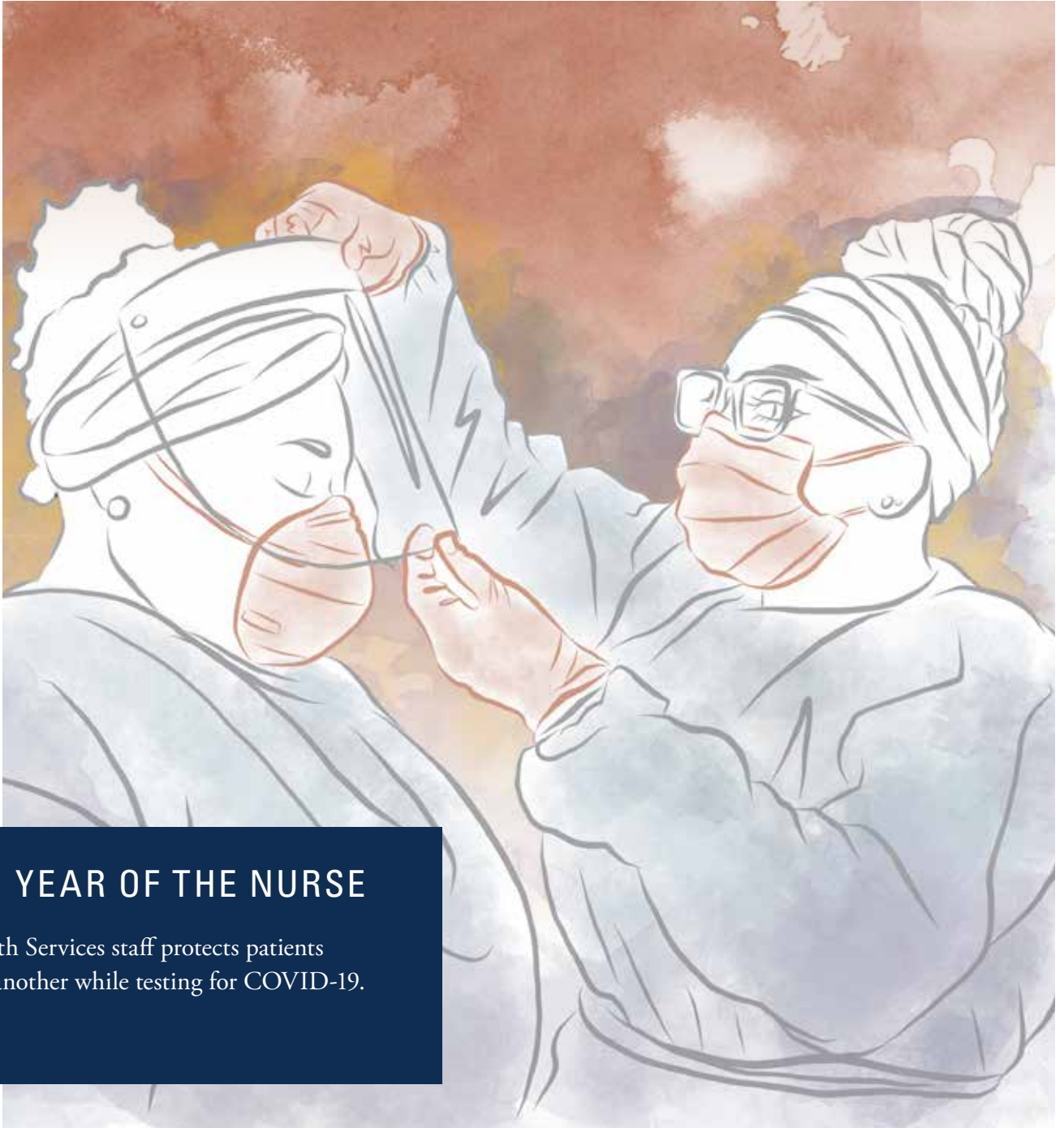


Cizik Nursing

UTHEALTH | THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON



2020 | YEAR OF THE NURSE

UT Health Services staff protects patients and one another while testing for COVID-19.

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ENDOWED FACULTY POSITIONS

As of September 2020

DISTINGUISHED CHAIRS

Diane M. Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN,
PHNA-BC, FAAN
The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair

Constance M. Johnson, PhD, MS, RN, FAAN
Maria C. and Christopher J. Pappas Family
Distinguished Chair in Nursing

Seeking two candidates
The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair

CHAIRS

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PHNA-BC, FAAN
Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair
in Nursing Education Leadership

Seeking candidates
Isla Carroll Turner Chair in Gerontological
Nursing

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Geri L. Wood, PhD, RN, FAAN
Bette P. Thomas Distinguished Professorship
in Innovative Health Care Delivery

Sandra K. Hanneman, PhD, RN, FAAN
Jerold B. Katz Distinguished Professorship
for Nursing Research

Constance M. Johnson, PhD, MS, RN, FAAN
Lee and Joe Jamail Distinguished Professorship
in the School of Nursing

Daphne Hernandez, PhD, MSED, FAAHB
Lee and Joe Jamail Distinguished Professorship
in the School of Nursing

Jennifer Beauchamp, PhD, RN, FAAN
Nancy B. Willerson Distinguished Professorship
in Nursing

Seeking Candidates
Dorothy T. Nicholson Distinguished
Professorship

Seeking candidates
John P. McGovern Distinguished Professorship
in the School of Nursing

Seeking candidates
John S. Dunn, Sr. Distinguished Professorship
in Oncology Nursing

Seeking candidates
Lee and Joe Jamail Distinguished Professorship
in the School of Nursing

PROFESSORSHIPS

Hyochol "Brian" Ahn, PhD, RN, MSN, MS-ECE,
MS-CTS, ANP-BC, FAAN
Theodore J. and Mary E. Trumble Professorship
in Aging Research

Vaunette P. Fay, PhD, RN-C, FNP, GNP
Suzie Conway Endowed Professorship
in Nursing

Cathy L. Rozmus, PhD, RN, FAAN
PARTNERS Professorship

Susan D. Ruppert, PhD, RN, FNP-C, ANP-BC,
FCCM, FNAP, FAAN, FAANP
PARTNERS Endowed Professorship in Nursing

Teng-Yuan "Erica" Yu, PhD, RN
Margaret A. Barnett/PARTNERS Professorship
in Nursing

Seeking candidates
Joan and Stanford Alexander Professorship
in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Seeking candidates
Judy Fred Professorship in Nursing

Seeking candidates
Patricia L. Starck/PARTNERS Endowed
Professorship in Nursing

2020-2021 SCHOOL OF NURSING ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Bette Thomas

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GREETINGS

DEAN DIANE SANTA MARIA



When 2020 was designated the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, little did we know Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth would conduct its first-ever virtual graduation ceremony on Florence Nightingale's 200th birthday. Nurses have never been needed more than they are right now. I am humbled by the strength, flexibility, and resilience I have witnessed among our students and faculty members, many of whom have worked on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic while also teaching or studying, and by our amazing staff, who shifted gears midsemester to facilitate a robust online learning experience and revise enrollment and matriculation processes.

Of course, challenge is nothing new to us. It brings out our connected spirit, and this pandemic is no different. We rallied with our hospital and community partners to assure the best care for our patients, the best education for our students, and the best prevention strategies for our communities. Education during a pandemic is not about simply changing modalities, but holistically meeting the complex needs of our students to assure we continue to lead the response in prevention, treatment, and recovery.

While we have had to pivot on some of our plans, innovation continues at Cizik School of Nursing. The new name of our annual magazine, Cizik Nursing, reflects our core values and forward momentum. We are changing in exciting ways to double down on our commitment to fostering leadership regardless of position, cutting-edge research that addresses pressing health care and equity issues, and an environment that celebrates the strengths of our diverse community, students, and faculty.

This issue of Cizik Nursing highlights many advancements, including our expanded simulation lab and our Smart Apartment for aging-in-place technology research, both completed just weeks before the pandemic took hold. The infographic on page 3 reflects the school's academic stature, from improved national rankings to increases in our already impressive first-time NCLEX pass rates. You will get a sneak peek at the UTHealth Behavioral Sciences Center, which will be part of the largest academic psychiatric hospital in the country, and where we will partner to provide unparalleled access to clinical experiences and experts in substance use and addiction, as well as care for victims of human trafficking and those experiencing homelessness. You will learn about our dedicated supporters, from those who helped our students struggling as a result of COVID-19, to Sheri Henriksen, whose estate gift will establish an endowed chair and scholarship to help ensure high-quality nursing education for years to come.

OUR 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Conducting research that addresses complex and systemic health issues



Leveraging smart technology and informatics to help older and differently abled adults to remain in their own homes



Strengthening partnerships that enhance faculty practice opportunities and offer outstanding clinical experiences for students

We will emerge from this pandemic stronger and even better prepared to fulfill our mission to advance the health and well-being within our diverse communities while developing tomorrow's leaders in nursing practice, education, and research.

Best,

DIANE SANTA MARIA, DrPH, MSN, RN, FAAN

THE JANE AND ROBERT CIZIK DISTINGUISHED CHAIR
HUFFINGTON FOUNDATION ENDOWED CHAIR
IN NURSING EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

CIZIK NURSING BY THE NUMBERS



ENROLLMENT

1,626

as of Fall 2019



GRADUATES

Fall 2018—Summer 2019

462 **293** **67** **9**
BSN MSN DNP PhD



US News & World Report
BEST GRADUATE SCHOOLS 2021

No. 22

Doctor of Nursing
Practice Overall

No. 17

Doctor of Nursing
Practice Family

No. 27

Master of Science
in Nursing

NCLEX

First-time Pass Rates | 2019



96.37%

MSN Program Nurse Practitioner Certification

First-Time Takers Pass Rates | 2019

FNP

Family Nurse Practitioner



AGACNP

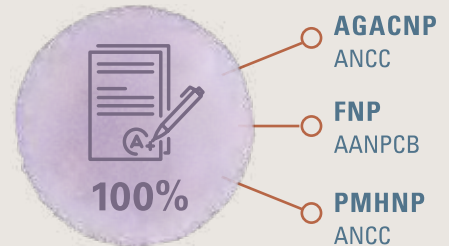
Adult/Gerontology Acute Care
Nurse Practitioner



ANCC: American Nurses Credentialing Center
AANPCB: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board
AACN: AACN Certification Corporation

Post-Graduate APRN Program Nurse Practitioner Certification

First-Time Pass Rates | 2019



Ranked
40th
in NIH funding
for nursing schools
calendar year 2019



Scientific publications and presentations

for calendar year 2019



163
Presentations

14
Book chapters

87
Publications

Nurse Anesthesia

BSN-DNP

National Certifying Exam (NCE) offered by
the National Board of Certification and
Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA)

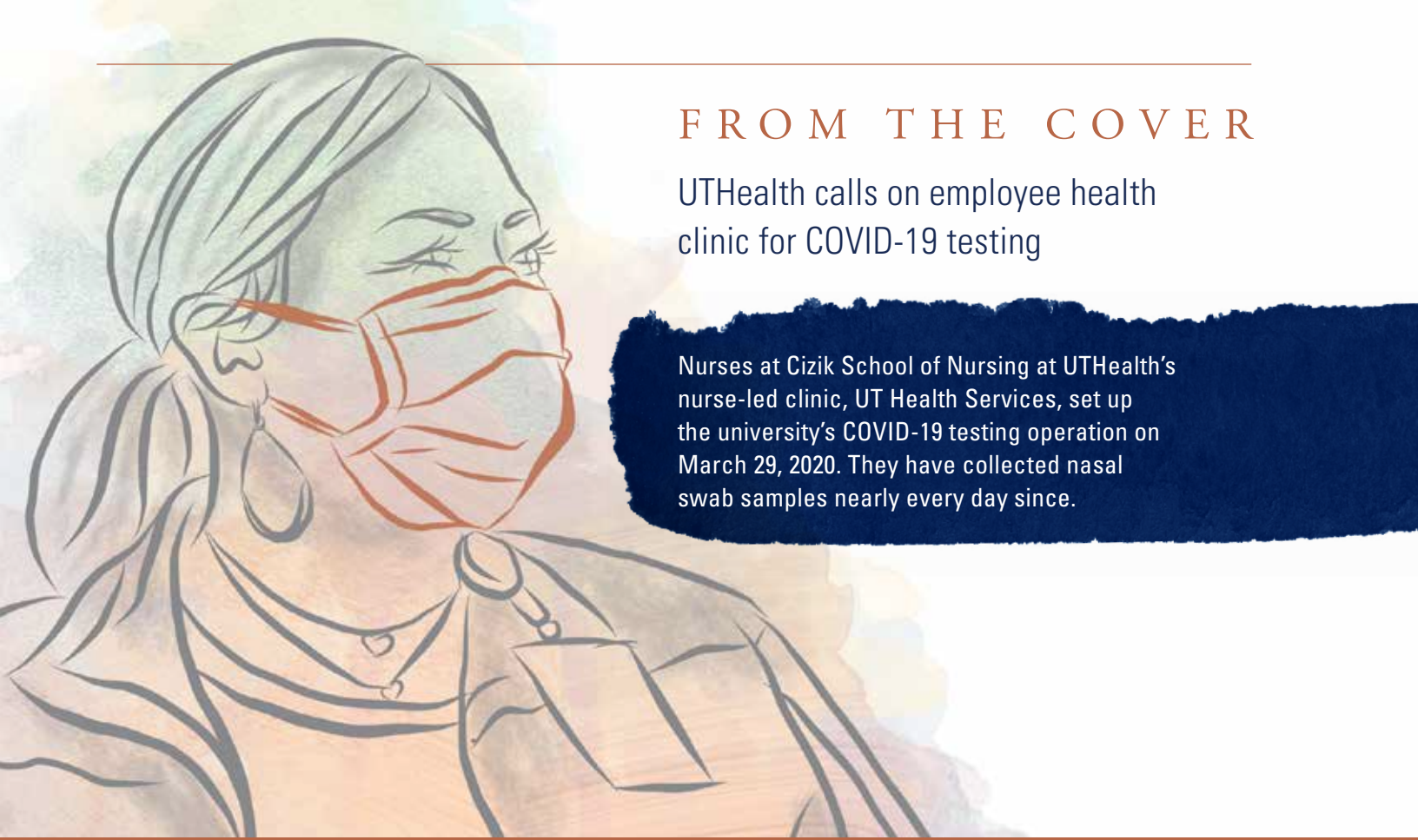


100%
Eight of the past nine years, including 2020

NUMBER OF COVID-19 TESTS ADMINISTERED
March—August 2020

2,073





FROM THE COVER

UTHealth calls on employee health clinic for COVID-19 testing

Nurses at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth's nurse-led clinic, UT Health Services, set up the university's COVID-19 testing operation on March 29, 2020. They have collected nasal swab samples nearly every day since.

The employee health clinic operates a drive-thru testing center every morning serving the nearly 9,300 employees at UTHealth. During the hot Texas afternoons, they moved down the street and continued providing tests in the clinic. Through the end of August, they had performed 2,073 tests.

Early on, a shortage of test kits limited availability. Supply issues were resolved, then by mid-May, demand for tests dropped to just a handful a day. Testing spiked again in late June and early July to as many as 400 weekly, then declined again by about 90% in early August.

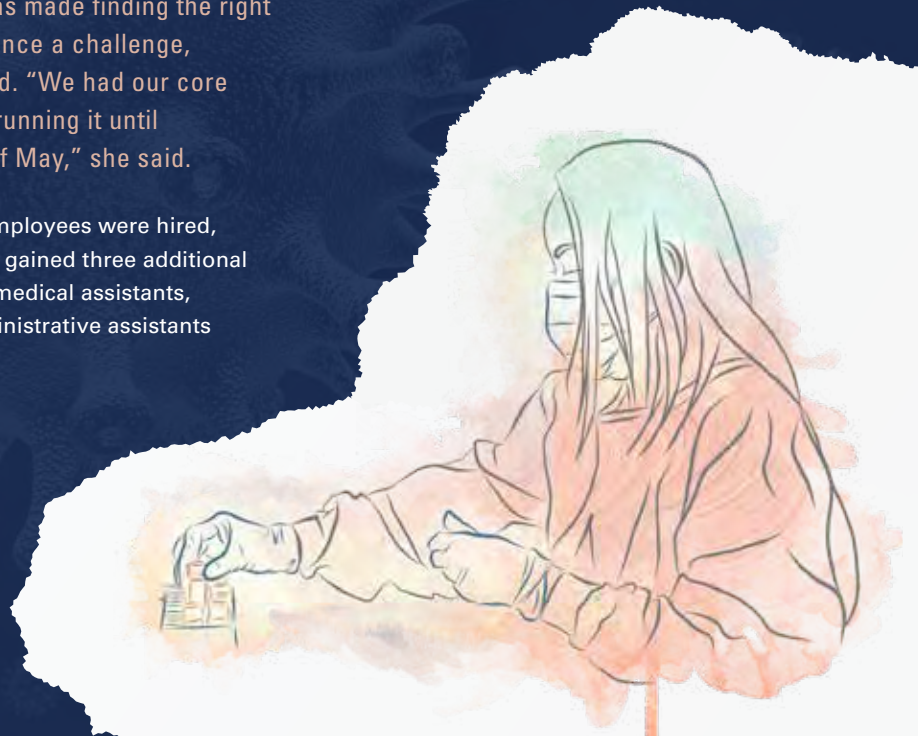
"It's really an impressive amount of testing when you consider the size of our staff," said Susan Parnell, PhD, RN, assistant director of corporate occupational health and an assistant professor at Cizik School of Nursing.

The clinic tests employees across the entire UTHealth campus in Houston, which comprises six schools. It also tests employees of several Houston companies and institutions for which it provides occupational health care services.

The everchanging nature of the pandemic has made finding the right staffing balance a challenge, Parnell noted. "We had our core group of 12 running it until the middle of May," she said.

Temporary employees were hired, and the clinic gained three additional nurses, four medical assistants, and two administrative assistants in June.

Each RN manages a key element of the COVID-19 response—testing, phone triage, and contact tracing/cluster management. With additional staff in place, the UTHealth Services team is ready for the long haul. No matter what the fall and winter may bring, they will be prepared to meet the demand for testing.



COVID-19 CONTRIBUTIONS

Donors step up for students during pandemic



This year, at a time when the need for high-quality health care has never been greater, many of those preparing for health careers found themselves in need. Shutdowns and cutbacks meant the loss of jobs needed to pay for nursing school.

Steadfast supporters of Cizik School of Nursing reached out during these difficult times. Donations of more than \$49,000 to the school's Student Assistance Fund included a \$10,000 matching gift from the Nancy and Clive Runnells Foundation. These contributions funded more than 80 hardship grants for students' basic living expenses while attending nursing school.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our students during the pandemic!



Cizik School of Nursing Student Government Organization members helped sort and distribute food donations from Champion Forest Baptist Church's Jersey Village congregation and the Houston Food Bank.



Long-time Cizik School of Nursing supporters Carla Diaz-Lewis and Kenneth Lewis helped keep students safe and nurses fed during the pandemic. Staff at UT Health Services, the school's nurse-led primary care clinic, receive one of many lunch deliveries courtesy of the Lewis family. Mrs. Diaz-Lewis also delivered 200 individual bottles of hand sanitizer for our students.



Restauranteurs Maria and Chris Pappas, long-time members of the UTHealth Development Board and Cizik School of Nursing Advisory Board, provided delicious family dinners to-go from Pappasitos for our staff at UT Health Services. Maria Pappas is a past chair of PARTNERS and always steps up to support students, faculty, staff, patients, and the Houston community.



Medical Bridges, Inc., donated 1,000 surgical face masks and 300 KN95 masks to Cizik School of Nursing to help nursing students continue their education during this pandemic. Pictured is CEO Walter Ulrich of Medical Bridges with Dean Diane Santa Maria and professor Beth Ulrich.



MEETING THE CLINICAL CHALLENGE

Cizik School of Nursing's expanded Sim Lab and dedicated preceptors prepare students for success

Nursing is a profession of doing. A nurse's education begins with learning critical concepts from books and lectures, but to be fully prepared to care for patients, nurses must learn by doing.

Two approaches go hand-in-hand in providing students the experience they need to gain proficiency and competence—laboratory simulations and clinical placements guided by preceptors. Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth's Beth Ulrich, EdD, RN, literally wrote the books on both. The second edition of her "Mastering Precepting: A Nurse's Handbook for Success" was published in 2019, and an update of her similarly titled "Mastering Simulation" book was published in 2020.

"Experiential learning is very important," Ulrich said. "You can't read a book and be great at starting an IV. There are a lot of things in nursing that you have to see and do to learn."





BSN student Saeem Karedia checks on a “patient” in the newly remodeled and expanded Simulation and Clinical Performance Laboratory.

State-of-the-art Sim Lab

Simulation labs, where students begin their hands-on education, traditionally focused on teaching basic skills and procedures, but they have advanced to mimic a multitude of more realistic experiences.

“Sim labs have been gaining a foothold in all of health provider education over the past 15 years or so,” said Eric Christensen, director of Cizik School of Nursing’s facility. “They can recreate experiences that you might have to wait hours and hours to see—or might never see—when working with real patients.”

Cizik School of Nursing unveiled its newly expanded Simulation and Clinical Performance Laboratory (Sim Lab) in January 2020. The renovation added 9,000 square feet of space and increased the school’s capacity to accommodate nearly twice as many undergraduate and 70% more graduate students as before. Spaces can be modified to simulate



\$8.2M

Sim Lab renovation



27,000 sq. ft.

of simulated workspace



6

high-acuity rooms



14

patient exam rooms



CATHY ROZMUS, PhD, RN

Dedicated Preceptors

Educating nurses would be impossible without experienced professionals guiding students through the clinical environment to gain confidence and competence.

“I think back to a lot of people in my life who helped me, mentored me, and I feel that it is my obligation to do the same,” said Annie Benjamin, a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner with UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center who serves as one of the nursing school’s clinical partners and is a graduate of the school. “When some of the students call or email and tell me that they passed the boards, that is an incentive for me.”

Experienced nurses follow different paths to precepting—some may be asked by their employers to work with students, or students may request their help.

experiences ranging from home health care to childbirth to emergency medicine. Faculty members or preceptors monitor students, direct scenarios, and manipulate high-tech robotic “patients” from a centralized audio/visual control room.

“Plans for the expanded Sim Lab started several years ago with Dr. Cathy Rozmus, our vice dean for academic affairs, sketching a layout to maximize functionality, incorporate cutting-edge technology, and accommodate growing enrollment,” said Dean Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN. “Simulation is a very valuable part of our educational process, and I am grateful to our faculty and staff who have worked so hard to create this state-of-the-art learning environment for our students.”

Because of the capability to recreate specific low-occurrence, high-risk scenarios, students earn twice as much credit for time in the Sim Lab as they do in real-world clinical rotations. Still, no matter how sophisticated the simulator, nothing can fully substitute for caring for human patients.

“We’ve shown that we can replace about half of clinical experience with simulation,” Ulrich said. “The rest of it needs to be hands-on with a live patient in front of you.”

BETH ULRICH, EdD, RN



One highly sought-after preceptor and Cizik School of Nursing graduate is Amanda Bergeron, an acute care nurse practitioner who works in the heart failure intensive care unit at Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center.

“I work in a very high-acuity unit that provides great experience for students,” Bergeron said. “Precepting a student can slow me down as far as my workload, but overall it’s worth it. It also challenges me to be at the top of my game, because if I don’t know the answer to a student’s question, I have to do the research to find it.”

At some hospitals, precepting brings extra pay or can be a step on a career path. However, it can be a tough job, and precepting opportunities should be considered carefully, Ulrich said. The new edition of her book on precepting includes a list of questions for nurses to ask their managers to ensure they will have the resources and support needed to be successful as preceptors.

Being a good preceptor requires patience, confidence, experience, and a desire to teach, but a long career isn’t necessary. In fact, some of the best preceptors can be those who are newer to the workforce and can better relate to colleagues who are just beginning their clinical work, Ulrich said. Nurses usually must have at least one year of experience to qualify to be preceptors.

“Once you feel confident, then I think it’s very rewarding to be able to precept students,” said Bergeron, who adds that precepting helps keep her in touch with other nurse practitioners in the health care community. “It also helps with keeping the standards of the profession high.”



The COVID-19 factor

The 2020 pandemic sent even the best-laid plans back to the drawing board. Halfway through the spring semester, the newly remodeled Sim Lab sat empty, and clinical sites halted rotations.

Didactic courses remained online for the summer, but students were able to come to campus in staggered shifts to complete Sim Lab requirements.

“Because of the social distancing requirements, we are limited in the number of students we can get through,” said Christensen. “We have extended hours to get more students through the process.”

Necessity being the mother of invention, faculty came up with some innovative virtual simulations that followed the linear progression of patient care, noted Padmavathy Ramaswamy, PhD, RN, assistant professor in the Department of Graduate Studies. For example, as the number of COVID-19 cases rose in Houston over the summer, an annual interprofessional simulation shifted to a telehealth scenario, with students from Cizik School of Nursing and McGovern Medical School at UTHealth collaborating on a case study that accurately mimicked the way many real patients with nonacute conditions received care during the pandemic.

“A lot of the students had already secured preceptors for the summer, then COVID hit,” said Ralph Leal, Cizik School of Nursing’s graduate clinical coordinator. With elective procedures canceled, a few of the preceptors were unable to serve students because they found themselves without work.

The need for preceptors to guide students in the clinical environment and in the Sim Lab will be even greater as we emerge from the pandemic and more new nurses are needed to relieve those who have spent months on the front lines. The process for being approved as a preceptor can be fairly straightforward, especially if a clinical site is already under contract with the nursing school, said Leal, who verifies preceptor credentials on individuals who apply.

“I don’t think there’s any job in nursing that doesn’t need a preceptor to help them through,” Ulrich said. “This is where the rubber meets the road and how we take care of the next generation of nurses.”

Nursing students need you!

Are you a clinician interested in helping prepare the next generation of nurses?

Learn more and apply to work with Cizik School of Nursing students.

nursing.uth.edu/preceptor

EMERGENCY NURSING

Houston ED nurses face a new kind of challenge



Elida Ramirez, PhD, ENP-C, directed student nurses at Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center who cared for people displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Harvey, but in her 30 years as an ED nurse, she has never seen anything like COVID-19.

"In Houston, we are used to disasters, but this one is very different," Ramirez said.

Students from Cizik School of Nursing were not immediately able to step up to assist in treating patients the way they would in response to a hurricane. Clinical assignments were canceled or delayed, and classes moved online. However, approximately 60 Nurse Practitioner (NP) graduate students were already licensed, experienced, and working on the front lines when the pandemic hit.

Ramirez herself practices in three different Houston-area emergency departments. Early on, she said every shift was different. "Things changed every day based on what we were learning about the virus, and each facility used different methods to communicate," she said.

But as the weeks and months wore on, wearing N95 masks and face shields on every shift became routine. "This is something we've always been trained to do, it was just not something we did every single day and every hour of the day," she noted.

Gus Calvillo, RN, shifted from the ED environment to UTMB Health at Galveston's urgent care clinic in Texas City in the summer of 2019 while working toward his Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) degree. In the early days of the outbreak, the clinic tested a handful of patients each shift. That quickly shot up to 80–100. A couple of weeks into the pandemic, he already felt as though he had been dealing with COVID-19 for months.

Amanda Sanger, NP, had also moved away from the ED to better balance work and school, switching to a post-anesthesia care unit instead. She is one of Ramirez's students in the Emergency NP (ENP) post-master's program. With clinical assignments and elective surgeries cancelled on the same day, Sanger shifted back to working in Memorial Hermann Health System's floating pool for ED staff to meet the call of duty as cases started to soar in Houston.

Anxiety remains high among the patients. Especially as infections began to spike in the Houston area over the spring and summer, many patients were afraid to go to the hospital, Ramirez noted. When they finally showed up in the ED, they were more acutely ill regardless of the cause.

For Sanger, who worked a shift early on at a screening checkpoint outside of the ED at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, one of the most emotional moments was watching a positive-tested husband and his wife “air hug,” knowing they could not be together during his hospitalization.

Nurses, too, must overcome understandable fear to treat patients at this time. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, Calvillo had begun taking extra precautions at work to prevent bringing home any germs to his infant son and wife. His co-workers soon followed his lead in donning PPE.

“I’m wearing mine all of the time because we just don’t know who might have it,” said Sanger. She and her husband, Damon, chief pilot for Memorial Hermann Life Flight, are also being extra careful to protect their two young daughters.

“I come home, I take everything off at the door, I drop it in the wash, I take a shower,” Calvillo said. Refraining from holding his son is the hardest part of the pandemic for Calvillo.

Meanwhile, Ramirez strives to keep students like Sanger and Calvillo up to date with their coursework

through what she calls “rolling information sessions.” She presents the same information in three or four different sessions and records them so that her working students have multiple opportunities to access the material covered.

“I want to communicate with my students directly and not just by email,” she said. “You need to have contact with people.” She also tries to break up her virtual sessions so as not to overwhelm her students with hours of sitting in front of a computer.

In addition to using technology to facilitate course work, Ramirez uses video chats to keep in touch with members of the American Academy of Emergency Nurse Practitioners (AAENP), of which she is a founding member. Sometimes the AAENP members help one another locate resources or overcome administrative hurdles. Other times, the nurses serve as a support group, sharing their common frustrations.

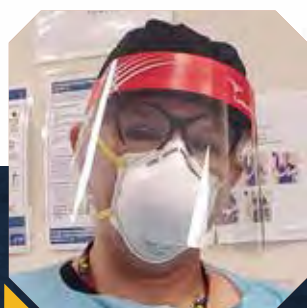
Through the AAENP connections, Ramirez kept in touch with colleagues in some of the early hot spots before the pandemic surged in Texas. “We communicated with people who were in New York, and we were able to be better prepared because of what we learned from other states,” she said.

For some medical professionals, the mental health concerns posed by the pandemic stem not from the stresses and fears associated with providing care to patients, but from being unable to help if they are quarantined because of exposure, Ramirez said.

“We are doers. When you enclose someone who is a doer in a place where they can’t do, that affects us mentally,” she explained. To help combat feelings of isolation and helplessness, her AAENP group planned virtual social hours. “We are trying to do what we can for the people who are on the front lines.”



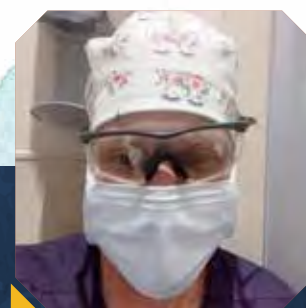
ENP students masked up and socially distanced for a group photo following a prehospital simulation in July.



ELDA RAMIREZ, PhD, RN



GUS CALVILLO, RN



AMANDA SANGER, NP

“We are trying to do what we can for the people who are on the front lines.”

ENP PROGRAM EXPANDS TO SAN ANTONIO

Texas needs more Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs), so Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth is expanding the state's only ENP educational program to UT Health San Antonio.

This strategic clinical partnership is funded through a two-year, \$1 million training grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The grant also provides ENP students with financial support while they complete their clinical requirements.

"The coordinating board is very supportive of this type of educational model," said Elda Ramirez, PhD, RN, ENP-C, professor at Cizik School of Nursing and the grant's project director. "We can start by offering the program to students in the San Antonio region, then we can continue to collaborate throughout the state." Ramirez is a former PARTNERS Research Scholar in the Department of Graduate Studies.

The post-master's ENP program draws students from all over Texas who study remotely with regular trips to Houston. Expanding geographically means less travel and more clinical rotations closer to home for many students. The team tentatively plans to conduct some in-person classes in San Antonio this spring.

Bradley Goettl, DNP, ENP-C, is an assistant professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine and the School of Nursing at UT Health San Antonio. He and Ramirez have joint appointments to both universities, and he helps direct San Antonio program.

The San Antonio educators have affiliation agreements with local hospitals and health systems, including the county-owned University Hospital, where Goettl practices. As UT Health San Antonio's clinical partner, the hospital houses the city's largest emergency department and serves 22 South Texas counties. ENP students will benefit from interprofessional education with simulation and training alongside emergency medicine residents and physician assistant students.

"Our initial goal is to start providing formal training for emergency nurse practitioners in the San Antonio region," Goettl said. "Long-term, our plan is to develop our own program that will mirror Houston's. This partnership will allow us to share faculty, strengthen both programs, and plan for future growth."

SAFE

Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth faculty members are collaborating with two hospitals on research aimed at making the workplace safer for nurses and their patients.

Together, the interprofessional studies represent nearly half of the statewide funding available through the Texas Department of State Health Services Workplace Violence Against Nurses Grant Program. In both, Cizik faculty will develop virtual reality simulations to train nurses and support staff.

An 18-month project at UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center (HCPC), funded by a \$79,000 grant, seeks to reduce the risk of violence for nurses and staff of inpatient psychiatric facilities. Cizik School of Nursing Assistant Professor Kelly Kearney, DNP, is partnering with principal investigator Elaheh Ashtari, PsyD, and other colleagues on a study aimed at decreasing patient-on-staff injuries and other adverse work events while improving patient-reported sense of



SPACE

Grants address workplace violence against nurses

safety. Ashtari is an assistant professor in the Louis A. Faillace, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth and chief of psychology services at UTHealth HCPC. Also partnering on the project is Ifeoma Ezeobebe, PhD, MSN, senior nurse manager at UTHealth HCPC.

“We work in a very challenging and difficult environment,” Ashtari said. “The patients who arrive here needing care are going through the most difficult times of their lives. When they come here, it should be a place of sanctuary, calm, and where they can heal.”

The study will apply trauma-informed care interventions to improve communication, evaluate behavioral intent, and avoid retraumatization of patients. It will measure the effectiveness of this approach in decreasing the frequency of restraints and seclusions as well as associated

patient-on-staff violence. A virtual reality simulation developed at Cizik School of Nursing will enable staff to practice de-escalation techniques aimed at reducing risks to nurses, staff, and patients.

“Our simulation will help nurses learn and hone important new skills before they need to use them with individuals in the midst of a mental health crisis,” Kearney said.

Another study will take place at Texas Children’s Hospital (TCH), directed by Assistant Director of Clinical Practice Karla Abela, who earned her PhD from Cizik School of Nursing in May 2020. Professor Beth Ulrich, EdD, RN, is the study’s co-director at Cizik School of Nursing. Assistant Professor Lisa Thomas, DNP, RN, is also involved as well as alumni Jennifer Sanders, DNP, RN, and Tarra Kerr, DNP, RN. Sanders is an assistant vice president at TCH, and Kerr is the hospital’s emergency department director.

The TCH/Cizik School of Nursing program, funded by a grant of almost \$180,000, will use cutting-edge mobile technology to identify workplace violence events in real time. A response team will be alerted and deployed to support affected nurses, Ulrich said. Training and education will also be provided to multidisciplinary team members on prevention and mitigation of workplace violence.

The team’s aims are to assess feasibility of using ecological momentary assessments as a reporting and data collection method, and to evaluate a training and real-time response program. The project utilizes an electronic data collection and alert system to facilitate timely reporting and follow up of incidents. As with the psychiatric hospital project, Cizik School of Nursing faculty will leverage resources of the school’s recently remodeled Sim Lab to develop and test virtual reality simulation with roleplaying scenarios to educate hospital staff.



Watch for opportunities in mental health nursing

The 264-bed UTHealth Behavioral Sciences Center is set to open in 2022. This facility, in conjunction with the UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center, will be the largest academic mental health complex in the U.S. Staffed by UTHealth physicians and nurses, the new campus will include a therapy mall, activity room, and communal dining facility that look into the internal courtyard through floor-to-ceiling windows.

Rendering courtesy Perkins & Will.

OUTREACH AMID ISOLATION

Ombudsmen advocate for long-term care residents during COVID-19

Social isolation necessitated by COVID-19 weighs on everyone, especially older adults and those living with disabilities who may have already felt relatively isolated before the pandemic. The long-term care ombudsmen staff and volunteers dedicated to advocating for the rights, health, and safety of residents have also missed face-to-face visits.

“It has been heartbreaking for all of us not to be able to be inside the facilities,” said Cizik School of Nursing at UHealth’s Greg Shelley, program manager of the Harris County Long-term Care Ombudsman Program, which is operated in partnership with the Harris County Area Agency on Aging.

Shelley’s team of seven staff and 73 certified volunteer ombudsmen advocate for residents of nursing and assisted living facilities, including memory care facilities, in the county where Houston is located. A staff ombudsman is assigned to each site and supports volunteers. Before pandemic restrictions were put in place, ombudsmen would visit their assigned long-term care facility weekly to identify needs and advocate for residents.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Texas State Long-term Care Ombudsman, Patty Ducayet, in March temporarily halted on-site visits to nursing and assisted living facilities by ombudsmen. However, on Aug. 3, Ducayet notified providers that ombudsmen would be returning to visits immediately. Texas Health and Human Services also issued guidance Aug. 7 allowing some visitation by friends and family under limited conditions.

During the pandemic, residents still have the right to access to an ombudsman, but federal and state authorities temporarily waived some residents’ rights to visitation, Shelley explained. Residents retained all other rights – including the right to leave facilities that only allowed entrance to staff and essential caregivers.

An important part of the ombudsman’s job is to educate residents about their rights and options, but also about the potential consequences of exercising them. For example, a resident who chooses to leave a facility during the pandemic will likely be asked to quarantine upon returning, Shelley said.



“Residents have a right to go against medical advice or refuse treatment, including COVID-19 tests, but they also would be required to quarantine for 14 days in that situation,” Shelley added, stressing the importance of testing and quick turnaround on results. “Some of the problems with the nursing facilities that have had significant outbreaks is that they didn’t know they had cases until someone was transported to a hospital and tested there.”

Throughout the spring and summer, ombudsmen relied on phone calls and videoconferencing to keep in touch with residents, family members, and facility staff.

“I don’t feel like we have been able to do anywhere near what we were doing before,” said Jo Latimer, a 13-year volunteer who would normally pay a couple of visits a week to a local facility. “When we visit with people there, we almost always come away with something we can advocate for.”

Latimer regularly reaches out via telephone to residents and their family members at her assigned facilities. Like many of us, one woman in her 90s worried about missing her usual hair appointments when the on-site salon shut down. “She has been so distraught about her hair that her family decided to buy her a wig,” Latimer said. “It was a great solution.”

While the ombudsmen are excited to get back to in-person visits for many reasons, Shelley emphasizes that face-to-face contact with the residents is one of the most enjoyable parts of the job, and it provides opportunities for residents to express concerns confidentially with an ombudsman who they might not otherwise meet.

During the period in which ombudsmen were not visiting, requests for private, confidential consultations from family members increased primarily over concerns about the restrictions on visitation. The lack of social contact for the residents has been a major concern, and restrictions on visits by friends and family have varied among facilities. In some cases, socialization can be very limited even among residents within a facility. Some locations have set up video chats with family members or allowed visits across barriers, such as windows.

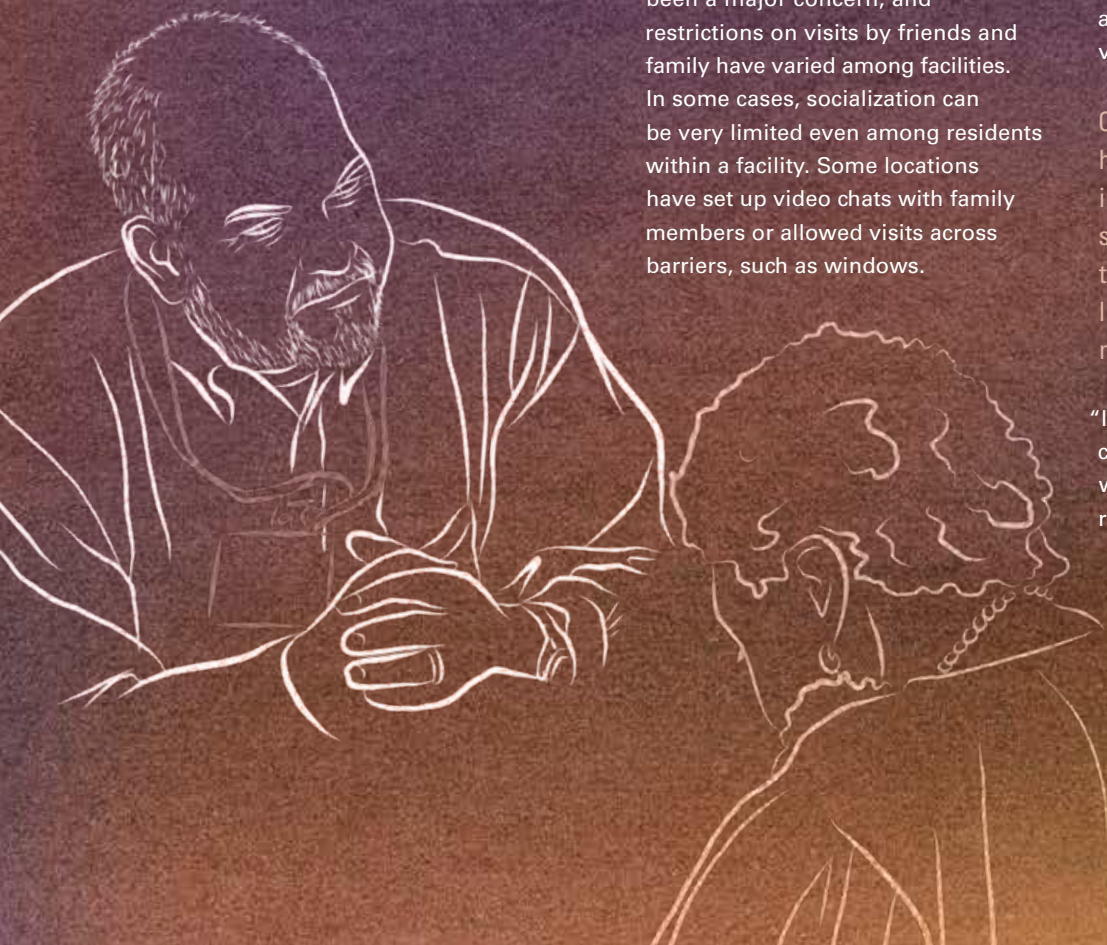
Assisted living facilities, like the one where Latimer’s well-coiffed client lives, have generally reported fewer cases of COVID-19 than skilled nursing facilities, Shelley noted. Differences between the two types of facilities that could serve to lower the risk of transmission include more private vs. shared rooms, more open space, and less contact with medical professionals providing direct care to multiple patients. However, assisted living facilities are not required to have nurse staff in the building every day, which poses some special risks to residents who become ill with COVID-19.

With restrictions beginning to ease in early August, staff ombudsmen underwent detailed training required by their state office so they could resume inside visits starting Sept. 1. Staff ombudsmen planned to accompany volunteers on their initial visits and to coordinate closely with facility management to ensure compliance with safety protocols.

“We will be providing PPE as needed to our staff and volunteers,” Shelley said. “We are hyperaware of the health and well-being of the residents, volunteers, and facility staff.”

One positive development Shelley has noticed during the pandemic is that it has created some serious dialogue regarding ways to improve how we deliver long-term care, particularly in nursing facilities.

“I hope it leads to some qualitative changes, benefiting both those who deliver the care and those who receive it,” Shelley said.



VIRTUAL VISITS

Telehealth gains ground amid COVID-19 pandemic



Social distancing required to mitigate the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus makes providing health care via phone calls and video chats not just a convenient option but an imperative in 2020. The pandemic strengthened telehealth's toehold in many fields, and nurses at the forefront of virtual visits believe it will remain as a permanent part of the "new normal."

Mental health

"I think telemedicine is here to stay, and this will change the way we practice in mental health," said Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Assistant Professor Kelly Kearney, DNP, PMHNP-BC.

"Health care providers who weren't using the telehealth platform previously now see the benefits and the necessity of adding this to their practice as another avenue for increasing access to needed health care visits."

Kearney is the school's psychiatric nurse practitioner program track coordinator. She conducted a couple of sessions a week with patients prior to COVID-19, then converted her entire caseload to telehealth. Not only did it enable her to "keep the doors open," it allowed patients to continue their counseling and treatment without interruption or risk of infection.

"Quite a few of my patients were afraid if they went outside, they would contract the virus," Kearney said. A few did test positive, some lost their jobs, and isolation increased risks for those who suffer from depression and live alone.

Associate Professor Rebecca Casarez, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, provides counseling at the UT Health Services clinic. She also increased the use of virtual appointments, and she is glad the clinic has given patients the option of in-person, telephonic, or video sessions throughout the crisis.

"There are some people who really want to do online visits, and there are others who really want to meet in person because they miss that personal interaction since so many other things are not in person," Casarez said.

In the long term, telehealth will remain an important tool for mental health care providers, Kearney predicts, not only because it facilitates treatment of patients in remote, rural areas, but because it makes counseling more convenient for those who would otherwise have to miss work or school for appointments. The cancellation rate for virtual appointments has been very low, she noted.





MENTAL HEALTH



NUTRITION



PRIMARY CARE

Nutrition

Darrine Abouchelleih, RD, a nutritionist at UT Health Services, also noticed fewer cancellations when she shifted to virtual nutrition and diabetes prevention classes and counseling. In addition to working with individual patients, Abouchelleih conducts several group sessions per week as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Diabetes Prevention Program. She began hosting them via videoconference in March.

“I can’t tell you it changed what I do significantly,” she said. “But I do love to see my patients in person. We like to do activities during our classes like marching in place or walking around the building. It’s harder to do that virtually.”

Homebound routines and stress related to the pandemic have made healthy eating and exercise more challenging for most of Abouchelleih’s patients, but a few said they were glad to be able to work from home and take daily walks around their neighborhoods.

Primary care

The applications for telehealth may be more limited in the primary care setting, but they are no less vital when patients are being encouraged to stay at home as much as they can.

The pandemic did not put a halt to in-person care at UT Health Services, Cizik School of Nursing’s nurse-led clinic. Some health care needs, like lab work or examinations for acute conditions, simply can’t be done remotely. But phone calls to check in on patients with chronic diseases and to refill prescriptions have been crucial during the pandemic, and videoconferencing can work well for conditions that require visual examinations only, like skin rashes, said Angela Rutherford, MSN, ANP-C, nurse practitioner with UT Health Services.

“For me, the bottom line is we’ve got to take care of the patient, even if it’s just maintaining care during the pandemic,” she said.

Assistant Professor Mitzy Kobeissi, DNP, FNP-C, is a telehealth veteran who operates her own concierge practice on the weekends. Her average patient is a stay-at-home, suburban mom. She frequently made house calls when she began her practice, but these days she sees most patients via video visits.

Kobeissi would normally handle colds, flu, and sinus and ear infections, but because those conditions share symptoms with COVID-19, she now refers such patients for in-person treatment in case they need a higher level of care. Treating minor health concerns for patients via telehealth helps take the pressure off of emergency departments, she noted.

Her experience following Hurricane Harvey proves the value of telehealth services – and of being prepared to ramp them up in a crisis.

“I was so busy after Harvey because people couldn’t get to their health care providers,” she said. “I find that in times of disaster, I become a go-to because I’m already equipped to do everything online.”

Kobeissi is sharing her expertise at Cizik School of Nursing. In the summer of 2019, she taught doctoral students how to set up a telehealth clinic, and this fall she is teaching telehealth principles in family nurse practitioner clinical courses.

“We are teaching them how to conduct a proper video visit and how to make a connection with the patient through the screen,” she said.

NEW DEAN LEADS WITH SERVICE AND COMPASSION

Diane Santa Maria doesn't just meet challenges, she seeks them out.

Take her first experiences as a nurse. While finishing up her BSN at The Ohio State University School of Nursing, she volunteered to help with recovery efforts in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch. Then she joined the United States Peace Corps.

"I was dropped off in the middle of the Dominican Republic with no Spanish skills, no running water, and no electricity," recalled Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, FAAN.

Her latest challenge—leading the Jane and Robert Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth—was not one she took on lightly, even if it did not require learning a new language or cooking over a campfire. When she became the school's dean *ad interim* in August 2018, she had three young children, was teaching several classes, and had applied for her first R01 grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research.

"I had to prove to myself that I could do this in a way that I would be proud of while meeting obligations to students, research, and family," she said.

Santa Maria did prove to herself that she could lead one of the nation's top nursing schools. She also convinced a search committee that worked diligently for two years, interviewing candidates from across the U.S. Effective Sept. 1, 2020, Santa Maria became the fifth dean in the school's 48-year history. She also will serve as The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair and the Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair in Nursing Education Leadership.

"I am pleased that we ultimately found the best possible candidate right here among our own faculty," said Michael R. Blackburn, PhD, UTHealth's executive vice president and chief academic officer, who co-chaired the committee along with Barbara Stoll, MD, former dean of McGovern Medical School at UTHealth.

A thread of helping those most in need has run throughout Santa Maria's career. While earning her MSN from Case Western Reserve University School of Nursing in 2003, she developed measles vaccination initiatives in Kenya and East Cleveland, Ohio, with the Red Cross. Afterward, she served as director of community health nursing with the Ho-Chunk Nation's Indian Health Service in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. She moved to San Antonio in 2005 and served in various capacities for the Medical Institute for Sexual Health.

Santa Maria came to Cizik School of Nursing in 2009 as a community health clinical faculty member. She earned her DrPH in health promotion and behavioral sciences at UTHealth School of Public Health, where she now serves as an adjunct faculty member. She became an associate professor with tenure in September 2018 and held two distinguished professorships before being named dean.

Santa Maria has focused much of her prolific research on youth experiencing homelessness. Meaningful work that improves the lives of those who are marginalized and stigmatized is incredibly important to her. Her five-year, \$3 million R01 grant funds a randomized trial assessing the efficacy of nurse case management for HIV prevention and care intervention among homeless youth. In August 2020, Santa Maria secured a supplemental award to study the effects of COVID-19 among the same cohort. She has also encouraged other nurse scientists at the school in applying for grants to study sexual and gender minority youth and the effects of COVID-19.

“I am greatly honored and grateful for the opportunity to lead such an outstanding team that amazes me at every turn, especially with their flexibility and resilience during the pandemic,” Santa Maria said.

A drive to seek out challenges, a voracious appetite for lifelong learning, and a desire to lift up others combine in Santa Maria’s engaging leadership style.

“I am trained as a behavioral scientist, as a mindfulness-based stress reduction facilitator, and in motivational interviewing. These things help me to connect with and listen to people in a manner that can lead to motivation for change and problem-solving,” she said. “I want to create a work environment where people want to show up every day, not just for what they can give but for what they can learn from others.”

Her ambitious vision for the future of Cizik School of Nursing touches all aspects of education, research, and practice – using lessons learned from the pandemic to help working nurses better fit education into their lives, partnering with hospitals to develop dedicated education units, nurturing the next generation of nurse scientists, and much more.

“Dr. Santa Maria is an effective and compassionate leader with a true commitment to service,” said Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, MD, president and Alkek-Williams Distinguished Chair at UTHealth. “The COVID-19 pandemic has been a true test of leadership for every organization, and she has successfully helped Cizik School of Nursing continue to meet the needs of our students, patients, and community. I have no doubt that Dr. Santa Maria will help further the school’s stature as one of the best institutions for nursing in the nation.”



Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN, became the fifth dean in Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth’s history, effective September 1, 2020.

DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES

Summer program introduces minority students to health care careers

CIZIK NURSING



Ellaine Tee



The Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP) helped Cizik School of Nursing student Ellaine Tee discover her career path—along with the cultural delights of downtown Houston.

Tee was born in the Philippines, and her family moved to neighboring Fort Bend County when she was six years old. She learned about SHPEP during a Cizik School of Nursing campus tour and decided to apply while then studying at the Wharton County Junior College campus in Sugar Land. The experience encouraged her to apply to Cizik School of Nursing, where she expects to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree this year through the school's Pacesetters program.

SHPEP is a free summer enrichment program sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It offers freshman and sophomore college students from groups underrepresented in the health professions the opportunity to strengthen their academic proficiency so that they can successfully apply to and earn degrees from health profession schools.

"A lot of effort has been put in over the years to recruit minority students from community colleges and underserved areas who usually don't have as many resources available to them as students who go straight into four-year universities," explained Erica Yu, PhD, RN, associate dean and chair of the Department of Undergraduate Studies at Cizik School of Nursing.

The decades-old national program initially focused solely on medical schools, later added dental, and expanded in 2016 to include more interdisciplinary health professions. SHPEP's 12 program sites highlight various disciplines, and UTHealth is one of seven programs that expose students to nursing careers. Each summer, 40 pre-med, 20 pre-dental, and 20 pre-nursing



students participate at UTHealth. Most hail from a regional catchment area that includes Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Arkansas, but some have come from much farther away.

“The interprofessional aspect is a big emphasis for our program,” said Robert Spears, PhD, associate dean for Student and Academic Affairs at UTHealth School of Dentistry. The group is divided into medical, dental, and nursing cohorts, but all students work together.

“We want them to learn from each other and understand the value of the different professions.”

Through the six-week program, students meet and learn from faculty throughout campus and get a taste for different health care professions. They also hear from student “ambassadors” who went through SHPEP and then continued their education in health care fields.

Students also gain hands-on experience in a typical year. Tee recalls learning how to fill a cavity at the School of Dentistry and using Sim Lab manikins at the nursing school to practice lumbar taps, intubations, and starting IVs. They also earned Stop the Bleed® certification.

“They get to meet mentors, they get to do things with their hands, and see if this is really what they want to do in their life,” said Pedro Mancias, MD, professor of pediatrics at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth. *“I think most medical schools and most professional schools look for students who have gone out of their way to get exposure, so they come out of the SHPEP program with a better application.”*

As with everything else in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic made this year’s experience different. On the upside, moving the program online enabled participants from Hawaii and Puerto Rico to join without traveling, and instructors introduced students to contact tracing. On the downside, the class of 2020 missed out on one of Tee’s favorite parts of the program – staying in the Rice University dormitories near campus and building close friendships with her fellow participants.

“In our downtime, we would travel around Houston. Even though I lived here, I had never had that kind of college experience,” said Tee, who earned her BSN this summer. The group took in concerts at Hermann Park, went to the Pride Parade, and visited the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

Tee keeps up with members of her SHPEP group and ticks off which of them have since gotten into nursing or medical schools. *“It’s a great program to make connections,”* she said, noting that she also built relationships with faculty members who later became her professors at Cizik School of Nursing.

The biggest benefit was gaining experiences that helped her decide which field of health care to enter. She learned that she enjoys the human element of nursing over pulling teeth (and that she prefers outdoor concerts to modern dance). *“I like how they exposed us to different professions,”* Tee said. *“It ensured that I wanted to be a nurse as opposed to a doctor or dentist.”*

“I would tell a student who is interested that you’re going to have a blast. You are going to meet people from other places, you’re going to make friends for life,” Mancias said.

To learn more about the SHPEP program, visit [SHPEP.org](https://www.shpep.org)

ACCOMPLISHED ALUMNI

DNP graduate leads with data in the Rio Grande Valley



Elizabeth Cantu Adamson, DNP RN

Elizabeth Cantu Adamson, DNP, RN, was an experienced nurse who did not know how to use a spreadsheet program when she took a new job in South Texas 15 years ago. In 2018, she became the first Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth student to receive a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree with a specialization in informatics.

Adamson has come a long way since earning her associate's degree at Moraine Valley Community College in the Chicago suburbs. Her family relocated to Dallas in the late 1990s, where she gained critical care, endoscopic, and a wide range of operating room experience at Baylor Scott & White Medical Center in Grapevine, Texas.

In 2005, she took a job with DHR Health in Edinburg, Texas, which now operates more than 70 hospitals and clinics in the Rio Grande Valley. Adamson was hired to establish a preadmission testing unit, but within two weeks, she was instead assigned to implement a surgical management system.

"I told them I thought they had the wrong person because I was a nurse. I didn't have an IT background," she said.

In fact, Adamson had the exact qualifications the health system was looking for – the clinical experience to help the information technology team develop a decision management system that worked for nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals. That first project led to another, then another, and over the years, Adamson helped implement systems for laboratory information, order management, and several other functions.

Her career evolved into informatics without any formal training in the field, and she became DHR's first Chief Nursing Informatics Officer. Along the way, she became a Certified Professional in Health Informatics Systems and earned her BSN and MSN degrees from The University of Texas at Arlington. Her chief nursing officer inspired her to seek her DNP. Online coursework was the only practical way for her to advance her education while working full time and raising two children in the far reaches of South Texas.

"Between work and school, that time is a big blur," Adamson said. "I was keeping my eye on the prize—to get an advanced education."

Knowing that campus visits would be required, she chose Cizik School of Nursing in part because of its relative proximity to Edinburg – which still meant a 5 ½-hour drive one way.

“Going through the process was both exciting and motivating,” Adamson said. “Even though I had a lot of hands-on experience, I didn’t realize how much I didn’t know. Getting that degree helped me fill in a lot of the gaps.”

“Liz was the first graduate of this unique program between Cizik School of Nursing and UTHealth School of Biomedical Informatics, the only school of its kind in the country,” said Juliana Brixey, PhD, RN, associate professor of health informatics at the School of Biomedical Informatics. “She was an exemplary student and a role model for future informatics students entering the program.”

The Cizik School of Nursing’s DNP program culminates with a process improvement project, and Adamson’s was titled *Improving Health Communication for Limited English Proficiency Spanish-Speaking Patients through Clinical Decision Support*. She stresses the importance of effective communication not only with patients but their family members in the region where she works along the U.S.–Mexico border. The system she helped develop ensures that Spanish speakers receive printed discharge instructions as well as follow-up surveys and communications in their preferred language.

The online aspect of Cizik’s hybrid program proved critical because it enabled Adamson to continue working while earning her degree, but she emphasizes the irreplaceable value of in-person interaction.

“Being on-site is so important—being able to connect with your peers and instructors. The stories and experiences that are shared are just as valuable as the coursework itself,” she said. “I still have relationships with a lot of my classmates that I probably will have for life.”

Adamson is still leading informatics initiatives at DHR. The knowledge gained through the DNP program gives her confidence to hone her vision and better advocate for clinicians. In addition to her involvement with clinical information systems, she has developed a business intelligence team to improve data collection and analysis used in decision-making. The business development team focuses on applications used in the revenue and finance functions.

“I’m not done growing,” said Adamson, who has been promoted to chief experience officer since earning her DNP. “With every new experience, I’m learning. I’m kind of just getting started.”

2020 MCGOVERN OUTSTANDING TEACHERS



HILDRETH ELOI, DNP, MSN, RN



MATTHEW LEWIS, PhD, DNP, CRNA

Each year, Cizik School of Nursing students nominate faculty members for the prestigious John P. McGovern Outstanding Teacher awards. These awards, made possible by an endowment from the John P. McGovern Foundation, are given to one undergraduate and one graduate faculty member at each of UTHealth’s six schools. This year, Cizik School of Nursing students selected Hildreth Eloi, DNP, MSN, RN, for undergraduate honors and Matthew Lewis, PhD, DNP, CRNA, for the graduate faculty award.

CONGRATULATIONS!

POMP AND UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE

2020 celebrations go online

No one attended Cizik School of Nursing's 2020 commencement ceremonies, but more than 4,300 viewed them. In keeping with the new normal, this year's event went virtual.

The school produced a commencement video for each of its four degree programs and debuted them on the 200th birthday of Florence Nightingale—May 12.

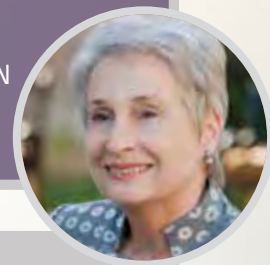
"This year has been designated Year of the Nurse and Midwife, and I think Florence Nightingale would be proud to know that a global pandemic did not stop the class of 2020 from completing their degree programs and celebrating on her birthday," said then-Interim Dean Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN.

"These nurses graduated during a historic moment for the nursing profession, so it is only fitting that we celebrated their achievements on such a historically meaningful date."

COMMENCEMENT QUOTES

As we as a community face the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, please know how proud we are of you, and we stand in awe of your dedication to nursing and your selfless commitment to serve others.

NANCY B. WILLERSON, BSN, RN
FOUNDING MEMBER, PARTNERS



COMMENCEMENT QUOTES

Develop unconditional loves in your life and commit to tasks that cannot be completed in a single lifetime, like confronting racism or addressing climate change, global poverty, or inequities.

SUSAN HASSMILLER, PhD, RN, FAAN
COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER
SENIOR ADVISOR FOR NURSING,
ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION



In the 2019–2020 academic year, Cizik School of Nursing graduated:



462
BSNs



293
MSNs

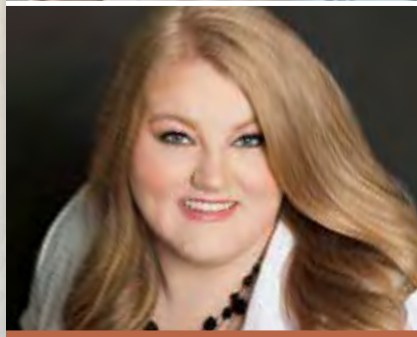


67
DNPs



9
PhDs

with an
additional 130
completing
post-master's
programs



Speaking during Cizik School of Nursing's first-ever virtual commencement were (top to bottom) Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, MD, president of UTHealth; Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN, then dean *ad interim* of the Cizik School of Nursing; and Shaneá P. Hall, president of the school's alumni association.

"You are now part of an elite group of individuals with shared experience and training received from the best nursing school in Texas."

SHANEA P. HALL, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, MPH

PRESIDENT, CIZIK SCHOOL OF NURSING ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Speakers chosen by students to represent their degree programs were (top to bottom, left to right) Brandy Wells, DNP; Meagan Reed, MSN; Collin Hills, BSN; and Brennan Streck, PhD.

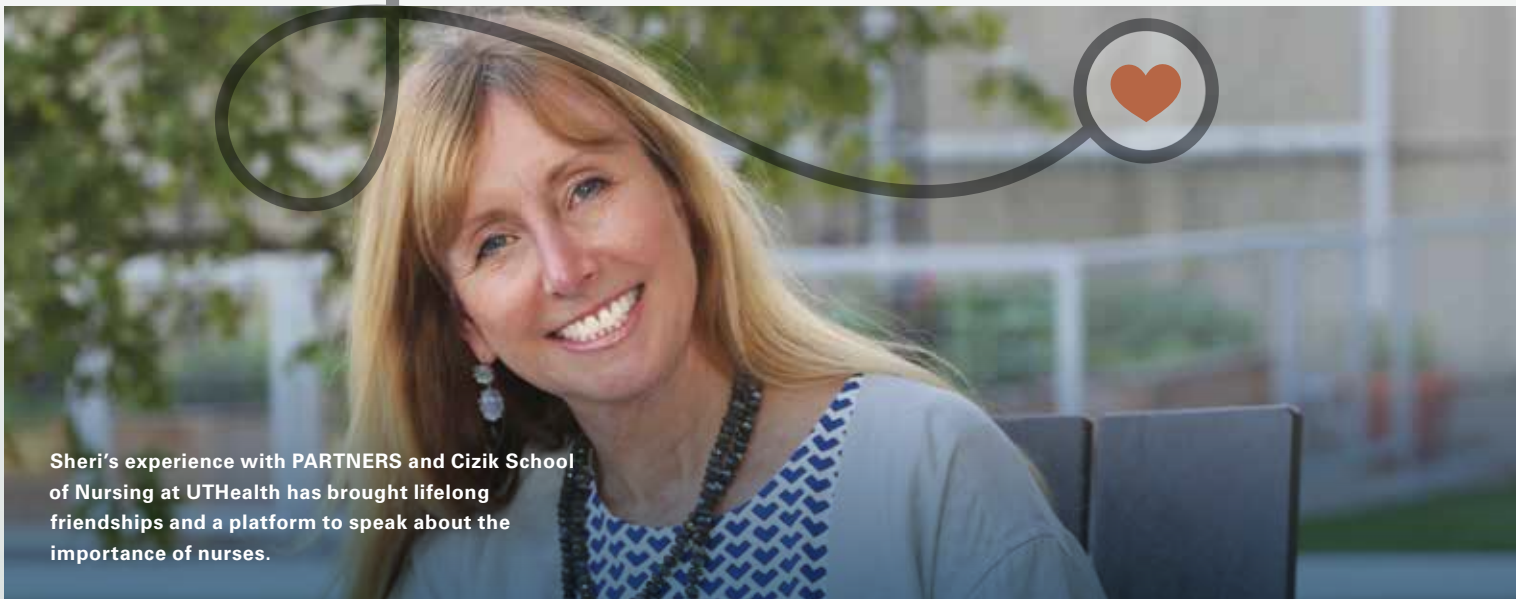


Students celebrated their graduations in creative—yet socially distanced—ways.

“ THAT’S WHAT NURSES

DO”

A mother’s gratitude sparks estate gift



Sheri’s experience with PARTNERS and Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth has brought lifelong friendships and a platform to speak about the importance of nurses.

CIZIK NURSING

A nurse was always there. Sheri Henriksen remembers this clearly from one of the most trying times in her family’s life.

In 1998, her 5-year-old son suffered septic shock, a systemwide infection that can cause organ failure and dangerously low blood pressure. At the time, only a small percentage of adults survived the condition that her son had, which triggered the septic shock, and no research had been conducted on survivability of this condition in children. He fought through the first month at a children’s hospital, breathing through a respirator in a drug-induced coma.

“I saw that the nurses not only carried out the doctors’ instructions, but they spent almost all of their time with the children,” Henriksen said. As her son struggled to survive, nurses kept vigil over him day and night. Their compassion went beyond providing medical care; they helped the entire family function through the crisis and balance spending time with him while caring for his 3-year-old brother.

“We had some incredible nurses,” she said. “One would build a tent with sheets when my son was in the hospital bed, and we would all get in to play – even while he was hooked up to so many machines. When he finally came home 3 ½ months later, I vowed that one day I would do something for nurses.”

Two years later, Leslie Bowlin, former chair of PARTNERS and a current member, told Henriksen about the organization, which supports students and faculty at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth. Henriksen quickly became a dedicated PARTNERS volunteer, serving as chair from 2009 to 2010 and contributing to its development as an effective advocacy and fundraising organization.

“I have really treasured the camaraderie in PARTNERS of so many wonderful women involved in the community, many of whom had careers as nurses,” Henriksen said. “Once a nurse, always a nurse.”

In 2019, she decided to create a legacy through her estate to reflect her love for nurses and commitment to education by making a gift to support the future of Cizik School of Nursing.

“Because of what I saw nurses do for my son, the gift that defines my legacy will be to Cizik School of Nursing,” she said. “I want to give back to those who gave my family the gift of life.”

The gift will create the Sheri Clark Henriksen Distinguished University Chair, establish the Sheri Clark Henriksen Scholarship Endowment, and enhance the PARTNERS Scholarship Endowment Fund. Together, these will help carry out Henriksen’s vision to educate nursing students, recruit and develop exceptional faculty, and support PARTNERS—all key components of ensuring well-trained nurses for years to come.

“Nursing is a calling. And we have a dire need for nurses across the country,” Henriksen said.

Diane M. Santa Maria, dean of Cizik School of Nursing, believes Henriksen’s gift will prove especially effective at helping train new nurses because it includes both scholarships for more students and support for the faculty who will educate them.

“I am beyond grateful for Ms. Henriksen’s extraordinary generosity,” said Santa Maria. “She has devoted herself to our students and faculty for many years, and we will be honored to carry these endowments in her name.”

Henriksen reflected back to 2014, when PARTNERS honored her at its Spring Luncheon.

“What I really wanted to share at the luncheon was the impact these caring nurses had on our lives—from my son being so sick as a child to him growing up and graduating from Rice University. This is what nurses do!” she said.



PROVIDING ADVANCED RESOURCES TO NURSING EDUCATION RESEARCH AND STUDENTS

— PARTNERS like no other —

As our nation’s health system faces a shortage of nurses and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, one unique volunteer organization has set itself apart as a prodigious fundraiser and advocate for the students and faculty of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth.

Since its founding in 1994, PARTNERS (Providing Advancement Resources To Nursing Education, Research, and Students) has donated nearly \$13 million to the school for student scholarships and faculty research grants. This support includes over 170 full-tuition scholarships and an endowment to provide ongoing annual scholarship support, ensuring that students from all walks of life have a path to rewarding careers that touch the lives of nearly everyone in the community. In addition, PARTNERS has awarded more than 60 faculty research grants, fostering early discovery efforts that can lead to major breakthroughs in patient care.

For members of this unique organization, their dedication is often personal. Many of the board members have either practiced as nurses or have experiences with the profession, and alongside their friends, they have created endowed professorships and a chair valued at more than \$3 million. Every member of the board also participated in a campaign to name the PARTNERS Student Lounge – an everyday reminder of their enduring support for future nurses and nursing leaders.

In addition to financial support, PARTNERS members take an interest in the success of the students, offering healthy snacks and refreshments during exam days and sponsoring the traditional Cizik School of Nursing pins that bachelor of science graduates receive upon completing their degrees. Hosting special events such as its Fall Coffee, Spring Luncheon, and Membership Drive serve the dual purpose of raising funds and spreading awareness of the importance of Cizik School of Nursing and the nursing profession.

Amidst the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, PARTNERS will continue to adapt its methods to ensure students at Cizik School of Nursing have the support that will help them step into the future with confidence.

To learn more and become a PARTNER, visit
nursing.uth.edu/development/partners

FIRSTS IN NURSING RESEARCH

When a patient hurts, a nurse is usually the first health care professional to know about it.

Recognition of the critical role nurses play in assessing and alleviating symptoms is opening doors for nurse scientists, including two Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth assistant professors who achieved research milestones in 2020.

Meagan Whisenant, PhD, APRN, and Stacey Crane, PhD, RN, are both developing systems for monitoring and managing cancer symptoms. In May, Whisenant became the first nurse scientist to receive a First-Time, Tenure-Track Faculty Member Award from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT). Crane followed suit in July, achieving a nursing first when she received a St. Baldrick's Foundation Scholar award.

Whisenant's focus on developing a routine symptom monitoring and management system for oncology practices is rooted in her own experience as a clinical nurse. She will use her \$500,000, five-year CPRIT grant to develop systems for collecting real-time symptom data from breast cancer patients in the outpatient setting at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center's Nellie B. Connally Breast Center.

"I was that nurse who took all of those phone calls coming from patients," Whisenant said of her early career. Her research seeks to improve providers' ability to respond promptly to patients while automatically incorporating symptom data into the electronic health record. "We know nurses need to be doing this, but we don't know how to integrate it into their workflow. We are going to test different workflows."

Working at the bedside with pediatric cancer patients and their parents inspired Crane to simplify the process for them to systematically and routinely report symptoms to health care providers. Her two-year, \$220,000 St. Baldrick's grant will help fund a kid-friendly, web-based interface derived from the Pediatric Patient-Reported Outcomes version of the Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (Pediatric PRO-CTCAE™), an instrument developed through the National Cancer Institute.

"My area of research grew out of my nursing practice and a desire to help alleviate suffering," said Crane, a certified pediatric oncology nurse. "Having been at the bedside and worked with children with cancer and their families for almost a decade, I saw opportunities where we can do better."

Research increasingly shows that managing symptoms improves overall survival for cancer patients as well as quality of life, Whisenant noted. It can help keep patients on their treatment schedules and out of the hospital.

"More foundations that traditionally awarded research grants only to physicians are opening up their application processes to PhDs, which creates opportunities for nurse scientists," Crane said. "Cizik School of Nursing is ideally positioned to foster oncology nursing research because of its proximity to and partnerships with MD Anderson Cancer Center and Texas Children's Hospital."

"As nurse scientists, we bring a unique perspective to these problems, but we need the collaboration of physicians," said Whisenant, who is excited about working with leading oncologists who support nursing research. "The Cizik School of Nursing presents a unique environment with a lot of momentum and enthusiasm for moving a research program forward."



STACEY CRANE, PhD, RN



MEAGAN WHISENANT, PhD, APRN

AGING IN PLACE

Smart apartment tests technology for independent living



Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth professors Joanne Hickey, PhD, RN, and Constance Johnson, PhD, RN, demonstrate robotic monitoring technology in the Smart Apartment. (Photo courtesy of Cizik School of Nursing.)

There's no place like home for people who are getting older or living with disabilities, and Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth is piloting technologies to help them stay in their own homes as long as possible.

The school unveiled its new Smart Apartment at an event in January 2020. Built within the Department of Research, the Smart Apartment is a living laboratory equipped with sensors, monitors, robots, and other devices that researchers use to identify and pilot technologies that can help with self-management of chronic diseases and detect health and behavior changes in aging and disabled adults.

"The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the number of Americans age 65 and older will climb to 78 million by 2035," noted Constance Johnson, PhD, RN, associate dean and chair of the research department at Cizik School of Nursing. "The technologies being developed and tested in the Smart Apartment will be vital to the future of elder care."

Three Internet of Things and Aging in Place Seed Grants were awarded in May to jump-start research in the Smart Apartment. Interdisciplinary teams from multiple institutions are testing ideas, gathering critical information, and laying the groundwork for larger grant applications

to come. Each team includes a nurse scientist from Cizik School of Nursing. The initial research projects involve facial and body-motion technology for monitoring stroke survivors, a voice-activated "chatbot" that provides information about medications, and general assessment of assistive technologies for older adults with cognitive impairment.

For more information about Cizik School of Nursing's Smart Apartment, visit nursing.uth.edu/research/apartment.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 and beyond



Hyochol "Brian" Ahn, PhD, RN

Hyochol "Brian" Ahn, PhD, RN, is conducting innovative research into brain stimulation for treating pain without medication. In 2020, he received a five-year, \$2.4 million grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research to study transcranial direct current stimulation combined with mindfulness-based meditation for home-based self-management of pain related to knee osteoarthritis in older adults. A supplement to that grant focuses on patients with Alzheimer's disease.



Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN

Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, RN, was awarded two supplements to her five-year National Institutes of Health (NIH) study assessing a nurse case management intervention for HIV prevention and care among youth experiencing homelessness. One supplement funds the assessment of the effects of COVID-19 on this population. The other takes a closer look at a sexual and gender minority subgroup, including the relationship between stress and risk behaviors.



Daphne Hernandez, PhD, MEd

Daphne Hernandez, PhD, received a Dean's Research Award to study health beliefs and stressors related to COVID-19 among Hispanic immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children. The project builds on her NIH study to assess chronic stress among adolescents concerned about their parents' potential or actual forced deportation. She was also named Cizik School of Nursing's Lee and Joseph Jamail Distinguished Professor in the School of Nursing.



Meagan Whisenant, PhD, APRN

Meagan Whisenant, PhD, APRN, is leading an interprofessional study investigating symptoms among patients with and without cancer who are experiencing COVID-19. Seed funding is provided by Cizik School of Nursing's Elizabeth W. Quinn Oncology Research Award. Whisenant is collaborating with Loretta A. Williams, PhD, APRN, of MD Anderson Cancer Center, as well as faculty from other UTHealth schools.

OTHER CURRENTLY FUNDED PROJECTS INCLUDE

Come As You Are - Assessing the Efficacy of a Nurse Case Management HIV Prevention and Care Intervention Among Homeless Youth

PI: Santa Maria, DrPH, RN. R01 grant funded by National Institute of Nursing Research.

The University of Texas System Health Biobank

PI: Jennifer Beauchamp, PhD, RN. Funded by a University of Texas System Award.

The Influence of Menstrual Cycle on Hippocampal Volume and Diffusivity

PI: Seema Agarwal, PhD, RN. Funded by intramural Dean's Research Award.



PHD SCHOLARSHIP

Ewoh receives first
Jane and Robert Cizik award

Congratulations to Justina Ewoh, MSN, FNP, the first recipient of The Jane and Robert Cizik Scholarship. This full-ride scholarship was established in 2020 to enable one outstanding future nurse scientist to devote three years to innovative health care research while earning a PhD from Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth. Ewoh will study COVID-19 and other diseases that disproportionately affect the African American community and other minorities. Constance Johnson, PhD, RN, and Hyochol "Brian" Ahn, PhD, RN, are her co-advisors.

BSN TO DNP

Cizik School of Nursing adds adult/gerontology care tracks

Bachelor-prepared RNs can seamlessly advance their nursing education by earning Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth in three different focus areas. The school began offering Family Care (FNP) and Psychiatric/Mental Health Care DNPs in Fall 2019 and added an Adult/Gerontology Acute Care and Primary Care tracks for Fall 2020.

"The need for innovation and performance improvement techniques focused on older patients continues to grow as the population ages," said Assistant Professor Lisa Boss, PhD, RN, and director *ad interim* of the school's DNP program. "Adding the adult/gerontology focuses to our BSN-DNP program will prepare our nurse practitioners to meet these challenges and improve safety and health for their most vulnerable patients."

Cizik School of Nursing graduated its first class of DNPs in 2009 and now offers Texas' top-ranked DNP program. Its integrated BSN-DNP curriculum aligns with the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties' commitment to move all entry-level nurse practitioner education to the DNP degree by 2025.



JUSTINE EWOH, MSN, FNP

THANKS AND BEST WISHES TO OUR RETIRING FACULTY



Joan C. Engebretson, DrPH, AHN-BC, RN, FSfAA, FAAN, retired May 15 after 35 years of teaching, mentoring, and advancing research at UTHealth. She held a joint appointment at two institutions—Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth and UTHealth School of Public Health, where she earned her DrPH. She had served as the Judy Fred Professor in Nursing in the school's Department of Research since 2010.



Joanne V. Hickey, PhD, RN, ACNP, FAAN, FCCM, retired Aug. 31 after more than two decades of outstanding service and leadership at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. She held the Patricia L. Starck/PARTNERS Endowed Professorship in Nursing and was not only the coordinator but the architect of the school's Doctor of Nursing Practice program.



Debra L. Fowler, PhD, MBA, RN, CNE, NEA-BC, BCC, retired Aug. 31 after 14 years at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth, where she helped advance the careers of faculty and students. She wore many hats over the years, most recently as associate dean of Professional Development and Faculty Affairs, associate professor of Community/Educational Outreach, track director for the MSN in Nursing Leadership and Administration program, and head of the Division of Management and Education in the Nursing Systems Department.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY

DEPARTMENT OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Veronica Brady, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, BC-ADM
Assistant Professor

LaDawna Goering, DNP, RN, ANP-BC, ADM
Assistant Professor

Lori Hull-Grommesh, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FAANP
Assistant Professor

Marissa Solorzano, MSN, PHMNP-BC, FNP-C
Instructor

Susan Stafford, DNP, MPA, MBA, RN-BC, NEA-BC
Assistant Professor

Seth Stephens, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC, CPHQ
Assistant Professor

Tammy Stout, DNP, RN, ACNP-BC
Assistant Professor

DEPARTMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Sylvia Anasi, DNP, MSN, RN
Assistant Professor

Robert Coghlan III, OP, PhD, RN, BSN, MSN, CNS, FNP
Assistant Professor

Anitra Frederick, PhD, RN, CNE
Assistant Professor

Hsiao-Hui "Joyce" Ju, DNP, RN, FNP-BC
Assistant Professor

Kenessa Landry, MSN, RN-BC
Instructor

Vuong Prieto, PhD, RN, CHSE
Assistant Professor

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH

Stacey Crane, PhD, RN, CPON
Assistant Professor

Maja Djukic, PhD, RN
Associate Professor

Daphne Hernandez, PhD, MSED, FAAHB
Associate Professor

Meagan Whisenant, PhD, APRN
Assistant Professor

ROZMUS, AHN, McEWEN HONORED IN 2020



Cathy L. Rozmus, PhD, RN, FAAN, was inducted as a Distinguished Scholar and Fellow of the National Academies of Practice (FNAP). Members of this interprofessional, nonprofit organization represent 13 healthcare professions willing to serve as distinguished advisors to health care policy makers in Congress and elsewhere. Rozmus is the PARTNERS Professor and vice dean for academic affairs.



Hyochol "Brian" Ahn, PhD, RN, became the school's 17th American Academy of Nursing Fellow. Ahn is Assistant Dean of Research and the Theodore J. and Mary E. Trumble Professor in Aging Research.



Melanie McEwen, PhD, RN, FAAN, is a 2020 inductee into The University of Texas Kenneth I. Shine, MD, Academy of Health Science Education (Shine Academy). This honor is awarded to only a handful of nominees each year from across all UT System health institutions and carries with it the title of "Distinguished Teaching Professor." McEwen is a professor and nursing education tract director in the Department of Research.

Academy of Emergency Nursing (FAEN)

Academy of Nursing Education (ANEF)

American Academy of Nursing (FAAN)

American Academy of Behavioral Health (FAAHB)

American Association of Nurse Practitioners (FAANP)

American College of Critical Care Medicine (FCCM)

American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE)

American Organization for Nursing Leadership (FAONL)

National Academies of Practice (FNAP)

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (FSAHM)

OTHER FACULTY FELLOWS

Brian Ahn, FAAN '20 | Jennifer Beauchamp, FAAN | Joan Engebretson, FAAN | Deanna Grimes, FAAN | Sandra Hanneman, FAAN
Daphne Hernandez, FAAHB | Joanne Hickey, FAAN, FCCM | Lori Hull-Grommesh, FAANP | Constance Johnson, FAAN | Thomas Mackey, FAAN, FAANP
Marianne Marcus, FAAN | Melanie McEwen, ANEF, FAAN | Janet Meininger, FAAN | Elda Ramirez, FAAN, FAANP, FAEN | Cathy Rozmus, FAAN, FNAP
Susan Ruppert, FAAN, FAANP, FCCM, FNAP | Diane Santa Maria, FAAN, FSAHM | Elizabeth (Beth) Ulrich, FAAN, FACHE, FAONL | Geri Wood, FAAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS KENNETH I. SHINE, MD, ACADEMY OF HEALTH SCIENCE EDUCATION

Inductees designated as Distinguished Teaching Professor

Vaunette Fay, PhD, RNC, FNP, GNP | Deanna Grimes, DrPH, RN, FAAN | Marianne Marcus, RN, EdD, FAAN | Melanie McEwen, PhD, RN, CNE, ANEF, FAAN
Janet Meininger, PhD, RN, FAAN | Susan Ruppert, PhD, RN, FNP-C, ANP-BC, FCCM, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN | Geri Wood, PhD, RN, FAAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM REGENT'S OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENTS

Susan Ruppert, PhD, RN, FNP-C, ANP-BC, FCCM, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN '18 | Melanie McEwen, PhD, RN, CNE, ANEF, FAAN '17 | Amy Calvin, PhD, RN '16
Joanne Hickey, PhD, RN, APRN, ACNP-BC, FAAN, FCCM '14 | Cathy Rozmus, PhD, RN, FAAN '13 | Marianne Marcus, RN, EdD, FAAN '12

IN MEMORIAM



DR. DOROTHY OTTO
1932–2020

Dorothy Otto, EdD, MSN, RN, ANEF, Associate Professor Emerita at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth, passed away Saturday, Jan. 4, 2020. She will be remembered as an incredible mentor, colleague, and educator with a sharp sense of humor who lived with a sense of purpose.

The nursing school's history is inextricable from Otto's distinguished 60-year career. She was a founding faculty member when the school was organized in 1972, served as its acting dean from 1975–77, and continued

teaching until her retirement in 2015. An ardent supporter of Cizik School of Nursing and a PARTNERS donor, the Dorothy A. Otto Award Fund was established in her honor and is given annually to an undergraduate student who excels as a role model of professionalism.

Otto began her career as a nurse in McAllen, Texas, after earning her BSN from the University of Houston (UH) in 1954. She received her MSN from Texas Woman's University in 1971 and her EdD from UH in 1985.

Cizik Nursing is the annual publication of the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth that celebrates achievements in nursing education, research, and practice.

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FACULTY OPPORTUNITIES

Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth offers enriching opportunities for faculty to grow their careers with outstanding interprofessional collaborations in the Texas Medical Center. Below are just a few highlighted positions:

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- **Associate Dean of Practice and Community Engagement**
Director of UTHealth Services Clinic
- **Research Department:**
Several endowed chairs and distinguished professorships
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Post-doctoral Research Assistant Professor
- **Doctoral Prepared Assistant and Associate Professors:**
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MSN Program Director
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
- **Other graduate faculty positions:**
Family Nurse Practitioner
Adult/Gerontology Acute Care
Adult/Gerontology Primary Care
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