



# College of Nursing and Health Innovation



**2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

## UNDERGRADUATE NURSING

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
  - RN to BSN
  - RN to MSN
  - Pathways

## GRADUATE NURSING

- Master of Science in Nursing
  - Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
  - Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
  - Family Nurse Practitioner Neonatal Nurse Practitioner
  - Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
  - Pediatric Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
  - Pediatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
  - Neonatal Nurse Practitioner
  - Dual Pedi Primary/Acute Care
  - Dual Gerontology Primary/Acute Care
  - RN to MSN
- Master of Science in Nursing Administration
- Master of Science in Nursing Education
- Master of Science Healthcare Informatics
- Doctor of Nursing Practice
- Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

## KINESIOLOGY

- Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science
- Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology
- Bachelor of Science in Public Health
- Bachelor of Science 3+2 BA + AT
- Master of Science in Exercise Science
- Master of Science in Athletic Training
- Master of Science Athletic Training 3+2 BA + AT
- Master of Public Health
- Doctor of Philosophy in Kinesiology
- Graduate Certificate in Public Health Practice

## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- Kourage Health
- MavFit Exercise and Wellness Counseling
- Little Mavs Movement Academy

## CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- Graduate Gerontology Health Care
- Undergraduate Telehealth
- Postbaccalaureate Graduate Health Care Informatics
- Nursing Educator Certificate

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### Editors

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As we reflect on all our accomplishments over the past year in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI), we draw inspiration for the future.

In spring 2023, we celebrated the opening of our new state-of-the-art College of Nursing and Health Innovation Smart Hospital and School of Social Work building. This world-class facility creates the very best environment for our nursing and kinesiology students to learn and grow using the newest in simulation and virtual-reality technology.

Our college is leading the charge to address Texas' critical shortage of qualified nursing graduates. Our undergraduate and graduate programs continue to bring the highest quality of academic excellence to students and continue to be ranked high among our peer institutions across Texas and nationally. Our undergraduate nursing students continue to pass credentialing exams at rates exceeding national and state averages. CONHI is a three-time National League for Nursing Center of Excellence, a designation awarded to institutions that demonstrate an unwavering commitment to excellence in nursing education.

In this year's edition of the Annual Report, you can read about the academic successes and research endeavors happening across our college. Our faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to support student success, contributed to new scientific knowledge, and provided new community services.

Every day, I am impressed with the quality and character of our personnel and their important contributions to educating the future generation of health care workers, advancing health research, and engaging the community to improve health and human condition. Jingsong Zhou, for example, in our college's Department of Kinesiology, continues her collaborative research to understand the molecular mechanisms involved in both the origin and treatment of ALS, a fatal neuromuscular condition. You can read more about it on page 7. In this report, we also highlight unique stories and successes of our students and alumni who are making an impact on campus and beyond. From the emergency room to the Chicago Cubs to Amazon, you don't have to look far to find a CONHI Maverick making an impact.

As we prepare for the future of our college and our students, we invite you to learn more about our efforts and achievements of the past year. As always, we appreciate and thank you for your continued support and generosity as we build upon a history of quality and excellence and work toward a bright future.



**Elizabeth I. Merwin, Ph.D., RN, FAAN**  
 Dean, College of Nursing and Health Innovation



DEAN'S MESSAGE

**Inspiration abounds  
 in our college. We  
 are positioned to  
 provide a world-class  
 educational experience  
 for our students.**

 The College of Nursing and Health Innovation is a National League for Nursing Center of Excellence.

 The baccalaureate degree program in nursing, master's degree program in nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice program, and postgraduate APRN certificate program at The University of Texas at Arlington are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, 655 K Street NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20001, 202-887-6791.

 The athletic trainer program in the Department of Kinesiology is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.

2022-23 ENROLLMENT



20,416

NURSING

Undergraduate = 12,951  
 Master's = 4,793  
 Doctoral = 353  
 Other = 301

18,398

KINESIOLOGY

Undergraduate = 1,862  
 Master's = 137  
 Doctoral = 17  
 Other = 2

2,018

2022-23 GRADUATES



4,209

NURSING

Undergraduate = 2,480  
 Master's = 1,109  
 Certificate = 85  
 Doctoral = 113

3,787

KINESIOLOGY

Undergraduate = 368  
 Master's = 47  
 Certificate = 3  
 Doctoral = 4

422

FY 2022 SPONSORED PROJECTS\*

\$6,885,313

\*new and continuing



CONHI SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED\*

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23  
 Recipients = 421 \$946,570

\*total includes endowed scholarships and others from fellowships, grants, and Dream Makers



FACULTY

Both on-campus and online

NURSING  
 Full-time = 138  
 Part-time = 544

KINESIOLOGY  
 Full-time = 45  
 Part-time = 31

2022-23 GRANT PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

82

\$62,455,824



CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

UNDERGRADUATE NURSING  
 Placements = 5,672  
 Sites = 147

GRADUATE NURSING  
 Placement = 3,664  
 Sites = 1,971

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ATHLETIC TRAINING  
 Placements = 72  
 Sites = 39



FIRST-GENERATION TO COLLEGE IN CONHI

2022-23 ENROLLMENT 10,278

50% of CONHI enrollment was first-generation students



CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING AND LONGEVITY

The center aims to improve the quality of life of older adults by improving psychological health with innovative, evidence-based physical rehabilitation programs.



BONE-MUSCLE RESEARCH CENTER

The BMRC brings together recognized researchers with areas of expertise that are highly complementary in bone, muscle, neuronal, and vascular biology.



MULTI-INTERPROFESSIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH INFORMATICS

MICHI draws from the strength and knowledge of multiple professions and disciplines with the ultimate goal of transitioning from sick care to health care.



NORTH TEXAS GENOME CENTER

The center provides massive genome sequencing capabilities for biotech and health research.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR RETURNS TO UTA



A UT Arlington alumna is returning to her alma mater to head the College of Nursing and Health Innovation's PhD in Nursing Program. **Renee C.B. Manworren** ('10 PhD, Nursing) previously served as an associate professor of pediatrics and researcher at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Dr. Manworren is passionate about her profession's practitioners.

"Nurses are amazing—they are America's most trusted professionals, but they're undervalued," she says. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, physicians addressed the nation as sources of wisdom while nurses were shown exhausted and in tears after witnessing the terrible suffering and deaths of neighbors and strangers. Yet nurses cared for their patients with technical proficiency, connectivity, courage, innovation, and humility."

The new director understands the damage that the international nursing shortage is inflicting on these workers.

"Our numbers are dwindling," she says. "Being a nurse is hard work physically, mentally, even socially; however, our passion for caring is contagious. I came back to UTA because UTA is developing many incredible nurses in novel ways. I returned to UTA to encourage nurses and clinical scientists to break the rules and transform the unhealthy part of health care through innovation."

She believes that questions spark innovation, and that philosophy influences her mentoring. It's why her greatest joy is "encouraging nurses to ask questions, to discover answers, and to improve the care we provide."

She lauds the contributions of the teachers she learned under while at UTA—and before she even arrived here.

"Before I considered pursuing a PhD, Carolyn Cason, my dissertation chair, critiqued my research proposal to modify a validated tool on pediatric pain management. She told me I should do it with scientific rigor. That modified validated tool has been published in 26 languages in 42 countries," she notes.

Concern for patients drives Manworren's research, which "seeks to change our sensitivity to children's pain to better prevent, assess, and treat it while finding predictors of adverse outcomes for acute pain treatment."

GRADUATE NURSING



**Oluwatosin Adebisi**  
Clinical Assistant Professor,  
Graduate Nursing



**Sharon Blackerby**  
Clinical Assistant Professor,  
Graduate Nursing



**Aaron Langford**  
PMHNP Program Director,  
Clinical Assistant Professor,  
Graduate Nursing



**Rhonda Winegar**  
Assistant Professor,  
Graduate Nursing

**Renee Manworren**  
PhD Program Director, Professor, Graduate Nursing

*Not pictured: Immaculate Okeyo*  
Clinical Assistant Professor, Graduate Nursing

UNDERGRADUATE NURSING



**Sohyun Kim, PhD**  
Assistant Professor,  
Undergraduate Nursing



**Elizabeth Kreuze, PhD**  
Assistant Professor,  
Undergraduate Nursing

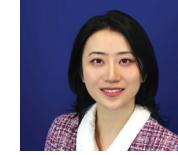
KINESIOLOGY



**Anita Corbitt, PhD**  
Clinical Associate Professor,  
Kinesiology



**Denise Hernandez, PhD**  
Assistant Professor,  
Kinesiology



**Feinuo Sun, PhD**  
Assistant Professor,  
Kinesiology

SELECTED GRANTS

Amounts awarded to UTA in 2022-23

NURSING

**Marco Brotto**  
*Osteocyte Regulation of Bone/Muscle With Aging*; Indiana State University Subaward via the National Institutes of Health, **\$1,970,110**

**Venu Varanasi**  
*Semiconductor Biomaterials to Speed Bone Healing: A Bioengineering-Driven Approach*; National Institutes of Health, **\$479,516**

**Yan Xiao**  
*PROMIS Learning Lab: Partnership in Resilience for Medication Safety*; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **\$2,187,499**

KINESIOLOGY

**R. Matthew Brothers**  
*Neural and Vascular Mechanisms of Elevated Cardiovascular Disease Risk in African American Women*; National Institutes of Health, **\$447,615**

**Paul Fadel**  
*Mechanisms of Exercise Intolerance in Heart Failure*; UT Southwestern/National Institutes of Health, **\$2,282,641**

**Michael Nelson**  
*Mechanism and Modulation of Sex Differences in Myocardial Steatosis-Induced Left Ventricular Dysfunction Obesity*; National Institutes of Health, **\$3,302,033**

**Daniel Trott**  
*T-Cells Mediate Age-Related Arterial Dysfunction*; National Institutes of Health, **\$634,500**

**Jon Weidanz**  
*Mouse Vivarium Services and In Vivo Experimental Support*; Boehringer Ingelheim International GmbH, **\$2,004,680**

**Gabriela Wilson**  
*CDC COVID-19 Disparities*; Tarrant County Public Health/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **\$500,000**

**Jingsong Zhou**  
*Preserving Mitochondrial Function for Alleviating ALS Progression*; National Institutes of Health, **\$2,232,900**

2022-23 RANKINGS AND HONORS

- NO. 1** public university for military service members and veterans (*Military Times* Best for Vets: Colleges, 2023)
- NO. 2** among all universities (*Military Times* Best for Vets: Colleges, 2023)
- NO. 3** best public university in Texas (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2024)
- NO. 5** (tie) for undergraduate ethnic diversity (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2023)
- NO. 1** online accelerated BSN degree (Nursingprocess.org)
- NO. 1** online BSN (College Rank)
- NO. 1** public nonprofit institution for conferring the most bachelor's degrees in nursing
- NO. 21** online nursing master's programs for veterans (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2023)
- NO. 32** in National Institutes of Health funding among schools of nursing for 2022 (Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research)
- NO. 5** in Texas among public universities (Nursing Schools Almanac)

## FIGHTING A NATIONAL NURSING FACULTY SHORTAGE

A shocking 90,000—that is the number of qualified applicants nursing schools around the country were forced to turn away this year. The reason? Too few faculty members to teach them and not enough clinical sites to train them.



“There just are not enough nursing faculty to be able to support educating all of the people who want to be a nurse or nurse practitioner in this country—and yet we have a shortage of both,”

says **Ann Eckhardt**, clinical associate professor and chair of the Graduate Nursing Program.

That’s the battle Dr. Eckhardt and her colleagues are fighting to reverse this trend. Her team was awarded a state grant for its work, part of a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board effort to support nursing programs and explore potential solutions to overcome the ongoing shortage.

**The UTA plan has four primary objectives:**

- Establish and pilot a clinical teaching assistant program that allows an increase in clinical group size by pairing graduate nursing students with faculty members.
- Increase recruitment and retention of preceptors for nurse practitioner clinical experiences through outreach and development opportunities.
- Explore the use of virtual simulation in nurse practitioner education to allow faculty to focus their limited time on student remediation and other student needs.
- Offer professional development specific to simulation for faculty, students, and simulation coordinators.

“The goal is to increase the availability of nursing faculty and simulation coordinators to prepare more registered nurses to further reduce the nursing shortage, and to increase the recruitment and retention of preceptors to help train the next generation of nurse practitioners,” Eckhardt says.

## DISPARITIES IN ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE DIAGNOSES



A University of Texas at Arlington research team found that foreign-born women of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent are two and a half times more likely to have an undiagnosed case

of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (AD/ADRD) compared to U.S.-born white women.

The research, led by public health Assistant Professor **Tiffany Kindratt** in the Department of Kinesiology, appears in the June 2023 issue of the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

“Alzheimer’s disease is growing, and half of the cases are usually undiagnosed,” says Dr. Kindratt, who also is director of the Health Survey Research Lab at UTA. “That’s where we started to see a large disparity with MENA individuals and cognitive health.”

Her team examined data from 2000-18 in both the National Health Interview Survey and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. An undiagnosed case of ADRD was determined if the participant had problems making decisions, required supervision for their own safety, or experienced confusion or memory loss but did not have a clinical diagnosis from a health care provider.

Age is the greatest risk factor for developing ADRD, but psychological health, depression, and lack of early-life education can also play a role.

MENA individuals have been defined as a white race group by the U.S. government, but this and other research shows that their health differs from white individuals. Kindratt has argued for what she said is a critical addition of a MENA checkbox on federal forms, including the U.S. Census.

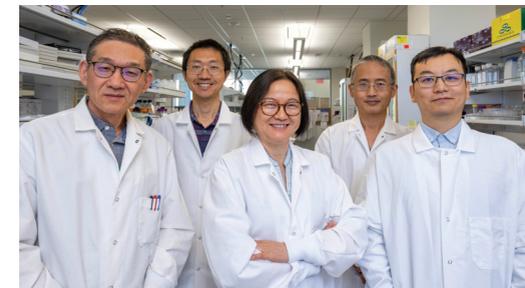
“Having a checkbox so someone can say they are of this descent would be much better than combing through data to infer that this is their identity,” she says.

## ALS RESEARCH UPDATES

**Jingsong Zhou**, kinesiology professor and associate director of the Bone-Muscle Research Center, isn’t supposed to be here.

“I was trained as a medical doctor first,” she says. “But with my deep interests in science, I shifted my direction to explore how the human body functions at molecular and cellular levels. With a doctoral degree in physiology and biophysics, I am in the right position to conduct translational research, which bridges the basic research to clinical applications.”

In 2006, Dr. Zhou began focusing her research efforts on ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), or



Jingsong Zhou (center) and her lab team.

Lou Gehrig’s disease, a systemic, fatal neuromuscular disease characterized by progressive motor neuron death and severe muscle wasting. ALS’ origins are largely unknown, and currently only three FDA-approved therapies exist, none of which extend a patient’s life for more than a few months.

Over the years, Zhou’s research on the topic has been supported by partners such as the National Institutes of Health, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and the Department of Defense. Additionally, in 2015, her lab received funding from the viral Ice Bucket Challenge through the ALS Association.

Most recently, she was awarded a five-year, \$3.16 million grant from the National Institutes of Health that will support a collaborative effort between UTA, the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and Temple University to explore the molecular mechanisms underlying neuromuscular degeneration in ALS and to develop potential therapeutic interventions.

On second thought, it turns out UTA is exactly where Zhou is supposed to be.

## NEW CLINICAL IMAGING RESEARCH CENTER APPROVED

UT Arlington has given the green light to build a \$6.2 million Clinical Imaging Research Center with a new 3-Tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. Currently, UTA faculty, staff, and students needing an MRI for research must travel to other facilities in the area that have those capabilities.

The center will be located in the Science and Engineering Innovation and Research building and headed by **Michael D. Nelson**, associate professor of kinesiology. Officials estimate the new facility will be operational within 12 to 15 months.

“The addition of the Clinical Imaging Research Center is a key part of UTA’s vision to expand our clinical research infrastructure,” says **Kate C. Miller**, vice president of research and innovation. “We believe adding this facility on our main campus will be a beacon for researchers to come together to innovate, discover, and perform interdisciplinary research.”

One of the main research areas for the new center will be brain health and related medical

research. But it will also support ongoing studies in engineering, physics, mathematics, computer science, social work, and business.

“The interdisciplinary nature of the Clinical Imaging Research Center will bring together the best and brightest of the UTA community and beyond,” says College of Nursing and Health Innovation Dean Elizabeth Merwin. “We are optimistic a facility of this size and scope will continue to attract top-tier researchers and scholars with specific interests and expertise to our campus.”



Photo courtesy of Siemens Healthineers.

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

**Fatoumata Jallow**, *Medication Safety in Community-Dwelling Older Adults*

**Leslie Jennings**, *Factors Affecting the Success and Persistence of Pre-Nursing Students*

**Jean Montgomery**, *Self-Care Narratives: Life Stories of Rural Adults Managing Chronic Illness Without Insurance*

**Marlene Porter**, *Work Engagement, Burnout, Well-Being in Nursing Professional Development Practitioners*

**Tashiana Roberts-Jackson**, *Relationship Between Nurse Professional Development Practitioners' Perception of Empowerment in the Workplace and Intent to Stay Post the COVID-19 Pandemic*

**Elisa Stehling**, *Resilience in Heart Failure Patients: A Qualitative Study*

**Adrianna Vinar**, *Multidisciplinary Teamwork Perceptions When Mobilizing Ventilated Neurosurgery Patients*

**Shannon Whitehead**, *The Influence of African American Women's Values and Beliefs on Moderate Intensity Physical Activity: A Qualitative Study*

## DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE

**Carrleigh Abernathy**, *Implementation of Scoring Questionnaire for Sore Throat*

**Nkechi Obiageli Akpati**, *Effect of Walking on Anxiety Among Patients Diagnosed With Generalized Anxiety Disorder Using GAD-7 Screening Tool*

**Cynthia Amachree**, *Antibiotic Stewardship in the Urgent Care Clinic*

**Raji Anup**, *Human Papillomavirus Vaccine for Nine-Year-Olds and Up: An Evidence-Based Project*

**Gina Arrey**, *Reducing Workplace Violence in an Acute Psychiatric Setting*

**Anna Augustin**, *Implementation of a Medicare Annual Wellness Visit Education Program in Primary Care*

**Stella Ebelechukwu Azie**, *Use of Aerobic Walking Exercise in Reducing Depressive Symptoms*

**Sueanne Baddour**, *Increasing Depression Screening Rates for Older Adult Primary Care Patients With PHQ Protocol Implementation*

**Anju Banjade Kharel**, *Hypertension Management in Nepali Immigrants Through Evidence-Based Intervention*

**Sonya Barnett**, *Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Guideline Development*

**Isabel Beckett**, *Improving Mammography Communication Through Provider Education*

**Susan Bowlin**, *FAST-Tracking Access to Obesity Treatment*

**Mari Micci Bramuchi**, *Conservative Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease With Structured Walking Programs*

**Valarie Melisa Chambless**, *Comparing HPV Vaccine Rates in Texas to Southern States and Districts With Minor Consent Laws*

**William Clinton**, *Improving Nursing Knowledge and Compliance for Pressure Injury Prevention*

**Cynthia Jean Drew**, *Improving Completion Rates of Advanced Directives in Assisted Living Facilities*

**Traceen Eileen Driskill**, *Asymptomatic Chlamydia*

**Catherine Nenta Ebune**, *CARES Act and the Social Determinants of Health Influence on Telehealth*

**Kizzie Edie**, *Effectiveness of a Hypertension Bundle on Blood Pressure, Self-Efficacy Knowledge, and Adherence*

**Nafsat Olamide Elias-Salawu**, *Access to Maternal Care: The Improving Access to Maternal Care Act*

**Cavel Elliot**, *Decreasing Caregiver Stress and Burden in a Group of Community-Dwelling Caregivers to Persons With Dementia*

**Patrick Escamilla**, *IV Skills Confidence and Ultrasound Dependence in COVID-Era Graduate ER Nurses: A Quality Improvement Project*

**Mary Ezebuio**, *The Significant of Diet, Exercise, and Weight Loss on Blood Pressure Management*

**Danielle Fernandez**, *Provider Visit Attendance Improvement in Behavioral Health Population Post Hospitalization*

**Alejandra Fierro**, *Obesity Management in Primary Care*

**Lisa Florida**, *Impacting Patient Centeredness in Purposeful Rounding Utilizing an Interactive Participation-Based Simulation Approach*

**Drexel Forbes**, *Triaging Patients During an All-Hazard Disaster: A Clinical Practice Guideline for Nurses*

**Luchia Foster**, *Improving Colon Cancer Screening in Primary Care*

**Danielle Marie Fournier**, *Provider Education to Improve Postoperative Biomarker Testing for Patients With Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer*

**Erica Francis**, *Addressing Diabetes Management Among Uninsured T2DM Patient Using Telephone Follow-Up Visit in a Community Clinic*

**Tammy Franqueiro**, *Resilience, Burnout, and Well-Being Among New Graduate Nurses*

**Icelind Gallardo**, *Guideline for Opt-Out Sexually Transmitted Infection Screening in Correctional Facilities*

**Samantha Kay Garcia**, *Evaluation of a Palliative Care Screening Intervention to Increase Early Palliative Care Consultation in the Intensive Care Unit*

**D'Ann DaShya Glasco**, *Increasing Cervical Cancer Screening in Hispanic Women*

**M Graves**, *Guideline for Medication-Assisted Treatment*

**Mary Elizabeth Grimaldi**, *Pre-Operative Checklist Compliance*

**Natasha Danielle Gultery**, *An Intervention Addressing and Improving Food Insecurity Screening in Older Adult Patients Diagnosed With Major Depressive Disorder*

**Shannon Lynn Havens**, *Quality Improvement Initiative to Reduce Abscess Packing*

**Amber Hernandez**, *Emergency Department Overcrowding*

**Dematria Pleshette Holbrook**, *A Nutritional Intervention in Wound Care*

**Jeanette Jackson**, *Improving the Intraoperative Anesthesia Handoff*

**Trenel Jackson**, *Implementation of a Lung Cancer Screening Program*

**Martha Johnson**, *Telehealth Weight Loss Program for Diabetic Patients in a Primary Care Setting in Texas*

**Sunghae Sandra Jung**, *Mammography Adherence in Women 40 to 75*

**Jenny Khan**, *Diabetes Foot Ulcer Risk Assessment: Utilizing a Screening Tool*

**Andrew Kosko**, *Development of a Clinical Practice Guideline to Prevent Post-Cesarean Surgical Site Infections*

**Suzanne Elizabeth Kraus**, *Code Shock Alert Implementation*

**Esther Kumar**, *Reduction of Cardiovascular Disease Risk Using a CV Bundle in a Community of Senior South Asians in Texas*

**Kiana Lacy**, *Diabetes Risk Bundle for African American Adults Living in a Rural East Texas Community*

**Jose Anselmo Lara**, *Provider-Led Education in the Urgent Care Setting to Improve Sexually Transmitted Disease Testing and Outcomes*

**Nickeya Laycock**, *Implementing a Transitional Care Discharge Bundle to Prevent Early Hospital Readmissions in Kidney Transplant Recipients*

**Oyetokunbo Lemoru**, *Utilizing Daily Mindfulness Training to Manage Stress in Adults Diagnosed With Chronic Conditions*

**Sheleta Lewis**, *Cardiovascular Wellness Assessment (Hypertension and Peripheral Artery Disease) in an Underserved African American Community*

**Rachel Mark**, *A "Walk in My Shoes": Behavioral Health Stigma Reduction Bundle*

**Sara Renee Martindale**, *Utilization of Text Message Reminders to Increase Outpatient Adult Psychiatric*

**Micky McDaniel**, *Guideline for Suicide Screening and Assessment for Acute Care Hospital Settings*

**Vanessa McDaniel**, *Reducing Polypharmacy in Geriatric Primary Care*

**April Renee Meras**, *Family-Based Intervention for Childhood Obesity*

**Ronald Meza**, *Reducing Readmissions in Heart Failure Patients*

**Henry John Mineros**, *Diabetes Foot Exams in Primary Care/Improving Outcomes*

**Sasha Morales-Otero**, *Urinary Tract Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance*

**Deanna Motakef**, *Improving Throughput With Early Identification of Needs*

**Jennifer Muniz**, *Access to Care in States With Full Practice Authority*

**Bonita Neumon-Owens**, *Evaluation of a Wellness Bundle: Acute Care Nurses*

**Marija Nielsen**, *Improving Adherence to AAP Guidelines Regarding a Watchful Waiting Approach for Acute Otitis Media in a Pediatric Urgent Care Setting*

**Relindis Nange Nsofon-Mutia**, *Improving Post-Hospitalization Nephrology Follow-Up for Acute Kidney Injury*

**Mfon Okon Ofong**, *Depression Screening in Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients*

**Kahura Olive**, *Hepatitis C Guidelines in Jail Settings*

**Clara Nkem Omolola**, *Improvement of Obesity Management in Primary Care*

**Roseline Onwuchuruba**, *Guideline for Diabetes Self-Management in Primary Care*

**Sandra Onwuka**, *Improving the Detection of Depression in a Primary Care Setting*

**Amanda Lynn Paradeaux**, *Overweight/Obesity Awareness*

**Hanh Phu**, *Developing HIV Care Reintegration Guideline in the Correctional Facility*

**Ashley Pineda**, *Improving Incident Reporting in Primary Care*

**Abimbola Popool**, *Guidelines for Suicide Risk Assessment and Referral in Correctional Facilities*

**Jeanine Price**, *Trauma-Informed Care in the Fertility Clinic Setting*

**Andrea Quintanilla**, *Screening Adolescents for Depression Using the PHQ9 Questionnaire*

**Rosa V. Rances**, *Improving Opioid Risk Assessment in Pain Management Practice*

**Lilia Rasul**, *Enhancing the Approach in Colorectal Cancer Screening in Primary Care Through Education*

**Michael Richards**, *Improving Depression Screening in a Men's Health Clinic: A QI Project*

**Karen Marie Robbins**, *Promoting Patient-Centered Pediatric Fasting Through Email Reminders*

**Mario Rodriguez**, *Implementing a Nursing Retention Bundle to Improve Nursing Retention and Nursing Satisfaction in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab*

**Katherine Sandlin**, *Improving Maternal Breastfeeding Knowledge: The Implementation of a Breastfeeding Bundle*

**Megan Margaret Sanford**, *Observation Versus Inpatient: Studying the Effect of Diagnosis-Specific Education on Pediatric Admission Classification*

**Lauren Michelle Schafer**, *Using Telehealth to Triage Pharyngitis in Pediatrics*

**Shannon Scolly**, *Preventing Opioid-Induced Pruritis Following Cesarean*

**Robert Simon**, *Suicide Assessment in Outpatient Behavioral Health*

**Torey Sippio-James**, *Impact of Legislative Policy on Maternal Mortality*

**Debbie Snodgrass**, *Improving Outcomes in Rheumatoid Arthritis: Implementing a Bundle Intervention into Practice*

**Ashley Snook**, *Improving Hydration in the Nursing Facility*

**Sarah Baguiwet Souffrant**, *Use of Procalcitonin as a Guide for Empiric Antibiotics in Adult Patients Admitted With COVID-19: A Quality Improvement Project for Antimicrobial Stewardship*

**Tabitha Dawn South**, *Addressing Nurse Leader Compassion Fatigue*

**Doretta Spates**, *A Mobile Health (mHealth) Intervention to Promote Physical Activity in African American Women*

**Shana Steege**, *Work-Related Injury Reduction in Surgical Area Nurses During Their First Year*

**Portia Stephens**, *Mobile Text Messaging Use in Hypertension Management*

**Annie Toms**, *Improving Power Drill Utilization for Performing Bone Marrow Procedures for Better Patient Outcome*

**Grace Ngozi Ukonu**, *Preventing Inpatient Falls by Adding Fall Video Education to the Existing Fall Prevention Program*

**Christine Marie Wade**, *Nurse Burnout Reduction Project*

**Shannon Warren**, *Care for the Caregiver: A Guideline Project*

**Ashley White**, *Quality Improvement of Site Selection for Clinical Trials*

**Davina Ashleigh Whitehurst**, *Reducing Medicated Related Falls in the Older Population*

**Nancy Wipf**, *Increasing Mental Health Screening Among Treated Rectal Cancer Patients*

**Renelle Ruth Woods**, *Heart Failure Follow-Up*

**Jessica Wright**, *LGBTQ+ Inclusive Care*

**Hanna Zamani**, *Using Self-Blood Pressure Monitoring for Management of Hypertension: A Guideline Project*

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN KINESIOLOGY

**Neelam Ahuja**, *Amorphous Silicon Oxynitride Coatings for Craniofacial Implants Stimulates Osteogenesis via NRF2 Antioxidant Activity*

**Logan Moore**, *The Role of Muscle Damage on Joint Tissue*

**Andrew Oneglia**, *Partitioning the Role of Myocardial Steatosis on Left Ventricular Function*

**Brandi Stephens**, *Sympathetic Vascular Transduction and Sympathetic Reactivity to Muscle Metaboreflex Activation in Young, Non-Hispanic Black Women*

**UTA** College of Nursing and Health Innovation

## EARN YOUR MSN IN PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH

Now available both  
online and in person

UTA's MSN in psychiatric mental health program is designed to train students to develop skills to apply neurobiological and psychosocial theories in providing compassionate and collaborative mental health care.

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# NEW SMART HOSPITAL OFFERS NURSING STUDENTS THE FUTURE

By Ellen Rossetti



is an investment in the quality of preparation we provide our students by exposing them to lifelike, real-world situations and scenarios. As a result, we are poised to play a significant role in the future of health care in Texas and beyond.”

Construction began in 2021 on the new \$76 million, 150,000-square-foot facility (the Smart Hospital takes up 33,000 square feet within). The building opened for classes in January 2023, and officials hosted a ribbon-cutting event and community tour on April 14.

Before the new facility opened, students practiced their nursing skills and simulation education in two separate buildings: a 13,000-square-foot Smart Hospital facility that opened in 2007 and a 13,000-square-foot Smart Lab that opened

in University Hall in 2015. Now, the new Smart Hospital brings those learning experiences into one space with 58 beds for student training, 25 virtual-reality headsets for immersive learning, a

120-seat classroom, and an apartment-style learning space to practice such services as home health and hospice care.

“We produce higher-quality simulation in this new space,” says **Jennifer Roye**, assistant dean of simulation and technology in CONHI, the largest producer of baccalaureate-educated nurses in Texas and one of the nation’s largest nursing programs. “Therefore, when students go out to practice, they are safer and more confident.”

The building, which came to fruition with the help of a \$1 million matching gift that UTA received from the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation, enables interdisciplinary education between UTA’s School of Social Work and CONHI. Plans are underway for even more collaborations throughout the campus and community.

“In the long run, we are going to see better-prepared graduates because they are going to have an opportunity to do more to challenge themselves to become better practitioners in that environment,” says **Donna Cleary**, clinical assistant professor in CONHI. “It’s going to improve their critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills, which will make them better nurses at bedsides when they graduate.”

Walking through UTA’s new building, students can see “learning on display” by looking into glass-

walled classrooms. Nursing students in the Smart Hospital advance from clinical foundations classes to more sophisticated scenarios with mock patient rooms and high-tech equipment in upper-level classes.

In Cleary’s class on nursing care for adults, students in an “escape room” unlock clues before moving to each step of patient care—such as obtaining

In The University of Texas at Arlington’s new School of Social Work/Smart Hospital building, the future of nursing is unfolding with the help of cutting-edge technology.

With virtual-reality headsets strapped across their eyes, nursing students tend to a computer-generated patient who is in cardiac arrest. In an IV training lab, students palpate veins and insert needles in lifelike arms called task trainers to practice drawing blood and starting IVs. In a mock labor and delivery room, nursing students help a life-sized pregnant manikin on the verge of giving birth. When the newborn manikin emerges in the room, the students dry off the computerized infant, spurring its cry.

For years, UTA’s College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI) has taught its nursing students with simulation education, using medical equipment, actors, and computerized manikins to train its students to handle simulated situations ranging from routine blood draws to life-threatening emergencies. But now, with its Smart Hospital having moved to a new, state-of-the-art building, CONHI offers its nursing students even more opportunities for hands-on experiences and individualized attention through enhanced clinical simulation education.

“The Smart Hospital unites CONHI’s world-class faculty and lauded research programs to develop innovative teaching strategies incorporating the latest state-of-the-art clinical simulation technology to prepare a well-qualified health care workforce,” says **Elizabeth Merwin**, dean of CONHI. “Investing in clinical simulation training



Nursing students hone their skills in the Smart Hospital’s VR lab.



Students prepare for their first immersion in simulation experience.

oxygen tubing after recognizing the simulated patient's oxygen saturation level. Although based on a game, the students' tasks are serious, and the skills they learn to transfer to the bedside are indispensable.

"It provides a different challenge," says Cleary. "They have to brainstorm within their team to figure out who is going to do what next, so they do a lot of troubleshooting at the bedside. It helps with team-building, and it also reinforces the need to assess before you do something. That helps build their communication skills."

In **Nicole Hawkins'** clinical nursing class on caring for patients with complex needs, senior students perform a head-to-toe assessment on a high-fidelity manikin that simulates a critically ill patient. From bowel sounds to heart and lung sounds, the audio from the computerized manikin

**"The students have expressed to me how much they love being at the Smart Hospital."**

sounds realistic, says Hawkins, a clinical assistant professor. Before entering the hospital setting and practicing skills on real-life patients, students in the Smart Hospital are able to practice IV medication administration, tracheostomy care, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation on simulation equipment, she explains.

"The students have expressed to me how much they love being at the Smart Hospital," says Hawkins. "It's the highlight of the semester for



Nursing student demonstrates the placement of a nasogastric tube.

them. They can take the knowledge they receive in the classroom and apply it in hands-on scenarios. If they're giving CPR to a manikin, for example, they can get real-time feedback on their technique."

A class focused on nursing care for infants and children sets the scene of a single-patient pediatric hospital room as realistically as possible—right down to the Barbie doll next to the child-sized manikin or the One Direction T-shirt on a preteen manikin. As a nursing student assesses the patient, the manikin responds in a child's voice, and an actor posing as the child's guardian answers questions. Nursing students learn how to use the clues in the room—like the T-shirt or doll—to ease the fear that children may feel about being in a hospital, says **Juanita Nickols**, clinical assistant professor and lead instructor of the class.

"The things in the room help the student spark a conversation and talk to the child in age- and developmentally appropriate ways," Nickols states.

The nursing students put their stethoscopes on the chest of an infant manikin and hear the baby's heartbeat, which is faster than the average adult heart rate. They measure the length of the infant manikin and its head circumference when the manikin is lying down, waving its arms and legs as babies often do during their exams.

"It is giving them a huge head start before they go into the hospital and have to do it for real," Nickols says.

**Efferata "Effe" Tigabu** ('23 BSN) agrees. She graduated last spring after taking simulation

classes in both the former Smart Hospital and the new building. When she walked into her clinical rotations during her nursing training, she discovered that the realistic simulations in the Smart Hospital had helped prepare her for speaking with real-life patients.

"I am more comfortable in assessing them and being confident in what I'm looking for," says Tigabu, who also used the new facility's study spaces outside of class time.

In the Smart Hospital, instructors watch from behind a two-way mirror as students complete simulated exercises with manikins or actors, then debrief them after. The experience gives students a sense of autonomy, says **Alyssa Peterson**, clinical assistant professor and lead instructor for the course in which students participate in a simulated delivery of a baby.

"It's a big confidence boost for them to be able to say, 'I know more than I think I do. I'm putting these pieces together.' It is really cool to see those light bulbs go off with them," Peterson says. "Time and time again, I think they surprise themselves more than any of us. We all know they can do it."

So what's next for the future of the Smart Hospital? Roye says that CONHI plans to collaborate with UTA's computer science faculty and CONHI's

Center for Rural Health and Nursing to create its own virtual reality scenarios focused on rural health care. Already, students use virtual-reality headsets for a clinical foundations course, a mental health nursing course, and another nursing course in which they respond to a mock "code" situation.

Roye also hopes to increase opportunities for interprofessional education across campus and in the community. An apartment-style space in the new facility allows nursing and social work students to practice care for home health visits. Kinesiology students studying to be athletic trainers have used Smart Hospital equipment to learn how to perform CPR and use an automated external defibrillator. Those collaborations will continue as athletic training students learn how to start IVs, listen to heart and lung sounds, and conduct orthopedic exams, says Roye.

Also in the future, CONHI plans to add a Mobile Simulation Unit to take its simulators on the road to educate other nurses in rural communities (read more about the effort on page 19).

Altogether, participating in realistic simulations gives students a safe place to practice skills before they care for patients in their careers.

"That all leads to better care in the community," Roye says. "Everyone benefits from this."



UTA administrators, local leaders, and UT System representatives officially open the new building.



## SMART HOSPITAL OPENS DOORS FOR EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION

Faculty and staff from CONHI welcomed their counterparts from UT Tyler's School of Nursing (SON) this summer at the Smart Hospital to engage in collaborative opportunities and enhance regional simulation education excellence.

"The event provided an opportunity for CONHI simulation faculty and UT Tyler's SON faculty to review where we've been and where we are going with simulation technology," says CONHI's **Lori Camperlengo**, clinical assistant professor of simulation. "Both institutions are working to provide state-of-the-art technology and learning opportunities for our undergrad nursing students and those in more rural communities."

The collaboration between UTA and UT Tyler was spearheaded by Camperlengo and Susan McBride, SON's associate dean of research. Through evolving conversations, the two realized that their respective institutions had many similar projects planned, including innovations in simulation-based education and integration of electronic health records (EHRs) in simulation.

"**Mari Tietze**, **Lori Camperlengo**, and **Jennifer Roye** have facilitated partnerships and collaborative discussions on how best to implement EHRs in simulation centers with academic EHRs," says Dr. McBride. "We also wanted our SON honors students to experience the Smart Hospital and collaborative research conversations between partnering organizations."

The UT Tyler faculty, staff, and students also toured the new Multi-Interprofessional Center for Health Informatics. Dr. Tietze, CONHI's Myrna R. Pickard Endowed Professor and director of the health informatics master's and graduate certificate programs, provided an update on EHR implementation within UTA's curriculum and her research. Tietze and McBride were lead principal investigators in 2015 and 2020 Texas statewide studies of nurses' experiences with EHRs.

"There are gaps in evidenced-based approaches to implementing and developing academic EHRs," says McBride. "Our findings indicate challenges with nurses' experiences using EHRs, and this transcends into important academic roles to begin to address some of the challenges. Simulation-based education with academic EHRs is a great place to lay a foundation for best practices."

As one of 14 institutions endorsed by the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning and one of only 26 around the world endorsed for its delivery of high-quality simulation, the Smart Hospital positions UTA to be a regional leader in nursing education and collaboration.

Continuing educational collaborations through open communication and sharing of ideas are ways to leverage the power of the UT System for the benefit of both faculty and students.

## SLAM LEANS INTO LOCAL SPORTS OPPORTUNITIES

The gloves are off in a bout to become the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex's undisputed leader in sports management. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas has the third-largest concentration of sports-media-entertainment jobs in the country, with a third of them located in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington area. Recognizing both the local need for education in the field and an opportunity to provide it, the College of Nursing and Health Innovation's Department of Kinesiology threw its hat in the ring.

Founded in 2018, the Sports Leadership and Management Program (also known as SLAM) prepares students for sport and physical activity program leadership in both public and private settings. Students choose one area of concentration within the program, either coaching and youth sports or sports leadership. The curriculum examines sports in the contexts of historical and contemporary culture.

SLAM also emphasizes hands-on experiences for participants.

"With the SLAM program being very new, the number of students who will need a senior year internship is increasing. To place students in the areas of sports leadership and management that they are most interested in, we are always looking for new partnerships," says **Alison N. White**, clinical assistant professor and director of the BA in kinesiology program.

"Community partnerships are key to introducing SLAM majors to authentic work experiences that provide insight into the inner workings of a profession while receiving guidance and inspiration from seasoned professionals."

One such community partner is the Travel and Sports Legacy Foundation (TSLF), a 501c3

charitable extension of the Arlington Convention and Visitors Bureau. This collaboration not only supports student success, but also serves the local community.

"In partnership with tourism employers and education officials, the foundation supports the community by providing scholarships, financial mentoring, and job assistance services to underserved youth and adult students interested in careers in travel, tourism, and sports industries," says Mary German, chief operating officer of the Arlington Convention and Visitors Bureau and TSLF's executive director.

According to her, TSLF has provided over \$7,700 in scholarships and mentoring program assistance to four SLAM students since 2021.

"We are grateful to partners like TSLF for the variety of ways they support our program, our students, and our community," says Dr. White. "These partnerships allow our majors to build their resumes, network with other professionals, and develop confidence in their abilities to contribute to and succeed in the profession."

Think your business or organization could be a contender for a SLAM community partnership? Reach out to White at [alison.white@uta.edu](mailto:alison.white@uta.edu) for more information.



Alison N. White at CONHI's Commencement in Globe Life Field.

## RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE GAINS MOMENTUM IN YEAR TWO

Raising awareness about the unique challenges involved with rural health care and educating individuals on how to implement solutions were the goals of the Center for Rural Health and Nursing's (CRHN) Second Annual Rural Health Conference, held Oct. 4-5, 2023.

Established in 2021, CRHN strives to improve access to health care in rural communities and to partner with providers to improve outcomes of care regardless of patients' locations. Its annual conference is one of the many ways the center prepares health care professionals with the skills they need to effectively address health care issues in rural communities.

"The Rural Health Conference prepares people for the future because you have to be aware of issues to anticipate needs and implement solutions," says **Aspen Drude**, CRHN manager. "The more original ideas we have, the more of a chance we have of finding unique solutions to the struggles the rural communities face."

Guests attending the conference included UTA faculty, staff, and students; staff members of rural health organizations such as the Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals, the Rural Nurse Organization, and the National Rural Health Association; rural health researchers from educational institutions; and rural hospital workers (CNOs, RNs, LVNs, and APRNs). The two-day event took place on the UTA campus.

"The focus for this year's conference was to identify challenges in rural Texas health care and propose solutions for those problems through research and innovation," says Drude.

Guest speakers, UTA professors, and staff members highlighted rural health care concerns such as mental health in rural America, rural emergency hospital designation, and rural obstetric care. CONHI's **Zhaoli Liu** led one of the conference's breakout sessions to discuss rural racial disparities in mammography screenings and breast cancer outcomes.

Scan here for more information:

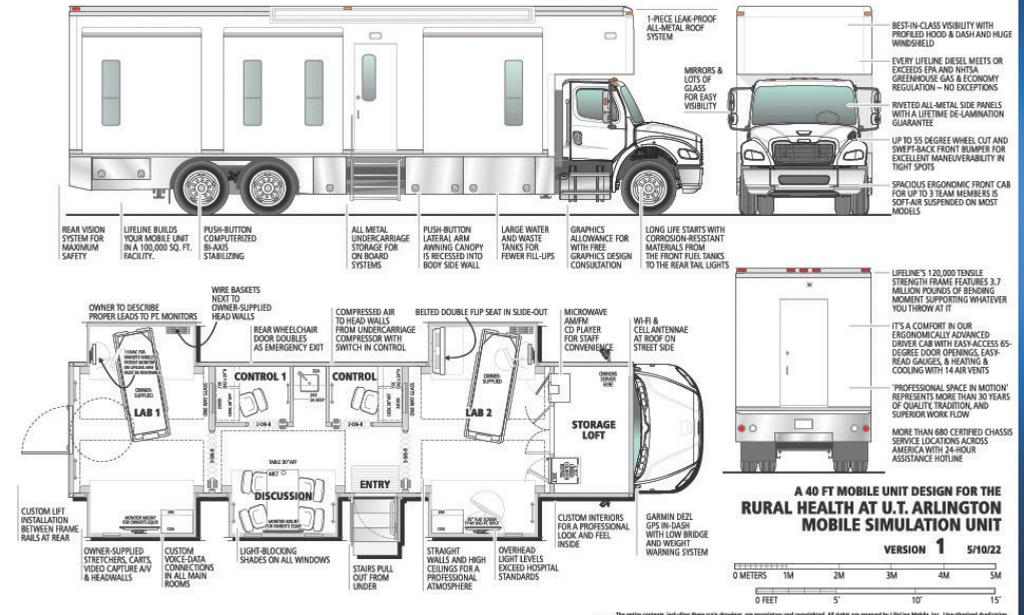


Image provided by LifeLine Mobile.

## SIMULATION TRAINING FOR NURSES IN RURAL AREAS

The University of Texas at Arlington's Center for Rural Health and Nursing (CRHN) is ready to open doors to the future of rural health care. Its Mobile Simulation Unit is a new way the center will continue striving to achieve its mission of improving access to health care in rural communities, ultimately improving patient safety and outcomes of care.

The Mobile Simulation Unit is a 40-foot simulation-equipped RV that provides simulation opportunities to nursing students and nurses in rural communities around Texas.

"Oftentimes, there are limited resources for simulation education at our rural partner sites," says **Jennifer Roye**, assistant dean for simulation and technology. "This unit will enable us to take high-fidelity simulation training to the site, providing our students in rural communities with the same experience as our students near campus."

The unit also allows rural students to receive training on procedures and other high-acuity, low-frequency events such as obstetric emergencies

and surgical complications. The simulations facilitate students' success by providing a safe environment to practice and learn in realistic scenarios before they enter the workforce. This enhances their readiness and leads to improved patient safety and outcomes.

"There is data that shows that simulation enables nurses to feel more comfortable in their jobs and better at skills they may only need occasionally," says **Aspen Drude**, CRHN manager.

The Mobile Simulation Unit will offer an extensive list of training simulations and scenarios for students and will utilize manikins. The CRHN worked with the Smart Hospital and the College of Engineering to develop the mobile unit's VR experiences.

"This type of training delivered to our rural communities can help reduce the health care disparities experienced by those in the community, such as access to specialty care," says Roye.

The Mobile Simulation Unit is expected to arrive on the UTA campus in summer 2024.



CRHN staff members attend the 2023 Rural Health Conference.

## EASING THE TRANSITION WITH DEUs



The transition from the classroom to professional practice is a major challenge in nursing. According to a pre-pandemic statistic from *ISRN Nursing Journal*, more than 30% of nurses leave the workforce within five years of graduation. UTA faculty

members are working to address this crisis by developing a new Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) program.

DEUs better prepare nursing students by giving them an opportunity to interact more closely with nurses who are assisting patients. Such nurses take more ownership of the students' development and offer greater engagement.

"The greatest benefit of DEUs is the sense of belonging that students feel on these units, which translates to greater connections to the profession, their patients, and the health care organization," says nursing Associate Professor **Meagan Rogers**. "Addressing the transition to the work is a critical

first step in meeting the growing workforce demands of the nursing profession."

Additionally, licensed nurses supporting DEUs report that working with students sharpens their own clinical skills, as they often return to the literature to explain patient care rationales.

"Our initial findings yielded several interesting outcomes: a realistic view of what nursing is really like, enjoyment of a one-to-one relationship between the preceptor and student, and growth and learning," notes Dr. Rogers. She and the other researchers are partnering with Medical City Healthcare for the program.

Besides increasing nurse retention, the initiative is designed to improve patient outcomes.

"When nurses know their patients and feel equipped to provide safe care, patients do better," says Rogers. "Students working in DEUs benefit from a more realistic view of the daily work of nurses, a stronger relationship with their assigned nurses, and a better understanding of patient care on their assigned units."

## SIGMA THETA TAU POSITIONS STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS



*Ceil Flores welcomes a Sigma Theta Tau inductee.*

Dedicated to nursing excellence and scholarship, the international nursing honor society Sigma Theta Tau strives to share its vision that connected and empowered nurses transform

global health care. The Sigma Theta Tau chapter at UTA was founded on May 23, 1980, and now has more than 800 members.

"Sigma Theta Tau provides nurses in all areas and stages of practice the opportunity to serve our profession, extend our reach, deepen our practice and knowledge, and be bold in our service to our community on both the local and international levels," says **Ceil Flores**, clinical associate professor.

By promoting leadership, mentorship, and a

commitment to nursing values, Sigma Theta Tau empowers students to not only excel academically, but also to develop meaningful professional skills that impact their nursing careers. Members benefit from numerous resources, including access to professional development courses, top-ranked peer-reviewed nursing journals, career advisors and mentors, and job postings.

The Sigma Theta Tau chapter at CONHI established four endowments to support undergraduate, master's, and doctoral nursing students, along with faculty interested in research activities.

"Students join an elite group within the nursing profession dedicated to excellence in scholarship and philanthropy at all levels," says Antay Waters, president of the Delta Theta chapter.

Sigma Theta Tau looks also good on a resume.

"As the only internationally recognized nursing honor society, Sigma Theta Tau is a name associated with excellence to employers," says Dr. Waters.



*Kourage Health aims to improve patient outcomes through exercise.*

## FITSTEPS IS NOW KOURAGE HEALTH PROGRAM

After a two-year pandemic-related hiatus, a beloved community health program is back in action at UT Arlington.

Formerly known as FitSTEPS, the newly rebranded Kourage Health Program provides no-cost medical exercise programs to community members with cancer. (The "K" in Kourage is in homage to program founder Gary Kimmel.)

But while the name may have changed, the goal of the program remains the same. Kourage Health is committed to improving patient outcomes through the power of movement. CONHI staff and students prescribe medical exercise to participants as a vital part of their care plans, as it provides a host of benefits that improve physical function, boost the immune system, increase energy levels, and elevate spirits. Patient engage in bespoke exercise regimens that incorporate equipment like treadmills, ellipticals, hand weights, and balance balls.

Additionally, Kourage Health at UTA has a special focus on cancer patients, offering a community space not only for exercise, but also for social support and fellowship with others. For patients to participate in the program, they must receive a referral from their physician—preferably at the time of diagnosis—to begin medical exercise before or while undergoing treatment.

With the spring 2023 relaunch came a new program head: kinesiology Assistant Professor **Liao Yue**.

"I think supporting this program really shows our commitment in community involvement and community health and connects our students with our community members," Dr. Liao says. "I believe this really echoes UTA's strategic plan, where the guiding principles include community engagement and student success."

In addition to providing high-quality exercise programs to patients in the community, Kourage Health is preparing public health and exercise science students for their futures through relevant internship opportunities. Public health students serve the program in a community outreach capacity, while exercise science students experience the hands-on application of an advanced online Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer Program from the American College of Sports Medicine.

The Kourage Health Program aligns well with another offering from the American College of Sports Medicine: the Exercise is Medicine Program. Kourage Health provides students the opportunity for real-life implementation of Exercise is Medicine concepts. In fall 2023, the Department of Kinesiology hosted an Exercise is Medicine Week to promote the program and its value to both students and patients.

[Scan here for more information on Kourage Health:](#)





## BIRTH EXPERIENCE PROVIDES INSPIRATION

**Efferata Tigabu** was born at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas shortly after her parents emigrated from Ethiopia. That early experience had a profound impact on Tigabu, who earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing last May. She credits her mother's descriptions of the "holistic and collaborative" care they received at Parkland as her inspiration for pursuing a career in nursing.

"We had no idea what real health care was like," she says. "They all treated us so well. The care we received there single-handedly redefined health care to my family. I thought about studying to become a doctor, but nurses are the most connected with people. I decided nursing is what I wanted to do."

At UTA, Tigabu became a student leader, serving as president of the Health Innovation Constituency Council, site leader for The Big Event volunteer day, and regional director for the Texas Nursing Students Association.

She also spoke at Dream Makers, an annual fundraising gala for CONHI, thanking the donors who had provided scholarship support to students like her.

"Being a first-generation college student, I was experiencing something new, and the fear of being in debt terrified me," Tigabu said at the gala. "Seeing these scholarships that were awarded to me by altruistic UTA nursing donors felt like someone had just lifted a weight off my shoulders. The support in my academic endeavors means more to me, and students like me, than you could ever know."



## KIANA LACY WANTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Kiana Lacy** discovered the College of Nursing and Health Innovation through her mother, who enrolled and graduated there at age 50.

"I was impressed with UTA offering degree programs for different lifestyles," Lacy says.

Shortly after graduating in 2010, she was diagnosed with idiopathic intracranial hypertension.

"The high pressure obstructed blood flow to my eyes, and I was diagnosed as legally blind. Though wanting to work again, I realized that due to perceptions about disabled individuals, the most effective way for me to serve the nursing profession would be through education."

In fall 2018, Lacy enrolled in CONHI's Master of Science in nursing administration program.

"Despite many people telling me I'd probably fail, I persevered," she says. "UTA's Student Access and Resource Center, which equips disabled individuals with equitable accommodations to access education, really helped."

In 2021, she chose to continue her educational journey at UTA and began work on her doctorate.

"CONHI professors challenged students to identify and mitigate gaps in the literature, delivery of care, leadership, and policy," Lacy says. The fact that African Americans are twice as likely to die from Type 2 diabetes (T2D) than other individuals spurred her into action.

"My doctoral project's aim is to implement strategies that delay the onset of T2D in this population."



## RETURNING STUDENT VALUES CONHI'S FLEXIBILITY

For her educational journey, **Amber Casarez** chose UTA, graduating in 2019 with a BSN. In 2021, she returned to earn her MSN in Adult-Gerontology NP and has now embarked upon her PhD in nursing.

"My experience at UTA has given me an excellent academic background necessary to prepare me for my professional roles," Casarez says. "I couldn't have asked for a better university to prepare me while transitioning from an RN to a BSN to an NP and, now, to a PhD."

Casarez praises UTA for its student-centered focus.

"When performing research as a new RN with less than six months' experience, I decided to earn a BSN," she recalls. "Other colleges varied in flexibility and cost, but UTA met all my criteria, providing the flexibility to work as an RN to provide for my family while completing online classes at my convenience—and at an affordable cost."

After completing her master's degree, she decided to pursue her options in nursing research.

"Though I'd considered other schools, UTA offered me the best flexibility and affordability for obtaining my doctorate," says Casarez. "I'm able to work as a full-time nurse practitioner while completing hybrid classes. I'd encourage anyone pursuing an undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral nursing degree to apply to UTA!"



## PRE-MED LEARNER READY FOR HER CLOSE UP

In addition to her role as a nursing student, **Leah Angelica Reyes De Leon** is making a name for herself on the small screen through her appearance on *The College Tour*, an Amazon Prime TV show.

The show's crew was on campus over the summer filming an episode about UTA. De Leon was a natural when it came to promoting the college. She chose its nursing program for two reasons: UTA is the No. 1 producer of nurses with bachelor's degrees in Texas and it offers supportive faculty and resources that ensure student success. De Leon—who's on the pre-medical track and aims to graduate *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's in nursing and a biochemistry minor in May 2024—took full advantage of those resources.

Her audition video for *The College Tour* covered campus life and its diversity, her academic achievements, and her nursing career opportunities.

"My strategy was being authentic, telling UTA's amazing story through my experiences and how UTA changed my life academically, socially, physically, and spiritually," De Leon says.

Filming *The College Tour* allowed De Leon "to reflect on my UTA life and enjoy sharing this big, once-in-a-lifetime experience filming with six of my best friends I met on campus in classes and organizations and at work."



## ATHLETIC TRAINER FINDS HOME AT AMAZON

After earning a Master of Science in athletic training from UTA in 2023, **Sara Isela Calzada** pursued her dream of helping others in a most unlikely place—Amazon, where she now works as an injury prevention specialist.

“My main role is educating associates about using proper body mechanics and leading injury-prevention projects. She is also a leader on the Workplace Health and Safety Team, which establishes and enforces a safe culture for the benefit of workers and the company.

Two things drove Calzada to enroll in CONHI's athletic training program: 1) her Arlington residency and 2) her conclusion after much research that she would receive the best education here “because of the excellent passing rates for the board of certification for athletic trainers and the various clinical rotations provided across the Metroplex.”

Those clinical rotations did indeed meet Calzada's expectations.

“The college gave me perfect opportunities to develop into a great athletic trainer,” she says. “I worked with high school and Division I collegiate athletes and in an orthopedic clinic. Practicing skills we learned in class and applying them through simulations and clinicals prepared me for my current role. Most importantly, though, forming connections with the professors, preceptors, and other health care professionals in my clinical rotations enabled me to explore my options for potential jobs.”



## CHADLACANE RODRIGUEZ IS LIVING HIS DREAMS

**Chadlacane Rodriguez** earned his master's degree in athletic training at UTA in 2023. He is now employed as a minor league athletic trainer for the Chicago Cubs in the Dominican Republic.

“My role with the Chicago Cubs is unique, as I work in professional baseball with kids ranging in age from 16 to 20 years old,” he says. “Working with our Dominican prospects is amazing since I get to see the difference in their styles of play, education, and culture. Working with the Cubs has given me with the perfect balance of helping professional athletes while playing a big role in their young lives and careers.”

Rodriguez's degree enabled him to not only step into a promising career, but also to move to another country.

“Living in the Dominican Republic has been a challenge and a great experience at the same time,” he says. “The Chicago Cubs are as invested in their athletic training staff as any other department and offer so many opportunities for growth and development.”

Rodriguez chose UTA's athletic training program because it gave him the various tools, connections, and opportunities he knew he would need to fulfill his goal of making a successful career in professional sports.

“The faculty collectively positioned me for success by giving me the autonomy necessary to become my own clinician,” he says. “I wouldn't be in this wonderful position without the skills I acquired and the connections I made through the faculty.”

## DREAM MAKERS RECOGNIZES THE IMPACT OF DONORS

Every year, the Dream Makers gala honors scholarship donors and their generous contributions to the educations and futures of UT Arlington's nursing, kinesiology, and public health students.

Since its inception in 2002, the program has raised over \$3 million for scholarships that benefit the academic careers of thousands of students. These students have gone on to impact the health and well-being of community members in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and beyond.

“Dream Makers connects donors with scholarship recipients, and reciprocal relationships form,” says **Ceil Flores**, clinical associate professor. “Donors learn how their generosity and financial support impact a student's success in school; students engage with the donors and learn more about the organization and the person or people the scholarship recognizes. A sense of gratitude permeates the event.”

Community partners and corporate sponsors such as Texas Health Resources, Medical City Arlington, and Cook Children's, to name a few, provide an exceptional in-person opportunity for scholarship



*Erin Carlson served as emcee for Dream Makers 2023.*

recipients to thank the donors for their generous financial contributions.

“Scholarships change lives,” says **Kim Siniscalchi**, professor of practice. “Many of our students have financial challenges and must make choices that will delay their educational journey and perhaps prevent them from returning to school. With the support of our donors, we have given thousands of scholarships to students over the years, and these students have gone on to make a big difference in our community.”

Scan here to contribute:



## GIFT WILL SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING TEACHERS

CONHI received a generous \$200,000 gift from AMN Healthcare in support of faculty development for nurses teaching in undergraduate and graduate programs. AMN Healthcare provides workforce management solutions for health care organizations.

“We are honored to support UTA's efforts to develop a more robust, diverse, prepared,

and dynamic faculty through professional development,” says Cole Edmonson, AMN Healthcare chief clinical officer. “This is a key step in producing the most clinically competent and prepared nurses that patients urgently need today and for years to come.”

Through the generosity of donors like AMN Healthcare, nursing faculty can receive support for additional training and professional development. For example, they can attend professional conferences, seminars, workshops, advanced courses, or pursue specialized certifications.

“AMN Healthcare's gift demonstrates its commitment to reducing the shortage of registered nurses and nursing faculty,” Professor of Practice **Kim Siniscalchi** says. “This gift comes at an important point in the college's strategic journey to further faculty development for innovative teaching strategies and academic excellence.”



*Kim Siniscalchi, Cole Edmonson, and Elizabeth Merwin.*

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