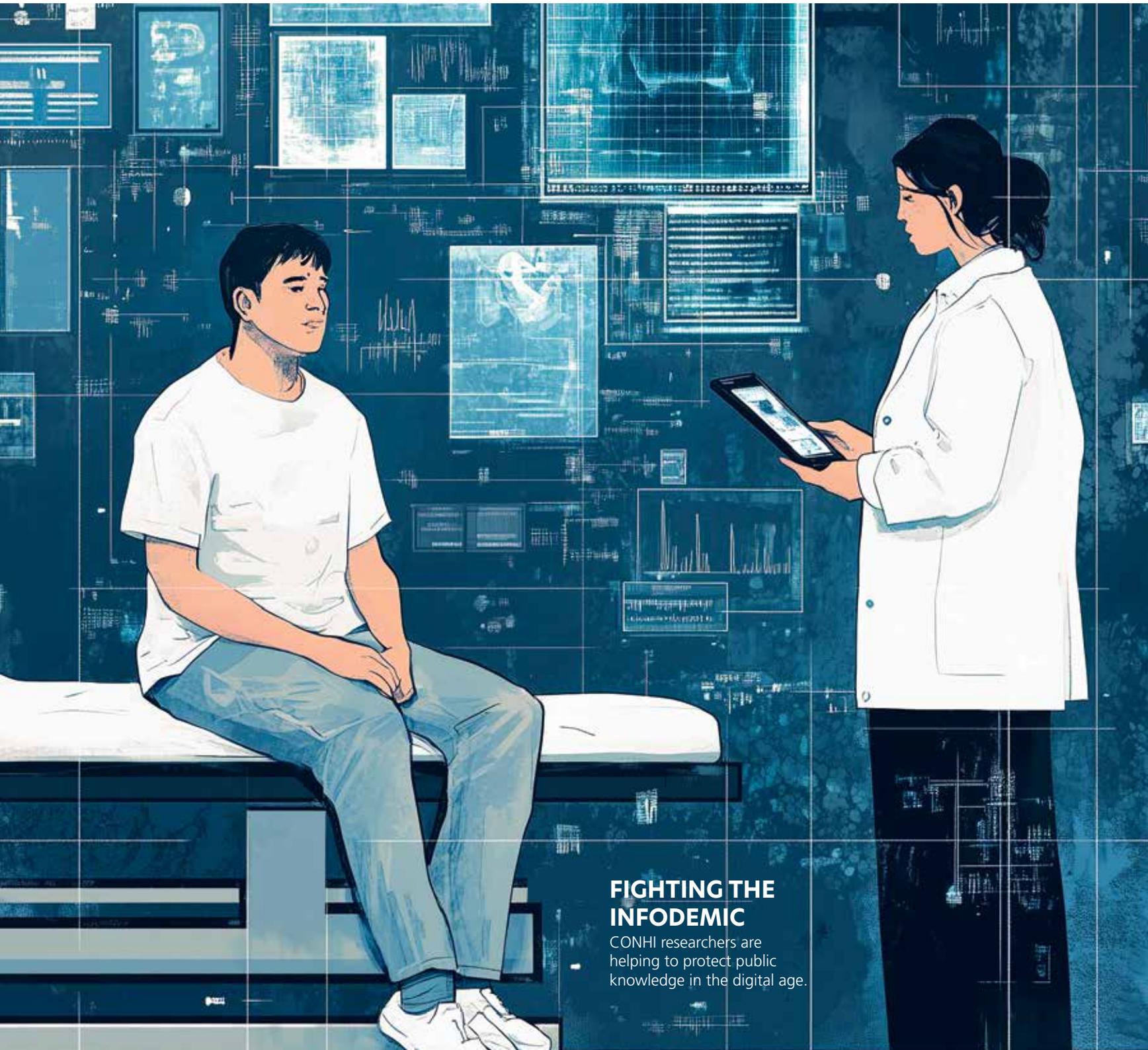


# UTAhealth <sup>2024</sup>

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON \ COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH INNOVATION



## FIGHTING THE INFODEMIC

CONHI researchers are helping to protect public knowledge in the digital age.



Nursing student Leah Angelica De Leon experiences a VR training module at the Smart Hospital.

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UTAhealth

COLLEGE OF NURSING AND  
HEALTH INNOVATION

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**UTA**  
College of Nursing and  
Health Innovation

# NOTES FROM THE DEAN



**“OUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE IS THE FOUNDATION FOR EVERYTHING WE DO.”**

In the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, we see outcomes improve in many ways: evolution, progress, and of course, innovation. As we reflect on our numerous accomplishments over the past year, I am inspired by our faculty’s and students’ capacity to adapt and pivot in the spirit of progress.

In spring 2023, we celebrated the opening of our new College of Nursing and Health Innovation Smart Hospital and School of Social Work. This world-class facility creates the very best environment for our students to learn and grow using the latest in simulation and virtual reality technology. In just one year, through partnership with the Center for Rural Health and Nursing, we expanded the capabilities of the Smart Hospital space to include a state-of-the-art immersive simulation room called the Igloo Vision, making CONHI the first in the country to use this technology for nursing education.

Additionally, leaders in our public health programs have taken the lead as agents of change in improving public health communication. The pandemic illuminated a critical need for better communication in the public health space, and our department leaders are partnering with UTA’s Department of Communication and Department of Modern Languages to strengthen communication efforts and close this gap in public health care.

We are also inspired by the courage and flexibility our students demonstrate in pursuing their dreams. From leaving the classroom for the ER or pivoting from physical therapy to an NFL team’s athletic training staff, our students are taking the leap to reach their goals.

In spring 2024, UTA President Jennifer Cowley unveiled another catalyst for change. *UTA 2030*, the University’s bold new strategic plan, is designed to focus on our shared dreams and bright future. Among the pillars of the plan are emphases on People and Culture, Student Success, and Community and Alumni Engagement. You’ll see our College’s contributions to these pillars of excellence come to life on the pages of this magazine.

We invite you to learn more about our efforts and achievements of the past year. We are grateful for your continued support and generosity as we continue to educate and prepare tomorrow’s health care workforce and advance research to improve health and the human condition.

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

## NEW FACULTY HIRES UNDERGRAD NURSING



**LAUREN GRANT**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**DEB HANSFORD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**SONIA JONES**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**ELIZABETH KREUZE**  
Assistant Professor



**KIRSTI LANDELS**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**MELISSA LEIKER**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**MONICA MASSEY**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**CHRISTA TELLER**  
Clinical Assistant Professor

## GRAD NURSING



**OLUWATOSIN ADEBIYI**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**AARON LANGFORD**  
Clinical Assistant Professor and  
PMHNP Program Director



**RENEE MANWORREN**  
Professor and PhD Program  
Director



**RHONDA WINEGAR**  
Assistant Professor

**DANIEL O’NEILL**  
Clinical Assistant Professor and  
FNP Program Director  
*Not pictured*

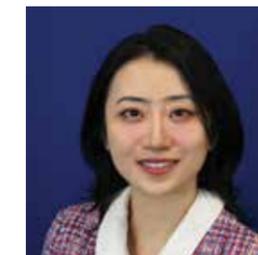
## KINESIOLOGY



**ANITA CORBITT**  
Clinical Assistant Professor



**DENISE HERNANDEZ**  
Assistant Professor



**FEINUO SUN**  
Assistant Professor



Kathryn Daniel

## A Celebration of Life

*The College of Nursing and Health Innovation honors Kathryn Daniel, beloved colleague and friend, who passed away on April 8, 2024.*

A dedicated nurse and scholar, Kathryn Daniel joined CONHI in 2007 and worked in gerontological nursing for more than 35 years. During her career as a nurse practitioner, she practiced in geriatric primary care, long-term care, home-based primary care, and assisted-living facilities. Before becoming a nurse practitioner, she was a critical care nurse and administrative supervisor for one of the largest hospitals in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

A native of North Texas, Dr. Daniel earned a bachelor's degrees in sociology and nursing from Baylor University, a Master of Science from Texas Woman's University, and a PhD in nursing from UTA. Her research in gerontology focused on patient safety for older adults, cardiac rehabilitation, palliative care, and an analysis of the present and future needs for nurses. Recognizing the need for more skilled professionals to care for older adults, the Deerbrook Charitable Trust gave UTA a transformational gift that helped Daniel launch a new graduate-level gerontology health care certificate program for health care professionals who work with adults 65 and older.

Daniel was well-known throughout the community and at UTA and for her professional collaboration with community partners and departments around campus. Since 2015, she led UTA's SmartCare program, a collaborative project with the College of Engineering that develops technology to improve the independence, quality of life, and health of the elderly and those with disabilities.

Her devotion to enhancing the quality of health and nursing led to her induction to the American Academy of Nursing's 2019 Class of Fellows and her selection as Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing by the National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence. In 2020, Daniel was recognized by the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association for Excellence in Research. In 2022, she was inducted into the Dallas-Fort Worth Great 100 Nurses.

Daniel will be remembered as a dedicated researcher and tireless advocate for nursing education. She was also a remarkable nurse who will be remembered by her students, colleagues, and patients as someone who always went out of her way to help others and gave generously her time, dedication, and support.

## MORITZ CHAIR

*Paul Fadel appointed as the Moritz Chair in Geriatrics*

Paul J. Fadel—professor of kinesiology, associate dean for research, and director of clinical translational science in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation—was appointed the Moritz Chair in Geriatrics in January 2024. Dr. Fadel will hold this appointment for three years.

"I appreciate the support of the dean and CONHI Leadership in this appointment as the Moritz Chair in Geriatrics," says Fadel. "I look forward to advancing our research capacity and collaborations focused on investigating neural and vascular mechanisms contributing to cardiovascular disease risk, with an emphasis on aging as a primary risk factor."

Fadel, who joined CONHI in 2015, has an extensive research background, particularly in neural cardiovascular control.

"Dr. Fadel has been funded on extramural grants from 2004 to present that have resulted in 180-plus publications. His expertise in the area of neural cardiovascular control makes important contributions to human health and disease conditions such as heart failure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and cerebrovascular health," said Dean Elizabeth Merwin in an email announcement to CONHI faculty and staff.

The Moritz Chair in Geriatrics is a permanent endowment used for the benefit of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation. Fadel is excited to use this appointment to identify mechanisms related to the heightened cardiovascular disease risk with age. This will facilitate the Moritz endowment moving closer to its goal of informing the field of geriatrics, aging, gerontology, while benefiting CONHI, UT Arlington, and the greater community.



Paul Fadel

## Rural Health Care Outreach

*CRHN teams increase community engagement to improve care*

Fostering positive community engagement builds lasting relationships between The University of Texas at Arlington and the communities it serves. The College of Nursing and Health Innovation's Center for Rural Health and Nursing (CRHN) focuses on building trust within rural communities through its various initiatives to increase access for prospective health care professionals and improve patient care outcomes.

"We are continuously improving the education we provide to new nurses regarding care and access to health care for our rural populations," says CONHI Dean and Executive Director of the CRHN Elizabeth Merwin.

The CRHN's community engagement efforts start with their liaison team, which works directly with each community by traveling to various rural counties in Texas. Engaging with the residents in person allows the team to meet the needs of rural and underserved communities and increase access to quality health care. Of the 186 rural counties in Texas, the liaison team has served 130.

"One of the highest needs in the rural and underserved communities is lack of access to health care," says SuLynn Mester, clinical assistant professor and rural liaison team member. "We have a profound opportunity to positively affect or help meet that need; however, to do that, we must first foster positive community engagement in these rural communities."

Similarly, the rural recruiting team travels throughout Texas to encourage an interest in health care careers in public schools. The team recruits from within each community and connects with high school students to foster that initial relationship.

"The rural recruitment team's role is to educate and inform future students about the allied health programs available through CONHI," says Celina Vasquez, rural recruiter for the Office of Enrollment and Student Services. "Our main focus is increasing the number, quality, and diversity of the student body in rural counties."

Additionally, the CRHN works to build community engagement through new certificate and professional development programs. The certificate is a virtual four-credit-hour interdisciplinary program, ideal for rural residents to complete in their local communities. The certificate is offered for undergraduate and graduate students wanting to learn

more about the skills needed to serve their rural communities and is ideal for new graduate nurses living or practicing in a rural area with up to two years of experience.

"UTA's accelerated online programs, rural clinical sites, and collaboration with rural communities will allow us to increase the overall number of allied health professionals trained while encouraging students to remain engaged in their rural communities as they develop the skills necessary to serve them," says Vasquez.

Establishing trust between CONHI and rural communities in Texas results in strong bonds between health care providers and patients. The CRHN's engagement efforts, developed through a rural lens, allow rural residents the opportunity to receive quality health care in their hometowns.

"Community engagement isn't just about connecting people to us; it's about building genuine connections with these rural communities," says Aspen Drude, CRHN manager. "By fostering these relationships, we not only serve but empower each community, allowing for sustainable community growth and improved patient care due to nurses being more comfortable and knowledgeable in their positions."

To learn more about all community engagement efforts and to stay up to date with the center's news, sign up for the new rural health quarterly newsletter by emailing [CRHN@uta.edu](mailto:CRHN@uta.edu).



A member of the CRHN recruiting team visits rural high school students.

## EYE HEALTH IN FOCUS

*Once-in-a-lifetime eclipse brings eye protection to the forefront*

The stars aligned at The University of Texas at Arlington Planetarium this spring for a panel discussion on the April 8 total solar eclipse. For “Exploring the Eclipse,” in partnership with *The Dallas Morning News*, UTA brought faculty experts together to discuss the history, science, and health effects of solar eclipses.

Moderated by Adithi Ramakrishnan, a science reporting fellow for *The Dallas Morning News*, “Exploring the Eclipse” featured Erin Carlson, a clinical professor in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, where she is the founding director of graduate public health programs. Her fellow panelists were Kimberly Breuer, associate professor of instruction in history; Yue Deng, a distinguished professor of space physics; and Levent Gurdemir, director of the UTA Planetarium and member of the International Planetarium Society.

On April 8, the path of the eclipse’s totality traveled directly over the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, making UTA a prime location to view this nearly four-minute phenomenon. This was the first total solar eclipse over North Texas since 1878 and will be the last one for another 200 years.

The eclipse attracted many spectators to the UTA campus, creating a need for education on eye protection and safety. Looking at the eclipse without proper protection can cause damage to both the eye’s cornea and retina.

“Researchers have found that public health education is effective at reducing visual morbidity during an eclipse,” Carlson says. “We know that education and having the right eyewear, the right solar filter, is really important.”



Eclipse panel at the Planetarium



## Dancing it Out

*Dance program helps overcome mental barriers*

At Colors of the Rainbow, a group of fifth and eighth grade students had the chance to show off their dance moves thanks to a program that developed their skills on and off the dance floor

Hosted on campus in May, the event was a finale to a 10-week dance workshop where students used ballroom dance as a vehicle to break down social barriers and encourage teamwork. Organized by Dancing Classrooms North Texas (DCNT), it was the first time Colors of the Rainbow has been to UTA since 2019.

UTA’s Department of Kinesiology has served as a sponsor for DCNT for nearly 20 years. Larry Nelson, associate professor of kinesiology and founder/director of the UTA Physical Activity Dance Group, has played a crucial role in the partnership, starting as a partner of the grant writing team that helped bring the Dancing Classrooms chapter to North Texas and progressing to his current role on the board of directors.

“More and more research is showing that dance activity reaches deep into those areas of the brain responsible for cognition and emotional expression,” Dr. Nelson says. “Studies conducted at UTA have identified some of the program’s social development benefits, physiological outcomes, and impact on students, teachers, and the community.”

Amanda Brown, site manager and teaching artist for DCNT, notes the physical benefits for the dancers as well.

“UTA has done studies on how dancing is highly beneficial for the children by testing their heart rates while they are dancing and found it has more benefits than many other gym activities in school,” Brown says.

The partnership has also created a way for UTA students to gain hands-on experience.

“We like to recruit our UTA kinesiology students to be ‘teaching artists’ in the program in order to help train them in both content and pedagogy and ultimately get their teaching hours,” Nelson says.

He believes the program’s impact will continue.

“Just as students learn how to read so they can read to learn, the students in this program learn how to relate so they can navigate people and the world effectively,” Nelson says.

## UTA’s Ironman

*Sports nutrition expert tackles his first triathlon*

For wheelchair athlete Tyler Garner, clinical assistant professor of kinesiology at The University of Texas at Arlington, a recent Ironman Triathlon—2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile run—was a challenge too irresistible to pass up.

Adaptive sports are nothing new for Garner. The UTA alumnus is a former Movin’ Mav wheelchair basketball player. The Movin’ Mavs provided an opportunity to meet and compete with “really extraordinary” athletes along the way.

“They motivated me and inspired me to really push my limits and see how far I can take myself,” he says.

The recent Ironman event in California, a punishing competition that included five hours of rain, was not Garner’s first foray into endurance races. He had previously completed a half Ironman in 2017 and also has competed in wheelchair racing. A full Ironman was his ultimate goal, and he achieved it after training for 10 months while also juggling his responsibilities as a husband, a father to a 5-year-old, and a teacher.

“My goal with training was to get to a point where I was confident I could finish the race,” he says. “I wasn’t trying to set any land-speed records.”

The training and competition will inform future lessons in his



sports nutrition class, and he applied some of what he teaches to his own training.

“We talk about concepts and theories, but at the end of the day, nutrition is very individualized,” Garner says. “It takes a lot of trial and error.”

By taking on the triathlon, Garner hopes he will inspire others, no matter their physical ability, to take on greater challenges.

“Maybe this is something that will encourage people to do something that scares them and really push themselves to see what they are capable of,” he says.

## Master of Science in Athletic Training

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# Success by Numbers

*Data-driven insights shape student recruitment initiatives*

To CONHI's Office of Enrollment and Student Success, success is a numbers game.

To understand the numbers—the stories they tell and the patterns they uncover—the team leans into data analysis to develop innovative strategies to recruit students to CONHI's programs.

Charles Johnson, director of recruitment for CONHI Enrollment and Student Success Services Academic Advising, believes in the power of data and incorporates it into his team's recruiting practices.

"Data on enrollment trends helps us understand the demand for nurses in the health care industry," says Dr. Johnson. "By analyzing this data, we tailor our recruitment strategies to attract more students to nursing programs, ensuring an adequate supply of nurses to meet health care needs from where the pipelines work—hospitals, clinics, and community colleges."

The strategies are certainly producing results. CONHI is now the largest producer of baccalaureate-educated nurses in Texas, with approximately 17,000 nursing students currently enrolled.

"Enrollment trends can reveal demographic shifts and preferences among prospective nursing students," Johnson says. "We can use this information to target our marketing efforts more effectively, reaching out to specific demographic groups or geographic areas where there may be a shortage of nurses."

In recent years, Johnson has expanded CONHI's recruitment team and developed strategic initiatives to reach prospective students in all regions of the state, including rural areas. He has also prioritized local partnerships, helping build connections with future generations of nursing professionals.

"Through MAH-X (Maverick Allied Health Experience), which works with local high schools to come visit our Smart Hospital and kinesiology labs, we have reached over 1,500 students since last year," says Johnson. "Many of those have applied to our programs."

Richard E. Polhamus, assistant director for CONHI Student Success Advising, has worked on the recruitment team since its inception.

"We started out with 17 events and have exponentially grown year over year. We conducted 254 events in 2023."

Looking ahead, Johnson remains confident in UTA's programs and is ready to reach even more prospective students.

"We have the best programs in the country, and it is my responsibility to let as many future students know that we are ready for them to be educated with us and to go out and serve Texans," Johnson says.



The OESS enrollment team



The OESS advisory team

## DIGGING DEEPER

*Advisory team committed to student success*

Student success is an essential guidepost that impacts every facet of UTA. The College of Nursing and Health Innovation's Office of Enrollment and Student Services (OESS) is committed to leading the charge.

Among those at the forefront of this initiative is Candice Calhoun-Butts, assistant dean.

"Students come with varied knowledge, skills, and experiences as well as diverse backgrounds and perspectives," she says.

"Tailoring services to meet all student needs is important, but to build a sense of community and care—engaging with students on a deeper level—is critical to student success."

To ensure successful outcomes for UTA students, the OESS team incorporates important themes into their decision-making, such as equitable outcomes, transformative learning, tailored support, and excellence. It also emphasizes the importance of technology.

"Technology has enabled us to minimize administrative burdens and allow more personalized experiences with students and prospective students," says Jeff Taylor, director of academic advising. "Various enhancements like our online degree plan, our student success platform, and our telecommunication and emailing system have created efficiencies and ultimately, enhanced advising."

Taylor's methodology is shared by the team.

"I take a holistic approach instead of prescriptive advising. I create a welcoming and safe space for my students to be expressive and share any information that they are comfortable sharing," says Courtney Jackson, academic advisor in kinesiology. "I also try to find commonality to aid bonding and remind the students that I am a professional advisor but still relatable as a person."

## CELEBRATING WOMEN IN SCIENCE

*Annual Women in Science Seminar hosts kinesiology legend*

Capping off Women's History Month in March, the College of Nursing and Health Innovation hosted its 3rd Annual Florence Haseltine Women in Science (WIS) Seminar.

"The seminar is one way to highlight the efforts and trajectories of women in fields of study associated with kinesiology and health professions," says event co-organizer and CONHI Associate Professor Priscila Tamplain.

This year's speaker was Beverly Ulrich, dean emerita in the School of Kinesiology at the University of Michigan.

"Dr. Ulrich is a giant in the field of motor development. She is also a legend in kinesiology, as she built the No. 1 school of kinesiology in the country," says Dr. Tamplain. "Her research directly affects protocols used in rehabilitation settings. Her talk enlightened students on how they can use research for application in their professions, such as physical therapy."

Dr. Ulrich's presentation also inspired faculty. "It's important to recognize the many successes of women in science, particularly for our junior faculty and trainees," says kinesiology Professor Paul Fadel, associate dean for research and director of clinical translational science.

"I'm grateful for the opportunities I've had, for all these twists and turns and changes of direction in my career because I think each one helped me do a better job in the next role," Ulrich said in her closing remarks.

The seminar is named in honor of Florence Haseltine. She is the Jenkins Garrett Professor and Presidential Distinguished Professor in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation and serves as the medical director for the North Texas Genome Center.



Florence Haseltine, Elizabeth Merwin, Paul Fadel, Beverly Ulrich, Priscila Tamplain



Nursing graduate students in Italy

## Nursing Abroad

*Grad nursing students gain a global view of health care*

For spring break 2024, students from the College of Nursing and Health Innovation traded flip flops and sunscreen for passports and notebooks—and made it a week to remember.

Twenty-one graduate nursing students from master's and doctoral programs spent their spring break traveling through Italy learning about health care and professional nursing from an international perspective. The group made stops at historic locations, including Rome, Florence, and Pisa.

Led by multiple CONHI faculty members, including Chair of Graduate Nursing Programs Ann Eckhardt and Clinical Assistant Professors Keri Draganic and Tamara Eades, the students embarked on a journey toward new perspectives.

"This unique short-term travel abroad opportunity allowed students to immerse themselves into Italian culture while learning about their national health system—Servizio Sanitario Nazionale—and investigating ancient Roman medical and health practices, the religious aspects of medicine, human anatomy, and the history of medicine," Dr. Draganic says.

Lindsey McDavid, a Master of Science in nursing education student and second-time participant of a UTA travel abroad experience, echoed the importance of attaining a global perspective of health education.

"Experiencing these cultures firsthand and learning about each country's health care system from local health care professionals has been invaluable for my current and future nursing practice," McDavid says. "I have developed cultural competence in a way that I cannot learn from a book or lecture."

Students' newfound global perspective will ultimately improve patient outcomes here at home.

"Through immersion activities and opportunities to meet with health care professionals in other countries, students gain valuable insight into health care delivery and cultural differences," Dr. Eckhardt says. "Texas is a majority minority state, and the United States will be a majority minority nation within the next 20 years. This demographic shift highlights the importance of cultural understanding."

The international trip was the fourth short-term travel abroad experience organized for CONHI graduate nursing students. Previous destinations included London, Switzerland, and France.



Ke'Sean Paire

The College Tour ▶



Leah Angelica De Leon

## Streaming Stars

The College Tour Stops at UTA

In February 2024, Amazon Prime Video users got a taste of what it's like to be a Maverick when the episode of *The College Tour* featuring UTA debuted. The team from the award-winning show collaborated with 20 students representing various UTA academic programs who shared their stories about life on campus.

The College of Nursing and Health Innovation was well represented. Among those featured was Leah Angelica De Leon, who completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in spring 2024 and was member of the Honors College during her time at UTA.

"Since entering UTA as a freshman nursing scholar, I've been met with supportive faculty, plentiful resources that cultivate student success, and a culture that empowers students to excel," said De Leon.

Also included in the episode was Ke'Sean Paire, a sophomore pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and member of UTA's Movin' Mavs wheelchair basketball team. Paire knew UTA was the right choice for him.

"Choosing a college and separating from my twin and family

was difficult. But I knew that UTA, with both access for people with disabilities and their amazing nursing program, was the perfect choice for me," Paire said.

*The College Tour* also highlighted research-focused academic journeys like that of Jeremiah Joseph, a junior pursuing a double major in clinical and applied physiology and philosophy.

"I'm a true believer in the fact that UTA provides equal access to opportunities for people of all backgrounds, especially when it comes to research," Joseph added.

The decision to promote student stories through *The College Tour* aligns with UTA President Jennifer Cowley's vision to strengthen UTA's brand awareness on a local, national, and international level. She believes that UTA students have created a special environment to thrive in and wants their stories shared.

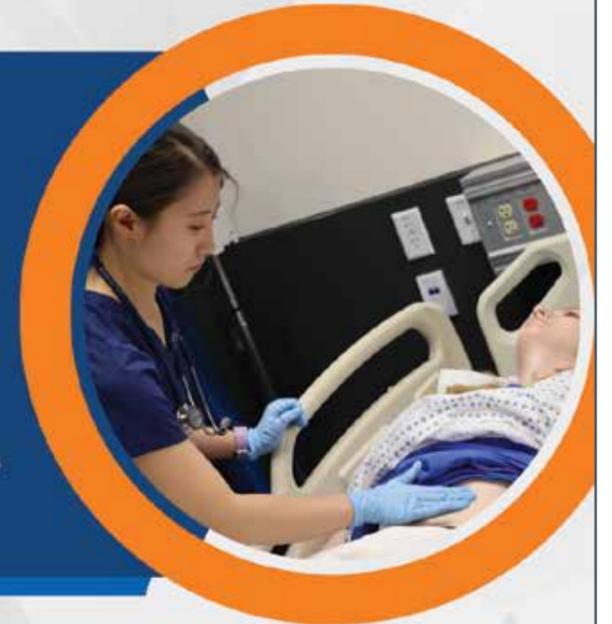
"I think what stands out for our students is their commitment to service," said Dr. Cowley. "They really want to create an impact in the world."

Stream UTA's episode of *The College Tour* now on Amazon Prime Video.

UTA College of Nursing and Health Innovation

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# CONHI happenings



HOMEcoming



BSN PINNING



## SNAPSHOTS OF ACHIEVEMENT

From spirited Homecoming events to bittersweet celebrations of lauded careers and the recognition of our incredible graduates, CONHI has charted a very busy, fun, and exciting year!



END OF SEMESTER AND RETIREMENT CELEBRATION



COMMENCEMENT



# *Fighting the* **INFODEMIC**

Interdisciplinary collaborations close the gaps in public health communication.

BY RACHEL BIGGS

*I*nfodemic.

While this term may be new to the mainstream, the concept behind it is acutely familiar to those working in public health spaces. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, public health professionals were keenly aware of the gaps in public health care communication, especially in vulnerable communities. The pandemic simply brought the problem front and center.

As defined by the World Health Organization, an infodemic is “too much information, including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments, during a disease outbreak. It causes confusion and risk-taking behaviors that can harm health. It also leads to mistrust in health authorities and undermines the public health response.”

## Fighting the **INFO**DEMIC

An infodemic can intensify or lengthen outbreaks when people are unsure about the appropriate actions to take to protect their health and the health of those around them. With the expansion of social media and internet use, information can spread more rapidly. This can help to fill information voids more quickly but can also amplify harmful messages.

“Nearly nine out of 10 adults in the United States struggle with health literacy which can impact their health outcomes, adherence to medication and treatment plans, and can increase the rates of health disparities in marginalized populations” says Brandie Green, clinical assistant professor and program director of undergraduate public health programs.

The College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI) is home to public health programs adjusting and adapting to face this challenge head on.

“The pandemic definitely taught us that we have a long way to go in the field of public health communication, but it also taught us ways to improve our techniques,” says Dr. Green.

### GRANTS, STUDIES, AND COURSEWORK

In the years since the pandemic, public health faculty members and communications professionals in UTA’s Department of Communication have led initiatives to strengthen public health communication efforts through grant-funded projects and updated and expanded coursework.

“The goal of teaching students how to effectively communicate public health information is to try to bridge the gap between some difficult medical jargon and the ability for a person or a population to achieve optimal health outcomes,” says Green. “In the program, the students learn how to use the content from a medical journal and make it digestible for a community with low literacy/low health literacy levels. We also review different types of health communication and what tools would be effective based on the audience.”



Karishma Chatterjee

Both Erin Carlson, associate professor and director of graduate public health programs, and Karishma

Chatterjee, associate professor of instruction, were part of a faculty cohort that secured a “Revising the Certificate in Medical Humanities” grant in June 2021, which was sponsored by National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 2022, Drs. Carlson and Chatterjee also received a Center for Research on Teaching and Learning Excellence grant to

codevelop an undergraduate interdisciplinary course titled “Communication and Health Disparities.” The course includes activities designed to improve student learning outcomes. Students are challenged to “describe and analyze how multiple communication factors affect health equity, including individual, social, historical, political, and cultural factors.”

“The idea to develop the course arose during the time both of us were on this team. I was already thinking about developing the course, and I asked Dr. Carlson if she would like to develop the course together and co-teach it,” says Chatterjee. “We did develop and co-teach it in spring 2023. I also taught the course in spring 2024 and the Department of Communication is offering it again in spring 2025.”

Additionally, faculty from CONHI’s Center for Innovation in Health Informatics worked alongside Chatterjee and others in the Department of Communication to secure a half-million-dollar Centers for Disease Control (CDC) grant: “CDC COVID-19 Disparities Work Plan UTA-MICHI Strategy 4 - Activity 1 Develop and Disseminate Health Literacy Materials,” sponsored by Tarrant County Public Health Federal Flowthrough. This grant was awarded to analyze the Tarrant County Hispanic community’s perceptions of the COVID-19 vaccine from June 2021 to May 2024. The study also examined the news preferences and information needs of this population.

The existing undergraduate public health communication course was refreshed in the wake of the pandemic and its impact on vulnerable populations.

“The undergraduate public health communication course focuses on providing students with effective communication tools to address barriers for marginalized populations,” says Green. “In the course, I highlight the high rates of low health literacy in vulnerable populations and equip the students with culturally competent approaches to implement tools that will increase the health knowledge in populations as well as promote healthy behavior changes.”

These courses hit home for public health educator LaKristie Davis. “During Dr. Green’s class, I realized that many experiences



LaKristie Davis



Brandie Green

I had normalized as a Black child growing up in a vulnerable area should not have been considered normal,” says Davis. “This realization inspired me to advocate not just for my community, but also for others who face similar disadvantages and unequal impacts.”

After completing her undergraduate degree in public health at UTA, Davis went on to enroll in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program.

“I was fortunate to serve as Dr. Green’s teaching assistant, then I became a graduate teaching assistant,” says Davis. “As the students were introduced to new ideas and concepts about vulnerable communities, I continued to learn alongside them.”

Davis completed her MPH degree and began work on her PhD in public administration and Public Policy in UTA’s College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs in fall 2024.

### CHWS AND HISPANIC POPULATIONS

Both in praxis and at the front lines in the war against health misinformation are community health workers, or CHWs. The American Public Health Association defines a CHW as “a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an



Denise Hernandez

unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.”

“Over the last four years since the pandemic, there has been a national spotlight on CHWs and the need for community-based collaboration to reach the most under-resourced communities,” says Denise A. Hernandez. “As a country, we learned some tough lessons during the pandemic. But on the positive side, people across the country now realize the value community health workers bring to public health teams.”

Long before the pandemic and since her arrival to the Metroplex, Dr. Hernandez has played a significant role in improving the visibility of CHWs in health care. In 2015, she worked with community leaders to establish the DFW Community Health Worker Association, a 501c3 nonprofit organization designed to promote professional development among CHWs and CHW instructors.

Recently, Hernandez was granted approval from the Department of State Health Services to form a CHW training

center at UTA through her research lab, providing opportunities for undergraduate students to apply their public health knowledge and CHW skills to an in-demand and growing vocation.

Hernandez’s work positioned her to play a critical role during the pandemic.

“During COVID, the association collaborated with community partners and academic institutions across Tarrant County to understand the concerns and questions the community had regarding COVID and the vaccine,” says Hernandez.

She notes that language barriers, immigration status, and lack of trust created obstacles for CHWs in the field during the pandemic. In 2023, Chatterjee and colleagues published an article in *Health Communication* on misinformation in Tarrant County’s Hispanic community that also supported these findings.

“Many participants reported they and people in their social networks came across a lot of misinformation and conspiracy theories on social media that may have increased mistrust in the vaccines,” says Chatterjee. “Thus, public health communicators have their work cut out in terms of trying to build credibility among the audience so community members will pay attention to information about diseases, novel health emergencies, and their management and prevention.”

Alicia Rueda-Acedo is an associate professor in UTA’s Modern Languages Department and a frequent CONHI collaborator on translation-related health care research and projects.

“There is an urgent demand for professionals in health care and human services who can deliver linguistically and culturally appropriate services to Spanish-speaking clients,” says Dr. Rueda-Acedo. “Proficiency in medical Spanish is a known factor that can improve patient outcomes, mitigate health disparities and risks, and ensure the safe and appropriate delivery of health care.”

As educators and researchers in UTA’s public health and communications programs continue to partner to better prepare students to face communication obstacles in the workforce, they are also challenged to construct innovative ways of evaluating and addressing the issues in a dynamic space.

Davis puts it best: “The learning never stops in this field.”



Alicia Rueda-Acedo

*Davis puts it best:  
“The learning never stops in this field.”*



Jill Whitfill, assistant professor of practice, monitors a manikin's vitals

# NEXT-LEVEL HEALTH CARE

Smart Hospital builds on a foundation of innovation.

BY DRU MURRY AND RACHEL BIGGS

Often attributed to Plato, the saying “necessity is the mother of invention” captures the essence of innovation. The College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI) Smart Hospital embodies this principle, demonstrating that necessity not only drives invention but also fuels continuous innovation, advancing health care education and practice to new heights.

“The health care space is in a constant state of change, and we have to find creative ways to keep up with the needs of a dynamic space,” says Jennifer Roye, assistant dean for simulation and technology.

Opening its doors in 2023, the UTA Smart Hospital provides students with opportunities to hone their skills through various types of simulation exercises. The 33,000-square-foot facility resides within the 150,000-square-foot School of Social Work and Smart Hospital Building, completing the health sciences quad on UTA’s southeast corner.

The Smart Hospital has been named as one of just 40 institutions worldwide endorsed by the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning for applying its Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice.

Since day one, the Smart Hospital has enjoyed best-in-class status, with amenities designed to advance nursing students’ competencies, including a virtual reality (VR) lab and multiple skills labs. Even still, in just a year’s time, CONHI has improved upon and expanded the College’s educational offerings and opportunities.

## THE LATEST INNOVATION

Perhaps the most ingenious adaptation to the Smart Hospital has been the installation of the immersive technology from Igloo Vision. Implemented in partnership with CONHI’s Center for Rural Health and Nursing (CRHN), the Igloo is a 13-by-13-foot virtual reality room that gives students an “immersive view or extended three-dimensional reality like that of a theater in the round,” says Roye.

## NEXT-LEVEL HEALTH CARE

While the Igloo is commonly used for training, CONHI is the first in the nation to utilize this technology for nursing education.

“Technology is fantastic, but if it doesn’t contribute to the learning objective, it is only bright and shiny. It’s all about the students and the outcomes,” says Roye. “I was confident the Igloo would be a game-changer.”

Of particular interest to Roye, Drude, and Elizabeth Merwin, CONHI dean and executive director of CRHN, is applying the Igloo’s functionalities to improve nursing education for health care providers in rural environments.

“There are 186 rural counties in Texas, with a combined population of nearly 5 million people,” says Aspen Drude, CRHN manager. “The CRHN was established to improve health care access and outcomes to those rural populations by addressing their unique needs and challenges. The Igloo allows us to address those challenges directly with our urban students.”

Enter Jill Whitfill, assistant professor of practice nursing. Whitfill joined the CRHN team in early 2024 to develop the Igloo’s training modules. She also has extensive experience in the field as a rural nurse.

“One reason education is so important for rural nurses is that they need to serve as generalists, not specialists. As such, they need to know a plethora of procedures,” says Whitfill. “Our Smart Hospital is advancing that needed education.”

The first operative scene simulated in the Igloo was in May.

“The module featured a patient suffering from a medical emergency brought into an operating room,” says Roye. “Accompanied by an instructor, five nursing students experienced a piece of realism.”

In June, just months after Igloo arrived on campus, the College won three awards at the InfoComm 2024 HigherEd Awards from the Higher Education Technology Managers Alliance (HETMA) for the integration of the Igloo in nursing education. CRHN staff accepted awards for best collaboration solution, best immersive experience, and AV award of the year.

“We are grateful to HETMA for recognizing our achievements in innovation,” says Dr. Merwin. “I am appreciative of and inspired by the CRHN and Smart Hospital staff for their efforts in bringing this vision to life.”

As they continue to develop training modules for nursing education, Roye and Whitfill hope to work with other disciplines in CONHI like kinesiology and public

health to develop Igloo-based immersive training programs.

The Igloo also opens opportunities for interprofessional education, including collaborations with the School of Social Work, the Department of Modern Languages, the College of Science, the College of Engineering, and more.

## ONGOING EXCELLENCE

### VR LEARNING LAB

Recent updates and adaptations complement a well-planned suite of existing technologies including VR, which can be an efficient and effective method to prepare nursing students to manage difficult-to-stage scenarios and practice communication and decision-making skills with patients.

“The mental health course seemed like the perfect place to start with the implementation of virtual reality,” says Roye. “The scenarios we used simulated difficult conversations with patients, such as a 15-year-old who had attempted suicide.”

Located on the second floor of the Smart Hospital, the VR lab is outfitted with 12 prefabricated spaces. Nursing students are equipped with VR Oculus Quest 2 headsets to complete the exercises, and monitors in the individual spaces show instructors or observers the student’s VR interactions in real time.

“Practicing these patient care situations in a safe place builds learner confidence before entering the real world,” says Roye.

### SKILLS LABS

Research indicates that only 9% of nurses prepared in the U.S. are ready for the job. The Smart Hospital is home to multiple adaptable skills labs and a home health suite designed to impact that statistic.

The majority of the Smart Hospital’s skills labs have glass doors to facilitate the idea of “Learning on Display.” These labs were designed to accommodate a comprehensive assortment of specialty skill instruction.

Patient assessment skills and psychomotor skills such as sterile technique, medication administration, and IV insertion are taught in the lab space. There are also open lab times when students may practice and get feedback from clinical instructors.

### MANIKINS

According to the Healthcare Simulation Dictionary by the Society of Simulation in Healthcare, manikins are “human patient simulators.”

The Smart Hospital is home to 74 manikins with various levels of physiologic functionalities and capabilities, including a manikin that can simulate childbirth.

Arguably the most well-known manikin in the Smart Hospital is Alex. He is an avid Texas Rangers fan who, when not on the job, can often be found in Roye’s office.

Alex closely mimics an actual patient. And like an actual

patient, Alex can answer probing questions regarding his symptoms so that nursing students can assess his condition and determine the proper course of action.

Alex can provide an impressive 70,000 responses to questions nursing students pose about the symptoms he is experiencing. By practicing interviewing an ailing AI patient and hearing his responses about his symptoms, future nurses are better prepared to treat the human patients.

## FUTURE-FOCUSED

### IPE

In practice, nurses care for patients alongside professionals from a variety of health care disciplines, such as social workers, doctors, physician assistants, physical therapists, and more.

UTA faculty members came together to develop Inter-Professional Education (IPE) curriculum to help students from various disciplines learn how to work together.

In fall 2024, CONHI partnered with the Department of Modern Languages and the School of Social Work on an IPE project that places trained medical interpreters in a simulated hospital setting. CONHI has also collaborated with the College of Science and Department of Theatre Arts and Dance to create a clinical immersion workshop for premed students.

“We see the value of collaboration cross the University,” says Roye. “Health care often involves many disciplines, and what better way to prepare these professionals than with simulation before they enter practice.”

### THE MOBILE SIM UNIT

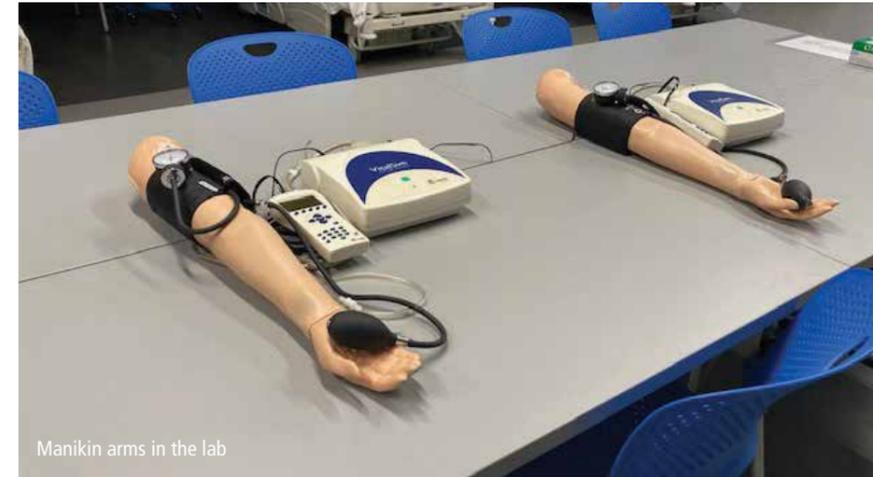
Later this year, CONHI will also roll out another innovative educational tool: the Mobile Simulation unit, a 40-foot simulation-equipped RV.

“The Mobile Simulation unit will bring state-of-the-art simulation training directly to our students and the rural facilities, no matter where they are located in Texas,” says Drude. “This initiative demonstrates our commitment to bridging the gap in health care education, especially in our rural areas.”

The Mobile SIM unit will benefit the rural communities in several ways, providing hands-on training in real-world settings, enhancing the skills of current health care providers, and fostering a deeper understanding of rural health challenges among students. It will also serve as a critical resource for continuing education and professional development for health care workers in rural Texas communities.

### AI

The introduction of AI in health care and education spaces has created challenges and opportunities for educators and students. In an October 2023 editorial for *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, Nicole Harder, associate dean in the College of Nursing at



Manikin arms in the lab

the University of Manitoba, opined that “the integration of AI and ML [machine learning] into health care simulation holds the promise of enhancing training effectiveness, optimizing learning outcomes, and ultimately, improving patient care. As we venture into this new frontier, it is crucial to explore the current landscape, acknowledge the achievements, and identify key research needs to take advantage of the full potential of AI and ML in health care simulation.”

“AI is another emerging concept,” says Roye. “As educators, we are going to have to embrace it, integrate it, and teach our learners how to use it ethically.”

## ACCESSIBILITY

The functional abilities essential for practicing nurses were established in a validation study published in 1996. This list of physical and intellectual abilities has not been updated since.

“As a profession, we must challenge the requirement that nursing students and nurses do all items listed in the 1996 functional abilities domains and corresponding activities and attributes document,” write Beth Marks and Jasmina Sisirak in their article “Nurses with Disability: Transforming Healthcare for All” featured in *The Online Journal of Issues Nursing*.

The Smart Hospital staff couldn’t agree more.

“We are working to make nursing education, particularly simulation experiences that we offer, accessible to those that are differently abled,” says Roye. “At CONHI, flexibility and creative thinking are our strong points.”

**EXCELLENCE  
IN HEALTH  
INNOVATION**



CONHI graduates more baccalaureate-prepared nurses than any university in Texas and is the largest public college of nursing in the country. In addition, the college holds designations as a National League for Nursing Center of Excellence. For more information on the Smart Hospital and CONHI programs, visit [uta.edu/conhi](http://uta.edu/conhi).



A student trains with VR

## Help for Mothers

*New public health grad focused on maternal health*

When Jessica Douglas first set foot on The University of Texas at Arlington campus, it marked a new beginning with a familiar focus: helping people.

Douglas took a decade-long break from school to raise her children and train as a doula. But in 2019, she decided to return to college. And last spring, she officially earned her Master of Public Health degree, crossing the stage with 5,700-plus Mavericks at Globe Life Field.

She also earned the prestigious Gerry C. Gunnin, Ph.D., Public Health Memorial Fellowship, considered the most competitive public health fellowship in Dallas-Fort Worth. Douglas will spend 10 weeks working for Texas Health Resources on a variety of community health initiatives.

“I always knew that at a certain point, I would go back to school and go into a profession that was patient-centered,” she says.

Douglas originally applied to UTA’s nursing program, but after looking into public health, she was excited at the idea of helping people on a community-wide scale.

“I have tons of life experience, have lived through lots of things, and have been on both the provider and patient sides,” she says. “The public health space just seems like the right place for me.”

The life experience that Douglas wants to bring to the field is filled with both tragedy and triumph. She had five miscarriages and a stillbirth; she also had two home births and two in a hospital. She wants to make sure moms like her have more positive experiences.

“The United States doesn’t have such a great track record with maternal health and outcomes—we’re pretty low across the board,” Douglas says. “There’s a lot of room for growth and change, and it’s what I’m comfortable with because it’s what my experience is in.”

She applied for the fellowship at the urging of Erin Carlson, clinical professor and founding director of UTA’s graduate public health programs. Douglas has worked with her as a UTA public health program assistant.

“Dr. Carlson was the reason I went into the graduate program,” Douglas says. “I was able to be a professional working alongside her instead of just studying under her. She is a great and knowledgeable mentor.”

Douglas said she finds herself looking back on her time as a Maverick, grateful for the support she received from her husband and the connections she made at UTA.

“I’ve made some really good relationships, and I’m excited to celebrate their accomplishments as well,” she says. “It’s not just about me. It’s about the people I’ve met along the way.”



Donna May Rigby

## READY TO MAKE AN IMPACT

*Public health grad has sights set on a cleaner environment*

For Donna May Rigby, UTA’s Public Health Program was a natural fit.

After defeating breast cancer, the U.S. Navy veteran knew she wanted to pursue a degree in public health, but she first had to decide where. Living in California at the time, she began to research public health programs across the country that were known for their support of veterans’ education.

In 2022, after meeting with UTA’s recruitment advisors, she departed California for the Lone Star State. The newest chapter in Rigby’s story would include the pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from UTA.

“I chose UTA because it was very veteran-friendly, and the application process was straight to the point,” Rigby says.

During her time in the Navy, Rigby served as an independent duty corpsman, which allowed her opportunities to care for and evaluate patients. However, she knew she wanted to begin a new chapter in community-driven work.

“That’s what attracted me to UTA’s public health program,” she says.

While at UTA, Rigby thrived.

“Working as a student assistant exposed me to behind-the-scenes short- and long-range planning for public health events,” says Rigby. “I am so grateful for the opportunity to work closely with the public health professors.”

A recent graduate, Rigby aspires to positively impact environmental policy for a safer, cleaner tomorrow through working for the Environmental Protection Agency.

## A SEAMLESS PIVOT

*Alum forges a new career path in nursing*

Recent nursing graduate Jeremy Schrodt (’08 BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; ’24 BSN) isn’t afraid of change.

After completing his undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies from UTA, Schrodt taught high school science for 14 years. However, the disruption to public education brought on by the pandemic caused him to rethink his career path. It turns out that the answer was all around him.

Schrodt’s wife, also a two-time UTA graduate, and two of his sisters are nurses. After looking into UTA’s flexible accelerated online BSN option, Schrodt was ready to embrace the change.

“I chose to apply to UTA for the nursing program because I was familiar with the University and the reputation of its nursing program,” says Schrodt. “The online program allowed me the flexibility to complete coursework around my work and family commitments. The accelerated format allowed me to initiate a career change with a shorter amount of downtime between careers.”

For the past two years, Schrodt has worked at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center in Waxahachie. Combined with the structure of UTA’s online program, he had the opportunity to put his courses to use in a real emergency room.

“Working as an ER tech allowed me to get a feel of what working in health care is like and provided valuable hands-on experiences I could use as reference to help understand theory taught in the BSN program,” says Schrodt.

He also credits UTA instructors for helping him bring it all together.

“The clinical instructors for my clinical rotations were wonderful in helping me understand and achieve throughout the program,” he says.



Photo by Brandon Todd

## Supporting Hoop Dreams

*Student earns WNBA internship in NYC*

Jessy Yaputra, who is pursuing her master’s degree in athletic training, knows there has never been a better time to join the WNBA.

The league’s popularity has reached an all-time high with the addition of several prominent record-breaking rookies. TV viewership and jersey sales have seen double- or even triple-digit growth over past seasons, and our own Dallas Wings, who call UTA’s College Park Center home, sold out their 2024 season ticket allocation for the first time in franchise history.

Yaputra is excited to get in on the action. This summer, she joined the WNBA’s New York Liberty as an intern on the team’s athletic training staff, working under the supervision of the Liberty’s head athletic trainer, Theresa Acosta. In addition to performing preventative procedures for players like taping and bracing, Yaputra says the experience exposed her to life beyond the job’s day-to-day responsibilities, including professional development, team dynamics analysis, and more.

Originally from Indonesia, Yaputra received a Faculty of Medicine degree from Pelita Harapan University. On the encouragement of her now-husband, Yaputra relocated to the U.S. to pursue her dream of working in professional basketball. UTA’s Master of Science in Athletic Training program was her first choice.

“The program’s understanding approach to students’ personal needs and circumstances reflects its commitment to holistic student well-being,” says Yaputra. “The provision of two personal days per semester, along with opportunity for individualized career guidance and advice, underscores the program’s commitment to supporting students’ academic, professional, and personal growth.”

UTA’s relationships with the Wings as well as the Texas Legends, the NBA G League’s Dallas Mavericks affiliate, also made the University an attractive choice.

“Meredith Decker, UTA’s MSAT clinical education coordinator, is very supportive with my career goal, and she granted my request to complete my clinical hours with the Texas Legends in spring 2024,” says Yaputra.

After clinicals, one thing has led to another, and Yaputra has found herself under the bright lights of both the WNBA and New York City.

Yaputra will graduate from the MSAT program in 2025.

## TRAINED TO LEAD

### MSN program prepares alumna for leadership

After enrolling in UTA's Family Nurse Practitioner MSN Program in 2014, Kristin Stanley began to see her career path take shape. Now the executive director for the Acclaim Physician Group and an adjunct clinical faculty member at UTA, she credits CONHI as a key factor in her success.

"Embarking on my educational journey at UTA laid the groundwork for a series of achievements that shaped my career trajectory," she says. "The faculty and staff are very committed and well-educated. Learning from providers with that type of experience and knowledge is of great benefit."

Having worked as an executive director in the medical field for nearly six years, Stanley lauds the coursework and design of UTA's MSN program for helping her develop skillsets she didn't necessarily think she would need to prioritize in nursing school.

"Being a nurse practitioner is a leadership role, and that's part of the program at UTA," Stanley says. "Presentations, paper writing, research—I wouldn't have thought I would use these things in my real life, but now I use them every single day."

Looking back at her time as a graduate student, she never predicted returning to UTA as a faculty member. "The foundational knowledge that I got from UTA has come full circle," Stanley says. "I've learned it, I've done it, and now I'm teaching it."

Stanley joins many UTA alumni who have gone on to improve health care education. She recently created the Family Medicine Advanced Practice Provider Residency program, which also includes psychiatric residency and neonatal fellowship program options.

"Quite frankly, the only reason I was qualified to do that is because of my Family Nurse Practitioner degree from UTA," Stanley says.



Kristin Stanley



Mohamed Almubiadin

## From Maverick to Bronco

### Double UTA graduate takes the reins in professional sports

There's an equestrian theme running through the education and career of recent Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT) graduate Mohamed Almubiadin, who joined the athletic training staff of the Denver Broncos in summer 2024.

"It's intriguing how my journey as a UTA Maverick transitioned to another horse breed, as a Denver Bronco," says Dr. Almubiadin. "Even funnier, during my clinical rotations at the MSAT program, I worked with the SMU Mustangs football team. It's as if my past experiences are guiding me towards being with the Broncos now."

He says his journey into the world of preventative and rehabilitative care is rooted in his father's resilience.

"When he first came to America, he worked tirelessly at three jobs to support our family," says Almubiadin. "Tragically, he was shot in the knee during a robbery while working as a gas station clerk. Thanks to physical rehabilitation, my father made an incredible recovery, avoiding amputation and returning to work. This life-changing experience has fueled my passion and dedication to athletic training and physical therapy for the past decade."

In 2017, Almubiadin earned his bachelor's degree in exercise science from UTA before completing his doctoral degree at Mary Hardin Baylor. He then landed a highly competitive sports medicine position as an outpatient physical therapist in Plano. He worked there for a year when his dream of working in professional sports came calling. Already familiar with UTA's kinesiology programs, Almubiadin reached out to MSAT Director Laura Kunkel for more information.

"Talking with Dr. Kunkel really solidified my belief in the program's ability to help me reach my goals," said Almubiadin. "She's been incredibly supportive and uplifting from the start, giving me the confidence to leave behind my comfort zone and pursue my master's degree at UTA. I'm so grateful for her and all the supportive staff in the MSAT program."



The crowd listens to remarks



Dream Makers attendees



Guests meet a manikin

## Experiencing the Impact

### Donors go all-in at Dream Makers 2024

For the first time, Dream Makers—CONHI's annual event honoring scholarship donors—was held at one of the on-campus learning environments where students are training to be the next generation of nursing professionals.

*"The new Smart Hospital has given us additional opportunities to engage with our community partners and donors"*

The event was moved from its traditional ballroom setting to the School of Social Work and Smart Hospital Building to allow donors a firsthand look at the cutting-edge facility. "The new Smart Hospital has given us additional opportunities to engage with our community partners and donors," says Kim Siniscalchi, professor of practice. "We were pleased to have our community partners and donors join us here for Dream Makers." Opened in 2023, the Smart Hospital is a 33,000-square-foot-facility featuring state-of-the-art technology-enriched learning spaces, teaching and research labs, and a simulation learning center. The International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning has endorsed the Smart Hospital in applying its Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice. UTA is one of only 40 institutions worldwide to receive this endorsement.

"Our goal was to give our donors unprecedented access to our space and to experience how their support translates to student training and success," says Dr. Siniscalchi.

The immersive open-house event began with remarks from UTA President Jennifer Cowley, who encouraged guests to explore the space and engage with faculty, staff, and students.

Located throughout the building, the seven guest experiences included:

- Home Health Suite
- Health Informatics Lab
- VR Learning Lab
- Labor and Delivery Simulation
- Escape Room
- Moulage Station
- Musculoskeletal Screening Room

"We are grateful to our team here in the Smart Hospital for their role in staffing the tour locations, interacting with our guests, and answering their questions," says Jenny Roye, assistant dean of simulation and technology. "Sharing our space and our work with the community is a pleasure."

To contribute to the Dream Makers and CONHI student scholarships, scan here:



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