

Q & A WITH COLLEGE OF NURSING DEAN



You have been at FAU for one year, what do you consider your most significant accomplishments?

The College's faculty, staff and students have been focused on excellence. One of our greatest accomplishments has been increased scholarship support for our nursing students. This past year, we secured an anonymous gift of \$5 million over several years to help first generation and disadvantaged nursing students. Other highlights include the College's #7 ranking in the nation for its online master's program in *U.S. News & World Report*. We also successfully launched the 2nd degree part-time BSN track for working professionals on FAU's Davie campus. We are attracting very competitive students and retaining them. The College expanded its Community Health Center to a disadvantaged, under-resourced area in West Palm Beach. We also significantly increased our external research funding from a number of foundations, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other funding sources to support research and answer the call to care for veterans, older adults with cognitive impairments, pregnant women and others.

What sets FAU's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing apart from other nursing schools?

The College is unique in several ways. First, it is grounded in a caring philosophy that is not just pedagogical. Caring is integral to the way we relate to those in our community – faculty, staff, students, members of the FAU community, hospitals, community partners and others. Our faculty are committed to creating the best experience for our students, patients and participants. They care for our students on an academic and personal level, which translates to our students doing very well on their educational journey. This past year, our students achieved a 100 percent pass rate on their Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Certification.

What new initiatives are underway at the College?

Our newest initiative is the part-time BSN program for working professionals with a previous specialist degree. We believe we are the only nursing school in Florida and maybe the nation with this type of executive-style programming.

This past year, we also developed and launched a certification program to prepare contact tracers with in-depth knowledge and an introduction to public health concepts, as well as a foundational understanding of the coronavirus and COVID-19. We are currently developing a second certificate program for dermatology. It is a post-master's program that would be beneficial at the advanced practice level in outpatient dermatology practices.

As an additional resource, we were pleased to launch a national webinar series in partnership with Cross Country Healthcare. Topics included self-care, compassion fatigue, lessons learned from COVID-19, and diversity within the healthcare industry.

How is nursing changing?

Due to the global pandemic, there is an exponentially growing need for nurses and especially those with a broad understanding of public health concepts. Nursing is more at the forefront of public health and infectious diseases in terms of treatment and prevention than ever before. Nurses now need to know how to adapt to providing care for new and emerging diseases, like coronavirus. Also, cross training of nurses is important, such as being knowledgeable regarding intensive care regardless of specialty.

We have also seen an increased need for nurses as part of home health services and in long-term facilities. The needs at these locations have expanded and become more complex. We already knew nurses were needed outside of the hospital, but this demand has significantly grown.

Moving forward, nursing schools should work more closely with public health departments and schools of public health to supplement nursing knowledge with training on infectious diseases, use of personal protective equipment and more.

How is the College answering the call to care through teaching, practice and research?

We are preparing our students to be genuinely caring nurses, teaching them both the theory and practice of caring. Our academic programs are guided by western medicine, but we also focus on holistic health – caring for the whole person.

Our clinics are ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the healthcare they desperately need. We know those medically disadvantaged carry a higher burden of chronic diseases and mortality. During this painful time for many, our staff has proactively reached out to patients to ensure they are protecting themselves and staying healthy. Earlier this year, the Community Health Center provided 2,000 masks to homeless individuals or those economically impoverished.

Nursing researchers are focused on identifying ways to improve the lives of those with cognitive impairment and other diseases. The College remains attentive and in-tune to the needs of the community. ■