

Q & A

ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR NURSING RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP



How did you begin your nursing journey?

I finished my PhD at the University of Maryland, then engaged in post-doctoral study as a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Nurse Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. I was then hired by the University of Texas – Houston Health Science Center as an Associate Professor, where I began growing my program of research centered on heart disease. For 15 years, I worked on several NIH grants focused on blood pressure, cardiac rehabilitation, and the body-mind connection. Story-centered care had its roots in my Texas work with people who had suffered a cardiac event.

In 2004, I had the opportunity to interview at FAU and learned the College of Nursing philosophy really reflected the values I lived. I welcomed the opportunity to be in a place where others placed high importance on studying the human health experience and caring.

Beginning in Texas and continuing in Florida, I served as a visiting research scholar at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology for more than two decades. This is when my work with story-sharing took shape as a research method. In our research, we were measuring blood pressure while stroke survivors told us about getting along day-by-day. They spoke of surviving WWII bombings, indicating their stroke was “nothing” by comparison. We decided to pursue these stories of surviving WWII bombings for Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors, eventually leading to the performance, *With Our Voices Raised*.

When you arrived at FAU, how did research at the College evolve?

I interviewed with Dean Anne Boykin for the Research Dean position. At the time, there was no structure for guiding research. The Dean knew it was needed, so she hired me for the role and supported my research

direction. From the very beginning, faculty worked hard to make research a focus, in addition to maintaining excellence in teaching. In time, the College’s research structure took shape, becoming a model that drew the interest of other colleges at the university.

What do you consider your most significant accomplishments?

Over the years, building the structure needed to support junior and senior faculty to accomplish their research and scholarship was my greatest accomplishment. More recently, I’ve been focused on finding balance between extramural funding for research and extramural funding for programs/services. I have also emphasized the relationship between College research endeavors and the University focus. For instance, at this point, we have faculty associated with every FAU pillar.

How is the College’s research endeavor answering the call to care?

It is at the core of what we do – answering the call to care. In all our research decisions, we have the wellbeing of our broader community in mind. We are person-focused and centered on making a difference in what matters most to those in our care.

Caring is such a strong value to be lived in both our practice and research. It may not be explicit in every research endeavor; however, it is there. It lives in our attention to humanness. A lot of our research gives voice to those who are disadvantaged...it is a meaningful way our researchers live caring.

Dr. Patricia Liehr retired from her role in August 2020. ■

DR. BUTCHER NAMED NEW PHD DIRECTOR



Founded in 2006, the College’s PhD program prepares nursing scholars to generate knowledge grounded in caring in nursing theory fundamental to the discipline of nursing and to nursing situations. The PhD program has four focal areas of caring science research: aging across the life span; health equity; holistic health, and transforming health care environments. PhD students work closely with faculty leaders, scholars, and mentors to design, conduct research, develop, and communicate nursing knowledge that contributes to caring science as related to health outcomes. As future nurse scientists, PhD graduates are mentored on how to build a program of research that contributes to the well-being of individuals and communities.

“What really attracted me most to this role is my passion for teaching and mentoring future nursing scholars. I have learned the seeds of academic career success are woven and intertwined with caring mentoring relationships. Mentors serve as caring teachers, wisdom-givers, guides, advocates, coaches, guardians, role models, and as sponsors to students. The distilling of counsel, support, advice, knowledge, opportunity, and friendship that arise out of professional mentoring relationships profoundly benefit a student’s career development,” said Dr. Howard Butcher. ■