

Cizik Nursing

UTHEALTH HOUSTON | THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON



2021 THE FUTURE OF NURSING

Virtual reality simulation teaches de-escalation techniques for inpatient psychiatric/mental health environments.

 UTHealth[®] Houston
Cizik School of Nursing

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HELP CELEBRATE OUR 50 YEARS OF SUCCESS!

Share your memories

ENDOWED FACULTY POSITIONS

GREETINGS

DEAN DIANE SANTA MARIA



Just a few months ago, the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine published the landmark report “The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity.” It struck me that Houston, Texas, represents a microcosm of the health care environment described in the report. We live in one of the most diverse cities in the nation, where we witness the disparities affecting underserved populations every day. As educators at the region’s top-ranked nursing school, we have not only an opportunity but a responsibility to move our health care systems toward positive change.

Our new five-year strategic plan sets out a mission and vision of excellence, innovation, and leadership in advancing and improving health care and health equity. We also cemented our commitment to fostering opportunity for students, faculty, and staff at all levels by establishing a new leadership position. Elda Ramirez, PhD, ENP-C, became our first assistant dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion in November 2020 and is sharing her passion for the cause throughout the entire UTHealth Houston organization.

This year’s magazine is filled with stories that touch on ways Cizik School of Nursing is working to improve health care access and quality for everyone. You will learn about a new Spanish-language stroke awareness acronym developed by our research team, a PhD student exploring coping mechanisms used by older LGBTQ+ patients with regard to health care, the new lecture series on domestic violence endowed by our long-time supporters Carla Diaz-Lewis and Kenneth Lewis, an active-duty Army nurse furthering her education, and a professor emerita who made addiction research her life’s work.

I am particularly excited about opportunities and innovations in psychiatric-mental health nursing in Houston and across our institution. The new John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center, which is set to open soon, will be the largest academic psychiatric hospital in the U.S. The virtual reality goggles displayed on the cover allow student nurses to practice de-escalation techniques aimed at improving nurse safety for inpatient treatment environments. In addition, one of our instructors, who is also working toward her PhD, is studying occupational stress among emergency nurses who witness trauma every day.

We are also adding to our truly amazing team of faculty and staff members. In this issue, you will get to know experienced educators and clinicians who have joined us recently to lead key areas of nursing practice, community outreach, and faculty development.

The challenges facing nurses in the next decade are many and varied, but so are the exceptional students, creative and dedicated staff members, and incomparable faculty members at Cizik School of Nursing. By learning from one another and building on the strengths and joys inherent in diversity, we will improve engagement with those who are hard to reach, meet the needs of underserved communities, better understand the challenges experienced by marginalized groups, and help improve overall health and health care access for all.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Improve the health and well-being of our diverse community by preparing tomorrow’s leaders to drive innovation and excellence in nursing education, practice, and scientific discovery

VISION:

To lead the advancement of health and high-quality health care for all

VALUES:

- Integrity
- Innovation
- Inclusivity
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Excellence

DIANE SANTA MARIA DrPH, RN, PHNA-BC, FSAHM, FAAN

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

**“
THE DECADE AHEAD
WILL TEST THE
NATION’S NEARLY
4 MILLION NURSES
IN NEW AND
COMPLEX WAYS.
”**

— THE FUTURE OF NURSING: 2020-2030

CIZIK NURSING BY THE NUMBERS



ENROLLMENT

1,637
as of Fall 2020



GRADUATES

Fall 2019 — Summer 2020

428 **270** **18** **16**
BSN MSN DNP PhD



U.S. News & World Report
BEST GRADUATE SCHOOLS 2022
NATIONAL RANKINGS

No. 28
Doctor of Nursing Practice

No. 32
Master of Science in Nursing

NCLEX
First-time pass rate (2020)



97.28%

MSN PROGRAM NURSE PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATION

Pass Rates for First-Time Takers (2019)

FNP

Family Nurse Practitioner

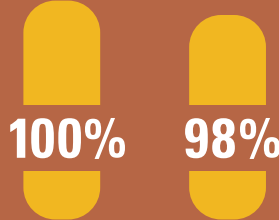


AANPCB

ANCC

AGACNP

Adult/Gerontology Acute Care
Nurse Practitioner



AACN

ANCC

ANCC: American Nurses Credentialing Center

AANPCB: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board

AACN: AACN Certification Corporation

Post-Graduate APRN Certificate Program Nurse Practitioner Certification

Pass Rates for First-Time Takers (2019)



AGACNP
ANCC

FNP
AANPCB

PMHNP
ANCC

Ranked
40th
in NIH Funding
for Nursing Schools
year 2019-2020



Scientific publications and presentations

for calendar year 2020



125
PRESENTATIONS

97
ARTICLES

3
BOOK CHAPTERS

Nurse Anesthesia BSN-DNP

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



100%

Nine of the past 10 years, including 2021

RESEARCH EXPENDITURES

(fiscal year 2020)

\$2,472,380



CONTRACTS AND AWARDS

(fiscal year 2020)

\$2,603,718



LOOKING PAST THE PANDEMIC

THE GROWING ROLE OF NURSES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE

At a time when society as a whole is grappling with the loss and lingering anxiety of a global pandemic, the need for mental health care services has never been greater.

Likewise, opportunities are expanding for nurses working in this field. Telehealth is opening virtual doors. Inpatient capacity will increase in early 2022 as UTHealth Houston adds 264 beds with the opening of the Dunn Center Building, part of the new John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center. The new hospital, combined with the UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center (UTHealth HCPC), will become the largest academic psychiatric hospital in the country.

Meanwhile, Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston alumni are blazing new trails for psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

Annie Benjamin, MSN, RN, PMHNP, became UTHealth HCPC's first on-staff nurse practitioner in 2014 after she

completed the psychiatric/mental health nursing post-master's program at Cizik School of Nursing. She had been working at the inpatient hospital for seven years at that point, after earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from the College of Nursing, Christian Medical College and Hospital, in Ludhiana, India.

UTHealth HCPC is gradually growing its team of PMHNPs, and Benjamin does her part by routinely serving as a preceptor for students seeking this advance practice certification. The need for bachelor-prepared registered nurses (RNs) to work at the bedside will also increase when the new hospital opens.

In the outpatient realm, another alumna recently became the first PMHNP assigned by McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston to work in one of the UT Physicians clinics. John Cook, MSN, MBA, PMHNP, earned his BSN and completed two post-master's programs at Cizik School of Nursing. UT Physicians is the clinical practice of McGovern Medical School.



The 264-bed Dunn Center Building is set to open in 2022. Staffed by UTHealth Houston physicians and nurses, the new facility will include a therapy mall, activity room, and communal dining facility that look into the internal courtyard through floor-to-ceiling windows.

Pictured touring the center are (L-R) HCPC Chief Financial Officer Lois Pearson, Cizik School of Nursing Assistant Professor Chukwudi Ekwemalor, and HCPC Chief Nursing Officer Elizabeth Maree.



“They want to expand their mental health services out in the community,” explained Cook, noting that incorporating PMHNPs into teams with physicians extends the practice’s reach, especially with underserved populations.

Many rural areas are also greatly in need of mental health services, Cook noted. The emergence of telemedicine helps reach into some remote areas, but in-person providers are also very much needed.

“Mental health nurses are needed in various capacities. We need them in research, mental health promotion, disease prevention, and education,” particularly in serving pediatric populations and assessing the effects of the pandemic, Benjamin said. “Studies need to be done to look at the mental health consequences of isolation and the various maladaptive coping strategies that children are using. Mental health nurses can play a pivotal role in prevention of substance use issues, early detection of mental health symptoms, and providing needed care or referring to appropriate resources.”

“

ULTIMATELY, THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF NURSES INFLUENCE THE QUALITY, SAFETY, AND COST OF THE CARE THEY PROVIDE, AS WELL AS ORGANIZATIONS AND SYSTEMS OF CARE.

— THE FUTURE OF NURSING: 2020-2030

”

NURSES NEED HELP, TOO

JONAS SCHOLAR STUDIES THE STRESS OF EMERGENCY NURSING

With a background as an emergency nurse and a sexual assault nurse examiner, PhD student and clinical instructor Christian Paige Owen, MSN, RN, CEN, knows how caring for traumatized patients affects nurses.

“Trauma takes its toll on the nurse both emotionally and physically,” said Owen, whose dissertation will focus on factors associated with occupational stress among emergency nurses.

Owen is one of two Cizik School of Nursing students to receive a prestigious Jonas Philanthropies grant in 2021 to study aspects of mental health. Jonas Philanthropies is a leading national philanthropic funder of graduate nursing education. The Jonas Scholars at Cizik School of Nursing are made possible by a grant from Jonas Nursing and Veterans Healthcare. Each \$15,000 grant is matched by Cizik School of Nursing.

Owen is excited to work with Associate Professor Maja Djukic, PhD, RN, FAAN, as her advisor for the Jonas scholarship and for her PhD. Djukic, the John P. McGovern Distinguished Professor in the School of Nursing, has pioneered national research of new graduate nurses to identify key gaps in quality and safety competencies essential for high-value patient care.

Emergency nurses are chronically exposed to trauma as part of their commitment to patients. “By understanding how secondary trauma impacts emergency nurses as well as the occupational factors that contribute to traumatic stress, we can better understand the mental health needs of emergency nurses as well as changes needed within the work environment to promote well-being and career longevity,” Owen said.

Owen considers this work especially important due to the impact of COVID-19 on health care providers and the expected shortage of nurses. “We need to realize that taking care of the emergency nurse is every bit as important as taking care of trauma patients,” Owen said.

Owen calls herself a “home-grown” nurse scientist and educator, having earned both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Cizik School of Nursing. She received her BSN in 2007 and MSN in leadership and administration in 2019.



CHRISTIAN PAIGE OWEN, MSN, RN, CEN

DYNAMIC DNP DUO

MARRIED STUDENTS SET SIGHTS
ON SERVING HISPANIC MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

If you listen for a few minutes as Andrea Ancer Leal and Miguel De La Mora discuss the future, chances are you may hear their big plans grow just a little bit bigger.

The couple completed Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston's Pacesetter Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program together in 2019 and started the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program a year later. Both are working toward becoming psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners with the goal of someday establishing their own bilingual practice.

An online dating site matched the pair, who married six months after their first date. They soon decided to combine their common interests and complementary strengths not only in marriage but to help serve the mental health needs of Latino communities.

"It is common to deny depression and anxiety," said De La Mora, BSN, RN. "We need to help the community know and accept that mental health is real."

The couple has spent most of their six years together furthering their education while winning awards and scholarships along the way.

De La Mora was recently awarded a prestigious grant from Jonas Nursing and Veterans Healthcare, a part of Jonas Philanthropies. The Washington-state native received the Nancy A. Akers Endowed Scholarship as an undergraduate.

Ancer Leal, BSN, RN, LMSW, is a PARTNERS Scholar who grew up in Houston. She is the first Cizik School of Nursing student to receive the Graduate Student Brain Awareness Outreach Award from the Neurosciences Research Center at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston. As a Research Coordinator II working with Associate Professor Jennifer Beauchamp, PhD, RN, Ancer Leal helped develop the RAPIDO® acronym for Spanish-language stroke awareness and virtually delivered a well-received oral presentation at the International Stroke Conference in March 2021.

Both are second-career students. Ancer Leal worked for six years as a social worker and studied for a PhD at UTHealth School of Public Health before making the switch to nursing.



**"IT IS COMMON TO DENY
DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY...WE
NEED TO HELP THE COMMUNITY
KNOW AND ACCEPT THAT MENTAL
HEALTH IS REAL."**

— MIGUEL DE LA MORA, BSN, RN



“I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN RESEARCH... WITH A DNP, I CAN BE A CLINICIAN AND A RESEARCHER, AND I CAN COLLABORATE WITH OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.”

— ANDREA ANCER LEAL, BSN, RN, LMSW

“I have always been interested in research,” she said. “With a DNP, I can be a clinician and a researcher, and I can collaborate with other health professionals.”

De La Mora previously worked as a mortgage loan officer and a credit union manager.

“I have always been interested in entrepreneurship,” he said. “We feel like if we can establish a business and be successful, that opens the door for ways to give back to the community.”

Since graduation, both have been working as nurses at Harris Health’s Ben Taub Hospital, and De La Mora notes that many patients hospitalized there for physical issues have underlying, untreated mental health conditions.

“About 55% of our patient population is Hispanic, and a lot of times they come in with medical issues that are related to unfortunate psychosocial situations,” he said. “We’re treating the medical issue, but it’s really a psychological issue that got them into this situation.”

As the couple discussed ways they might someday “pay it forward” to future Cizik School of Nursing students, Ancer Leal mentioned how much she learned through the Joan and Alexander Stanford Fellowship in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. De La Mora noted that most undergraduate students complete psych/mental health clinical rotations in hospitals, where they only see the most acutely ill patients. Then to their list of aspirations, they added the idea of creating a fellowship or scholarship to introduce undergraduate students to a broader range of psych/mental health careers and treatment settings.

Judging by their energy, hard work, and academic success so far, it’s easy to envision this dynamic duo making their ambitious dreams come true.

“We have been go-go-go since we got married. By the time we are done with school, we will be at the age to start a family,” said De La Mora. “We just enjoy the ride and do our best.”

LEARNING ABOUT LGBTQ

PHD STUDENT SEEKS TO IMPROVE CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Health care providers must take the initiative to educate themselves about the cultures and distinct health needs of the diverse populations they serve, says Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston PhD student Aaron Loeb, MSN, MBA, RN-BC. His research focuses on building cultural competence to care for LGBTQ populations, a very diverse group in and of itself.

“My interest is in making processes better for health outcomes, and mainly I think that is through education, professional development, and engagement,” Loeb said.

His experience in health care began in high school, when he volunteered in the occupational therapy department of a hospital for some 350 hours. Loeb began learning health care skills with U.S. Army medical clinic training while stationed in South Korea. Upon discharge, he worked as a home health assistant and earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He also holds master’s degrees in business administration and nursing education from Texas Woman’s University in Houston.

Loeb is the lead author of a paper recently published in *Geriatric Nursing* titled “Coping and healthcare utilization in LGBTQ older adults: A systematic review.” The paper summarizes research on the coping techniques that aging LGBTQ patients employ to counter real or anticipated discrimination, and how those mechanisms can affect access to and efficacy of health care.

“I have certainly experienced discrimination and stigma in health care as a patient and working as a nurse,” Loeb said. “I didn’t realize I was being treated differently than others until I started this research. I thought it was normal, but I knew it wasn’t comfortable.”

Older LGBTQ patients have witnessed historic events from the onset of the AIDS epidemic to marriage equality, yet many fear disclosure of their sexual or gender identity – even to health providers. On the other side of the equation, providers are often unaware of specific health care needs related to sexual practices or gender identity.

Loeb, who is board certified in nursing professional development, has served in several related roles at Houston-area organizations, including Texas Children’s Hospital. He ultimately would like to consult with organizations to develop customized programs to help systemically improve cultural humility and competence.

However, Loeb stresses health care providers’ responsibility to actively seek out opportunities to develop their own knowledge of the diverse groups they serve, regardless of whether those differences are based on race, gender, ethnicity, or other factors.



AARON LOEB, MSN, MBA, RN-BC

“As a health care provider, it’s really on me to understand more about culturally diverse populations, and in my case, I’m choosing LGBTQ,” Loeb said. “It’s not like we are learning about some rare disease that you are never going to see. This potentially impacts anyone coming in the door at any moment.”

Loeb credits Cizik School of Nursing faculty members with helping him gain the perspective and skills needed to tackle such a broad and complex avenue of research. Professor Diane Wardell, PhD, WHNP-BC, and Associate Dean for Research Constance Johnson, PhD, MS, RN, FAAN, co-authored the *Geriatric Nursing* paper.

“Dr. Johnson is my academic advisor, and she has been instrumental in helping me learn how to narrow a topic to make it researchable,” Loeb said. “I think this is an intriguing journey, and I think if it weren’t for the Cizik School of Nursing’s PhD program, I really wouldn’t understand how to piece together this information on the analytical level.”

“IT’S NOT LIKE WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT SOME RARE DISEASE THAT YOU ARE NEVER GOING TO SEE. THIS POTENTIALLY IMPACTS ANYONE COMING IN THE DOOR AT ANY MOMENT.”

— AARON LOEB, MSN, MBA, RN-BC



LEADING DEI

ASSISTANT DEAN BUILDS ON UTHealth HOUSTON'S STRENGTHS

Elda Ramirez, PhD, ENP-C, FAAN, is wasting no time leading diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at Cizik School of Nursing and throughout UTHealth Houston.

Ramirez, professor in the Department of Graduate Studies and director of the Emergency Trauma NP Track, was named the nursing school's first assistant dean of DEI in December 2020 and, in the Spring 2021 semester, became the inaugural chair of the UTHealth Houston DEI Council. She has conducted surveys of all six UTHealth Houston schools to determine how best to integrate DEI into existing initiatives. She works with students, faculty, and staff who champion the cause all across campus.

"DEI issues have always been a priority for us. My hope, however, is that formalization of these councils will augment our commitment to truly creating awareness," said Ramirez. "We want to make sure everyone feels safe in verbalizing their opinions about DEI and making suggestions for action and improvement."

The UTHealth Houston DEI Council, as well as one established within Cizik School of Nursing, focus on several paradigms to ensure DEI matters are addressed at every level, from recruitment and retention of staff and faculty, to vital classroom discussions of DEI topics.

"The events of 2020, especially the killing of George Floyd, shined the light and served as a tipping point to bring DEI discussions to the forefront more than ever before," said Ramirez. "We have a much larger platform now – an open space – where we can safely engage in dialogue and create actions to generate transformation."

Ramirez said the COVID-19 pandemic also spurred the need for DEI awareness as it pertains to workforce and health inequities, something she saw as an emergency nurse practitioner.

"People from lower social and economic backgrounds had no choice but to work to provide for their families, and in turn, are at risk of contracting the virus," said Ramirez. "In their attempts to be warm, safe, comfortable, and establish trust, those on the fringes of society passed COVID-19 to those they loved the most."

Ramirez's vision is to advance the health and well-being of diverse communities that the school and university serve and to ensure equitable representation on campus.

"The DEI initiatives we have in place, including the councils, can and will be change agents in continuing our efforts to enhance awareness, acceptance, and representation of all groups within our communities. It is necessary and appropriate given where we're located in Houston, one of the most diverse cities in the country," said Ramirez. "In working together through education, knowledge, and empathy for one another's differences, we can start truly moving forward."

“

*A NATION CANNOT FULLY THRIVE
UNTIL EVERYONE – NO MATTER
WHO THEY ARE, WHERE THEY LIVE,
OR HOW MUCH MONEY THEY MAKE
– CAN LIVE THEIR HEALTHIEST
POSSIBLE LIFE...*

— THE FUTURE OF NURSING: 2020-2030

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THE "DINE WITH PRIDE" EVENT IN JUNE CELEBRATED LGBTQ STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY ACROSS THE UTHealth HOUSTON CAMPUS. DR. ELDA RAMIREZ PICTURED CENTER, AT RIGHT.



SCHOLARSHIP TIP: NAVY VETERAN SAYS TO JUST APPLY!

No one was more surprised than Bruce Gillespie when the nursing student learned he would receive a full-ride scholarship from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™.

Gillespie, a U.S. Navy veteran, is seeking a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) through the 15-month Pacesetter program at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston. Before he began his studies in January 2021, he filled out a general scholarship application on the school's website.

"I thought it was a joke at first. Being 45 years old, I really didn't expect to get a scholarship," said Gillespie, who was so shocked he called the school to verify that his notification was legit. "I was smiling from ear to ear for quite some time."

The \$15,000-per-semester scholarship enables Gillespie to focus on his studies full time by covering tuition and providing a living stipend.

Gillespie served in the Navy from 1995-99 and used the experience he had gained to start his own aviation maintenance and repair business. He later transitioned to installing equipment for an international women's fitness chain.

"I got to see the impact this equipment had on women's lives, and I wanted to go into health care," he said.

He liked the fast pace of military life and plans to seek work in an emergency department after earning his BSN. Eventually, Gillespie would like to continue his studies to become a nurse practitioner.



NURSING STUDENT HELPS ARMY MAINTAIN FIGHTING STRENGTH

Major Lisa Kasper knew at a young age, when her mother became ill, that nursing was her calling. She has never looked back.

She became a registered nurse and found the field rewarding, but she wanted something more. So, she decided to bring her nursing skills to the United States Army.

"I was looking for a challenge and adventure – something different, and the Army offered just that," said Kasper. "I would have a new assignment every three to five years, and knew I would have amazing opportunities to grow in my nursing career."

In the Army, Kasper served as a bedside nurse and formed close connections with the soldiers she cared for. She found watching them recover from injuries or illnesses particularly fulfilling.

With 11 years of bedside experience under her belt, Kasper was ready to take the next step in the nursing profession: to obtain her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree as a family and emergency nurse practitioner (FNP/ENP).

After evaluating several options as part of the Army's FNP and ENP School of Choice program, Kasper applied to Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston.

"The BSN to DNP FNP track prepares registered nurses to become doctorally trained family nurse practitioners," said Kala Christopherson, DNP, APRN, FNP-C, family nurse practitioner track coordinator and assistant professor of clinical nursing at Cizik School of Nursing. "We also offer advanced training in an emergency concentration to equip nurses at a systems level. Students leave the program equipped to care for military members and their families."

When she was accepted into the program, Kasper was stationed in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and faced the challenge of moving to Texas during a COVID-19 pandemic surge. She had to receive special approval through the Department of Defense and take several other steps to make that happen.

But all the extra hoops she jumped through have been well worth it.

"I felt immediately welcomed at Cizik School of Nursing and could automatically feel a real sense of community," said Kasper. "You get the feeling that everyone wants you to succeed and is extremely hands-on."

Because she applied through the Army's FNP and ENP School of Choice program, the military pays for Kasper's tuition and living expenses so she can entirely focus on the curriculum and concentrate on her classes. She also receives a check-in each semester from Lt. Col. Louis Magyar, who serves as the deputy nurse practitioner consultant to the Army surgeon general.

"When our soldiers are enrolled in civilian school, it's easy for them to lose contact with the Army, which is why we regularly check in to see how they are doing and if they need any additional support from us," said Magyar. Helping students like Kasper gain DNP degrees helps "build the bench" and ensures the Army will always have medical personnel with the most up-to-date skills and a "ready medical force," according to Magyar.

"Cizik School of Nursing embraces the military, and we have found military and veterans to be great students at all nursing levels," said Christopherson. "We value the diverse nursing background military students bring to Cizik School of Nursing."

As for Kasper, she looks forward to expanding her leadership opportunities after she graduates in August 2023.

"It's such a rewarding feeling to know I will reach the highest level I can in my nursing journey," she said.



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NURSES LIVE AND WORK AT THE INTERSECTION OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITIES IN A WIDE ARRAY OF SETTINGS AND PRACTICE AT A RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL LEVELS.

— THE FUTURE OF NURSING: 2020-2030

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INTRAPROFESSIONAL SIMULATION

BSN, FNP STUDENTS LEARN TOGETHER

CIZIK NURSING



(L-R) BSN student Bailey King and FNP student Kaylan Timmons, BSN, RN, team up during the intraprofessional simulation.

Amid a global pandemic that kept people apart, educators at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston came up with a new way to bring together nursing students at different points in their careers.

The intraprofessional simulation they developed lets Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students in their final semester practice their skills, while Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) students in their first clinical semester begin preparing for their transition into health care provider roles as family nurse practitioners (FNPs).

Graduate and undergraduate faculty worked together in 2020 to develop scenarios acted out by standardized patients pretending to experience various symptoms. In the school's newly expanded Simulation and Clinical Performance Laboratory, BSN students take medical histories and practice skills such as blood draws and injections, while the FNP students hone diagnostic and treatment skills.

"Our goal is to improve teamwork and communication and also work on their skills," said Assistant Professor Padma Ramaswamy, PhD, RN. "The simulation is a welcoming, safe environment where they are learning and faculty are providing feedback."

The first scenario developed for the "combo sim" focused on women's health, with some common real-world factors (social determinants of health) interjected into the actors' bullet points, like challenges with alcoholism and lack of insurance.

"This is a very hard area for students to even approach," said Assistant Professor Mandi Lyons, DNP, RN. "Getting sexual and social health histories is really intimidating. You have to ask hard questions." Practicing with standardized patients before encountering uncomfortable situations in real life can help students overcome some of their anxiety, she added.



(L-R) BSN student Sara Atkinson and FNP student Gersonie Luma discuss a “patient” during the intraprofessional simulation.

Working with Ramaswamy and Lyons to develop the simulation were Associate Professor Kristin Ownby, PhD, RN, and Instructor Kennessa Landry, MSN, RN, as well as clinical educators D’Hania Miller, Jennifer Dugger, and Davida Chatman.

Bailey King, a U.S. Navy veteran working to become a registered nurse, did not need clinical hours but wanted to help out the future FNPs and to practice things like charting and administering medications.

“I attended mainly just because I did want to participate, and it’s a good way to keep practicing those skills,” said King, whose long-term goal is to complete Cizik School of Nursing’s nurse anesthesia program.

On the other side of the equation, FNP student Kaylan Timmons, BSN, RN, works in a hospital observation unit and said the simulation gave her a valuable glimpse into the primary care environment.

“They did a good job of making the simulation feel like what real life is going to be like for me very soon,” she said. “I’m going to take on that nurse practitioner role of giving orders instead of carrying out the orders. It was good to have that new mindset and see how we work together as a team.”

Lyons and Ramaswamy agreed that the combo sim not only helped bring together students at different levels but also undergraduate and graduate faculty members who interacted less than usual during the pandemic. “I have

enjoyed working with the undergraduate faculty, and we have gotten positive feedback from faculty and students,” Ramaswamy said.

At first a pandemic necessity, intraprofessional simulations are now requirements of BSN and MSN clinical preparation because they help students bolster skills and confidence before they begin clinical rotations with preceptors. Additionally, simulations allow students to have specific experiences with situations that are high risk but occur in the practice setting at lower frequency and may be missed during clinical rotations.

“This is the small little seed that we hope plants a big tree for the future,” Lyons said.

**“OUR GOAL IS TO IMPROVE
TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION
AND ALSO WORK ON THEIR SKILLS.”**

— ASSISTANT PROFESSOR PADMA RAMASWAMY, PhD, RN

GROWING THE PRACTICE

NURSE-LED CLINICS ON THE MOVE

Expanding access to the nurse-led UT Health Services clinics is one of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston's highest priorities, and leading the charge are two new additions to the practice team.

Professor Leissa Roberts, DNP, CNM, FACNM, will become associate dean for practice and community engagement as of October 30, 2021. On her team is Joy Harrison, DNP, MSN, RN, who became director of UT Health Services four months earlier.

Roberts will develop a new strategic plan for UT Health Services, which, in addition to offering primary care to individual patients, provides employee and occupational health services for all six UTHealth Houston schools and several large organizations in the Houston area. She will work to establish new ties within the community, especially in underserved areas, and identify opportunities for clinic expansion.

As director, Harrison is working to expand UT Health Services' reach while maintaining and growing efficient, financially sound operations. Among Harrison's first projects is overseeing the main clinic's relocation from the 16th floor of UTHealth Houston's primary administrative office building to a larger, ground-floor spot in the heart of the Texas Medical Center. Located in a building filled with mostly UT Physicians providers, the new nurse-led clinic is being converted from a previous bank branch. UT Physicians is the clinical practice of McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston.

"One advantage of the new location is that we will be more visible to patients and families who want to come here,"



LEISSA ROBERTS, DNP, CNM, FACNM

said Harrison, adding that workflow and parking/valet availability will be improved as well. "I also like the idea of being able to more easily collaborate with UT Physicians on patient care and on several projects."

Roberts comes to Cizik School of Nursing from the University of Utah College of Nursing in Salt Lake City, where she most recently served as associate dean of faculty practice. A certified nurse-midwife, she held a variety of leadership roles in faculty practice and obstetrics nursing after joining the faculty in 1993. Her scholarship revolves around the Coping with Labor Algorithm, an assessment tool that she and colleagues designed to replace the 0-10 numeric rating scale for labor pain. The Coping with Labor Algorithm is used widely by hospital systems across the United States and internationally.

She earned her Master of Science in nurse-midwifery and her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the University of Utah and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Wyoming Fay W. Whitney School of Nursing, from which she received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2016. In 2017, Roberts completed the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Wharton Executive Leadership Program. She is a Fellow in the American College of Nurse-Midwives and received that organization's distinguished service award in 2020.

Harrison brought to her new job three decades of experience within the Texas Children's Hospital organization, advancing through the ranks from staff nurse to assistant director of regional operations for Texas Children's Hospital Pediatrics managed services organization. She received bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and earned her DNP in nursing executive leadership and administration from Cizik School of Nursing in 2019.

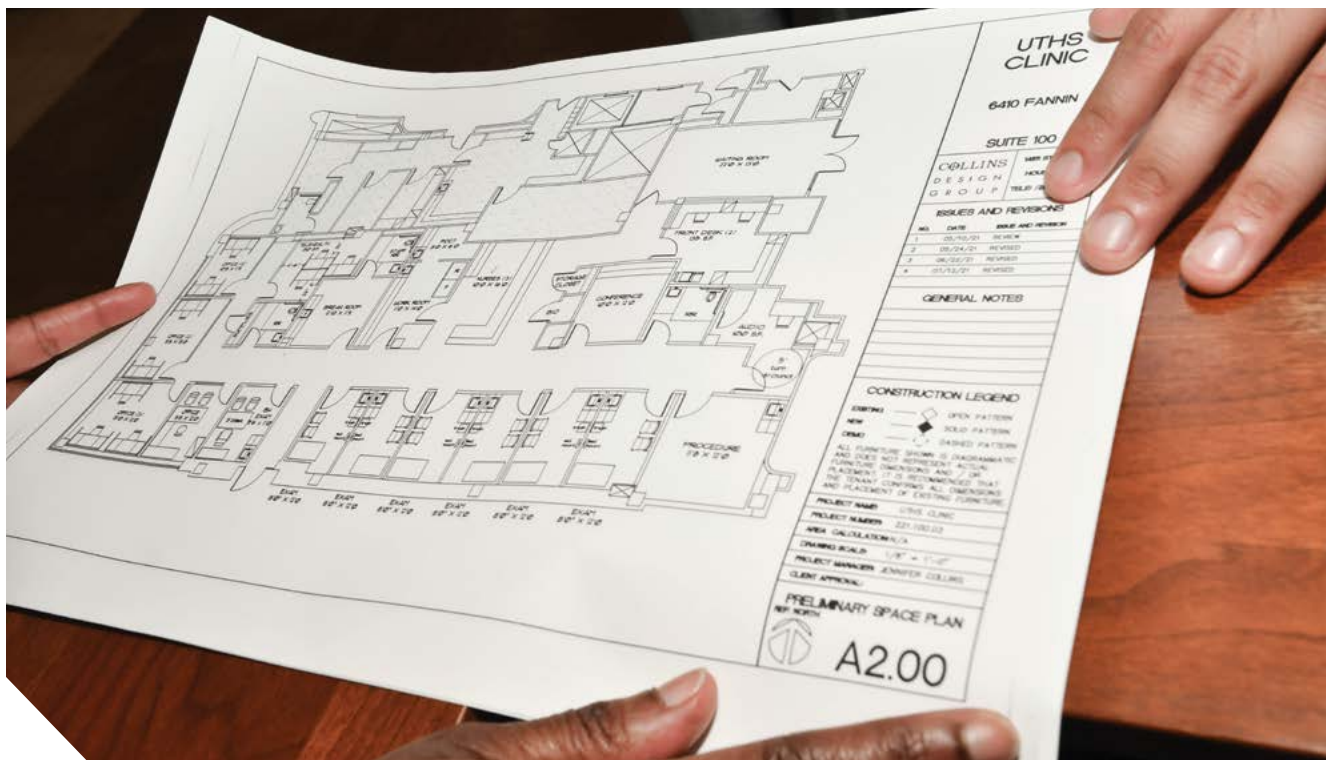
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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS ALSO HEIGHTENED THE NEED FOR TEAM-BASED CARE, INFECTION CONTROL AND PREVENTION, PERSON-CENTERED CARE, AND OTHER POPULATION-BASED SKILLS THAT REFLECT THE STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES.

— THE FUTURE OF NURSING: 2020-2030

”

Dr. Joy Harrison reviews remodeling plans with Akber Mazhar, assistant director of operations for UT Physicians.



A PURPOSE TO HELP

DONORS CREATE LECTURESHIP TO PROMOTE EDUCATION ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For many people, the words “domestic violence” bring to mind images of a male abuser and a female victim.

“The truth is, domestic violence is much broader than this narrow picture of abuse,” said Carla Diaz-Lewis. “A number of people can be impacted by domestic violence, including children, the elderly, caregivers, or anyone living within a household.”

Carla serves on the board of directors for Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, a nonprofit organization focused on family violence intervention and prevention, but she isn’t only an advocate. As a survivor of domestic violence, Carla knows firsthand just how prevalent it can be and how survivors of abuse face repercussions that can linger for the rest of their lives.

Growing up, she experienced physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from a few family members, both male and female. After leaving the situation in her late teens, the effects of domestic violence extended to homelessness, depression, self-medication, and hospitalization from an attempted suicide.

“Domestic violence is a major public health concern,” Carla said. “It causes a ripple effect of repercussions. Survivors can slip into drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, and criminal behavior; have lasting mental health issues; or find themselves victims of human trafficking. It can strike across all cultures, genders, socioeconomic levels, and sexual orientations.”

Through her determination, hard work, and perseverance, opportunities began to present themselves, and Carla secured a job in the oil and gas industry, which enabled her to become financially stable.

Leaving an abusive environment is only the beginning. “Healing the trauma can be a lifelong journey,” she explains. Although life had improved dramatically, her past experiences with domestic violence had lingering effects, and she struggled with issues like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety.

With a passion for preventing domestic violence and helping survivors, Carla and her husband, Kenneth Lewis, made a commitment to establish the Carla Diaz-Lewis Domestic Violence Lecture Series at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston.

“Education about the topic of domestic violence holds the key to prevention and intervention,” Carla said.

The annual lecture series, which begins in October 2021, will teach health care workers and community members how to identify and assist victims of domestic violence—important training especially for front-line workers like nurses, who may be the first resource for people seeking help. The first lecture will feature Jacquelyn “Jackie” Campbell, PhD, RN, a national leader in nursing research and advocacy who serves on faculty at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

“As nurses, we care for those affected by domestic violence but often times do not know it is happening,” said Diane M. Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, dean of Cizik School of Nursing and holder of The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair and Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair in Nursing Education Leadership. “We need to find and advocate for evidence-based, safe ways of disclosing violence and seeking care.”

Domestic violence has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as lockdowns forced households to spend more time together indoors. It adds to the urgency in Carla and Kenneth’s gift, which they hope will lay the foundation for a future hub of domestic violence research and education at UTHealth Houston.

“AS NURSES, WE CARE FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BUT OFTEN TIMES DO NOT KNOW IT IS HAPPENING.”

— DEAN DIANE SANTA MARIA

“We see this lectureship as a critical first step to meeting the needs of people impacted by domestic violence locally and across the nation,” said Santa Maria. “This lecture series will allow us to strengthen our connections to community providers, increase the knowledge of how to assess for and assist in caring for those affected by domestic violence, and conduct research on prevention and treatment.”



CARLA DIAZ-LEWIS

Kenneth, a member of the Cizik School of Nursing Advisory Council and UTHealth Houston Development Board, sees UTHealth Houston as a powerful force for health care in the Houston community – one he can be confident will bring Carla’s vision to life.

“We want to support the work of this institution so it can continue to make this kind of positive difference in our city,” he said.

“Now, with the loving support of my wonderful husband, I am grateful to have the opportunity to help others – and maybe even heal myself in the process,” Carla said.

“THIS LECTURE SERIES WILL ALLOW US TO STRENGTHEN OUR CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROVIDERS, INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO ASSESS FOR AND ASSIST IN CARING FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND CONDUCT RESEARCH ON PREVENTION AND TREATMENT.”

— DEAN DIANE SANTA MARIA

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston is extremely grateful to our steadfast supporters who make generous contributions to help our students and our mission, year after year. Below are a few examples from 2021.



Retired **Professor Nancy Bergstrom, PhD, RN, FAAN**, has established a scholarship to support one doctoral student a year who is focusing on gerontology at Cizik School of Nursing. Dr. Bergstrom held many positions during her tenure at the school. She served as director of the Center on Aging, associate dean for research, and the Theodore J. and Mary E. Trumble Professor in Aging Research.



Long-time Cizik School of Nursing supporters **Diane and Richard Trabulsi** established a scholarship for undergraduate nursing education. This scholarship will support one student each year who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) through the Cizik School of Nursing’s accelerated Pacesetter program.



A donation from restaurateur **Pedro “Pete” Mora**, owner of the Fajita Pete’s chain, will provide scholarship support for students earning a BSN through the Cizik School of Nursing’s Pacesetter program.



It’s a centuries-old tradition to present new nursing graduates with pins that symbolize their transition into this honored profession. Special thanks to everyone who contributed to a crowdfunding campaign to purchase pins for our BSN graduates.

To learn more, visit go.uth.edu/SupportCizikNursing



A POWERFUL “THANK YOU” TO OUR PARTNERS

The PARTNERS organization didn't let the pandemic stop its longstanding tradition of supporting scholarships and faculty research at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston.

PARTNERS stands for Providing Advancement Resources To Nursing Education, Research, and Students, and its 2021 Virtual Spring Luncheon exceeded the organization's fundraising goal.

In her keynote address, prominent and long-serving television anchor Deborah Norville extolled the benefits of gratitude. She gave thanks to PARTNERS, nursing educators, practicing nurses, and students. “You choose to care for others, so thank you on behalf of all the people who will feel your healing touch,” she told the students. Her talk featured highlights from her bestselling book, “Thank You Power,” that examines the science behind the benefits of gratitude.

Supporters who purchased “tables” for the April 21 event received meals delivered to their homes, where several hosted socially distanced gatherings. At Cizik School of Nursing, PARTNERS Spring Luncheon Chair Allison Edwards, DrPH, MS, RN, and Dean Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, hosted special guests that included

four current students who have received PARTNERS scholarships. Houston Public Media's Ernie Manouse served as virtual emcee of the prerecorded program.

The event honored Jane Morin Cizik, who with her husband, Robert, made a foundational \$25 million gift to the nursing school in 2017.

“Thank you for helping these exceptional students become the angels we call nurses,” Mrs. Cizik said.

PARTNERS achieved its initial fundraising goal prior to the event and approached the \$150,000 mark during the luncheon as supporters utilized a text-to-give option. Corporate and community sponsors included H-E-B, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston Methodist, Memorial Hermann, and Texas Children's Hospital.

“We are extremely grateful to everyone who made this year's luncheon a success, and more importantly, to the generous supporters whose contributions will help develop the next generation of nursing leaders and fund breakthroughs in nursing research,” Edwards said. “Here's hoping next year we can all celebrate together in person once again.”



To learn more about joining PARTNERS, visit
nursing.uth.edu/development/partners



Above: Luncheon honoree Jane Morin Cizik (center) celebrates at home with friends.

Left: Faculty and students watch keynote speaker Deborah Norville's recorded presentation.

Below: Luncheon chair Dr. Allison Edwards chats with scholarship recipient Oscar Dao.



LIGHT THE WAY FORWARD

At UTHealth Houston, our experts work toward a better future – one where scientific discovery, education, and patient care connect – strengthening one another for the benefit of all. When the many faces of UTHealth Houston bring their vision and generosity to this goal, they illuminate the path that leads to dreams becoming reality.

“I MADE A PLANNED GIFT TO SHOW MY GRATITUDE TO THOSE WHO GAVE MY FAMILY THE GIFT OF LIFE.”

— SHERI HENRIKSEN



To help light the way forward, please contact:

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Estate and Gift Planning

713-500-3200
www.UTHealthLegacyGift.org

PROGRESSING ON THE CLINICAL TRACK

CLINICAL TRACK ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SHARES HER JOURNEY

Nitha Mathew Joseph, PhD, RN, CNE, joined Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston in 2014 and was promoted to associate professor in 2021. She advises Doctor of Nursing Practice students while teaching undergraduate health assessment clinical care courses and a research evaluation and application course in the master's program.

Working at Cizik School of Nursing is extremely rewarding, motivating, and encouraging. My outstanding faculty colleagues and mentors have helped me achieve my career goals every step of the way.

As I began my career progression, I met with my senior faculty mentor, Sandra Hanneman, PhD, RN, FAAN, regularly to establish timelines to keep myself on track toward achieving goals and meeting the criteria for promotion. Going through this process was both exciting and motivating – even when it meant learning from manuscript or grant submission rejections. My department chairs also guided me to find resources and avenues to meet my career objectives while working in the clinical track with full-time workloads and even taking two maternity leaves while serving as an assistant professor.

I also gained valuable insights from my students. Systematically gathered student course

evaluations provide constructive feedback on my teaching effectiveness. I consistently use them to evaluate my teaching methods and make appropriate course improvements, continuously striving to provide a positive learning experience and good outcomes for all students.

I encourage my colleagues at the assistant professor level to find a faculty mentor early in their careers while working toward their promotion. Learn from them, and explore all faculty research collaboration opportunities and development incentives available to you. With determination and focused goals, you can progress to the next level of your career.

Thank you to all of the Cizik School Nursing faculty and staff members for your support and your continued commitment as we work together to carry out our mission and vision.

**“MY OUTSTANDING FACULTY
COLLEAGUES AND MENTORS HAVE
HELPED ME ACHIEVE MY CAREER
GOALS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.”**

— NITHA MATHEW JOSEPH, PhD, RN, CNE



NITHA MATHEW JOSEPH, PhD, RN, CNE

SALUTE TO NURSES

HONOREES SHARE BACKGROUND IN MENTAL HEALTH



A common thread connects the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston faculty member and student honored in the Houston Chronicle's 2021 Salute to Nurses – mental health care experience in the criminal justice system.

“Like me and you”

Known on campus as “Dr. Chudi,” Assistant Professor Chukwudi C. Ekwemalor, PhD, MBA, MSN, RN, PMHNP-BC, leads the undergraduate psychiatric and mental health nursing program and co-teaches graduate courses. A quantity surveyor/project manager turned nurse, he earned his first diploma and Master of Business Administration in his native country of Nigeria, then studied at Houston Community College to become a licensed vocational nurse upon immigrating to the U.S.

“I started my nursing career in nursing homes and later worked at the Harris County Jail,” Ekwemalor said, noting that it is estimated that half the people incarcerated there have at least one mental health condition. “Mental health treatment in jail and other places requires a lot of therapeutic communication. You have to really talk to patients in a way that enables you to understand them.”

Ekwemalor went on to receive his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from Prairie View A&M University before earning his Master of Science in Nursing and PhD from Cizik School of Nursing, as well as completing a post-master's program to become a psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioner. His research interests focus on vulnerable populations, immigrants, and minorities. His long list of awards as a student and an educator include an Excellence in Nursing Silver Medal from the Good Samaritan Foundation.

“Now is a time of great opportunity for psychiatric and mental health nurses, and succeeding in the field requires truly being a people person,” said Ekwemalor. “Therapeutic communication is at the heart of psych nursing. Patients have to trust you to reveal some of the difficult personal situations of their life. You have to genuinely try to understand somebody and walk with them. A lot of psychiatric patients are people who are like me and you.”

Exploring diverse options

Like many students earning BSN degrees through Cizik School of Nursing's 15-month Pacesetter program, Lance Edwards was preparing for a career change. The London native was one of only three students across Houston to receive a scholarship through the Salute to Nurses program.

Back in England, Edwards worked as a psychologist treating adolescents and patients with schizophrenia. Like Ekwemalor, he worked with mental health patients in the Harris County Jail, where he served as a case manager. He soon moved to the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, where he used multisystemic therapy to help teens and their parents.

“I worked in a hospital before (in London), and I really missed the more medical side of things,” Edwards said. A visit to an emergency department with a relative piqued his interest in nursing, and his wife encouraged him to make the change.

Edwards graduated in August 2021 and was very active at Cizik School of Nursing, serving in the Ambassador program, as president of the school's National Alliance on Mental Illness chapter, and as an Area Health Education Center Scholar. He also tutored undergraduate students taking Ekwemalor's class. A PARTNERS scholarship helped him focus on his studies and academic activities full time.

Before graduation, Edwards was leaning toward working in an emergency department but was exploring other aspects of nursing as well. “There are so many options in nursing. It's so dynamic and diverse,” Edwards said.

His advice to prospective nursing students is to choose the right school, develop a good schedule, and use the educational resources available to you.

“It really is a lot of work, but it's very achievable,” he said. “You have to really involve yourself in the school community. You can't really do it alone.”



CHUKWUDI C. EKWEMALOR, PhD, MBA, MSN, RN, PMHNP-BC PICTURED ABOVE

STROKE AWARENESS

RESEARCHERS PROPOSE SPANISH ACRONYM

When a group of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston research staff and students began translating a stroke education video from English into Spanish, they realized they needed to change more than just words.

Thus was born a multidisciplinary project to create a Spanish-language acronym and graphic to build awareness of stroke signs and symptoms for an at-risk population.

Jennifer Beauchamp, PhD, RN, an associate professor in the Department of Research and the Nancy B. Willerson Distinguished Professor in Medicine and Public Health at Cizik School of Nursing, led a collaboration that included researchers from McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston and the UTHealth Houston Institute for Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease.

“Hispanics have a higher stroke incidence and recurrence and are less likely to know the signs and symptoms of stroke compared to non-Hispanic whites,” she said. “We hope by creating this acronym, we are able to shed light on the need to educate those more vulnerable to having a stroke so they can understand the signs and symptoms and get help fast before it is too late.”

For English speakers, the acronym “FAST” is widely used to educate the public in detecting symptoms of a stroke. FAST stands for Facial drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulties, and Time. Beauchamp said when this memorization tool is directly translated into Spanish, it is not as effective.

The team’s new acronym, **RÁPIDO**®, stands for:

R – Rostro caído (facial drooping)

A – Alteración del equilibrio (changes in equilibrium or balance)

P – Pérdida de fuerza en un brazo o pierna (loss of strength in arm or leg)

I – Impedimento visual (visual impairment)

D – Dificultad para hablar (difficulty speaking)

O – Obtenga ayuda RÁPIDO, llame al 911 (get help fast, call 911)

A video presentation proposal for RÁPIDO won first place at the International Neuroscience Nursing Research Symposium in March 2021. The team is still in the preliminary stage of research and is seeking additional funding to investigate the effectiveness of the acronym within the Spanish-speaking community before implementing it in stroke education programs.

However, they hope that someday RÁPIDO, like FAST, will be used nationwide.

“Research shows Hispanics are dying at a faster rate and having second and even third strokes. So, if there is something we can do to raise stroke awareness in an at-risk population, then we will do it,” said Beauchamp.

Additional UTHealth Houston authors on the proposal included Anjail Sharrief, MD, MPH; Andrea Ancer Leal, BSN-RN, LMSW; Tahani Casameni-Montiel, BBA; and Alejandra Castro, BSN-RN, with Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital.



STROKE CARE DISRUPTED:

NURSE SCIENTISTS RESEARCH PANDEMIC'S EFFECTS



The full picture of COVID-19's effects on the continuum of stroke care is just beginning to emerge, but two Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston nurse scientists collaborated on studies that reveal potentially negative impacts, from hospital admission through rehabilitation.

Associate Professor Jennifer E.S. Beauchamp, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Assistant Professor Seema Aggarwal, PhD, AGNP-C, contributed to interdisciplinary research studies on stroke care during the pandemic. Beauchamp's group looked at admissions and inpatient treatment, while Aggarwal's assessed the effects of delayed admission to inpatient rehabilitation. Both faculty are also members of the UTHealth Houston Institute for Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease.

Fewer stroke admissions

In a study led by UTHealth Houston's stroke fellow graduate Sujan Reddy, MD, Beauchamp and other researchers conducted a meta-analysis of published findings worldwide and analyzed specific data from Memorial Hermann Health System in Houston.

"It's been well known in the literature that, for whatever reason, there have been fewer hospital admissions for stroke in the time of COVID-19," said Beauchamp, the Nancy B. Willerson Distinguished Professor in Nursing. "We don't think that's because strokes have gone away." In fact, COVID-19 is known to cause stroke events in a subset of younger patients.

One likely explanation for fewer admissions of patients who experienced milder strokes is the fear of acquiring COVID-19, and lockdowns may have affected access to transportation and care for some. However, Beauchamp indicated more research, including patient interviews, is needed to verify causes for the trend.

"In the future, when issuing statewide or national mandates, it is crucial to simultaneously incorporate public awareness to encourage patients to seek timely medical care for emergent conditions like stroke and myocardial infarctions, which are treatable but time-sensitive," Beauchamp said. "Taking the treatment to the patient with mobile stroke units can be a defining strategy during such crises in the future."

The study to which Beauchamp contributed found that door-to-treatment times increased, as did the length of hospital stays for stroke patients.



JENNIFER E.S. BEAUCHAMP, PhD, RN, FAAN



SEEMA AGGARWAL, PhD, AGNP-C

Rehabilitation challenges

Aggarwal's work picked up where Beauchamp's left off. Aggarwal worked with UTHealth Houston Stroke Institute staff researching inpatient rehabilitation for stroke care based on data from TIRR Memorial Hermann. Leading the study was Dorothea Parker, BSN, RN, a research nurse in the UTHealth Houston Stroke Institute.

"The admission rate dropped by 50% for inpatient rehabilitation," Aggarwal noted.

Even under normal circumstances, only a fraction of patients experiencing stroke receives inpatient rehabilitation, with a lack of adequate insurance coverage being an obstacle for some. Additional exacerbating factors during the pandemic included reduced capacity at rehab facilities due to the need for social distancing and delays in treating COVID-positive patients, Aggarwal said. Some families preferred that their loved ones not be admitted to rehab facilities or nursing homes that they could not visit, and outpatient rehab resources were sometimes limited.

The study specifically looked at functional independence measures (FIMs) that are assessed on admission and discharge. Examples include motor skills deficits and the ability to bathe or dress oneself. Among a group of 680 patients, the team found that the longer the time span between stroke onset and rehabilitation, the lower the FIM score.

"For every additional day that they took to get into inpatient rehab, we found a 2%-5% decrease of the odds of being independent, and the effect is cumulative," Aggarwal said. "The longer it takes for them to get into rehab, the longer it takes for them to be independent."

The team's findings were the subject of a poster presentation at the American Heart Association's International Stroke Conference in March 2021.

“A TEACHER’S TEACHER”

DR. MARIANNE MARCUS BUILT ON A TMC LEGACY

Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston will celebrate its 50th year in 2022, but one professor emerita’s family legacy in the Texas Medical Center (TMC) stretches back much further.

Marianne Marcus, EdD, RN, FAAN, was born in 1932 at what was then Hermann Hospital. In the previous decade, her grandfather served on the board of the Hermann Estates, which developed the hospital that would become the cornerstone of the TMC.

Her life’s path took several twists and turns before leading her back to where it all began.

Both sides of Marcus’ family moved to Texas from the East Coast, and her parents met at what is now Memorial Hermann – Texas Medical Center. Her grandfather, Gurdon Avery Taft, was general superintendent of the Wells Fargo Company (Railway Express) Southern Department, where her father, Robert Newell Taft, also worked. Her mother, the former Helene Trumpold, was a nurse who cared for Robert’s mother, Caroline Swart Taft.

Marcus’ father died of heart disease when she was only 12. Her mother moved the family, then living in Wichita Falls, Texas, back to Connecticut to be near her own parents. She worked two jobs as a nurse to put her three children through college.

“She had a very hard life,” Marcus recalled. “She worked very hard. She never complained.”

Marcus at first rebelled against the family tradition of nursing. She wanted to teach foreign languages but soon learned she didn’t have a knack for linguistics. She reluctantly visited nursing schools with her mother in New York City and settled on Columbia University.

“I loved it from day one,” she said. “I was so pleased to be able to help patients. I never looked back.”

She met a young medical student, Donald Marcus, at a mixer dance, and so began a relationship that has led to more than 60 years of marriage.

After a 17-year hiatus to raise their three children – Laura, Susan, and James – Marcus decided to return to the workforce in 1975 and began teaching in the practical nursing program at Presbyterian Hospital in New York. She earned master’s degrees in education and nursing from Teacher’s College at Columbia, then taught at Lehman College in the Bronx and her alma mater.

The Lone Star State called in 1980. Baylor College of Medicine hired Donald to head a new rheumatology

division, and Marianne walked into the eight-year-old nursing school at UTHealth Houston looking for a job.

“The first person I met was Dr. Dorothy Otto,” Marcus recalls. “I said, ‘Do you think there are any faculty positions at your school of nursing?’ She said, ‘I would think so, but let’s ask the dean.’”

That chance encounter would lead to a lifelong friendship and more than 30 years of teaching future nurses at UTHealth Houston under three deans – Arlowayne Swort, PhD, RN; Patricia Starck, PhD, RN; and Lorraine Frazier, PhD, RN.

Marcus began as an assistant professor teaching RN-to-BSN students and served in a number of leadership positions, including two stints as chair of the Department of Nursing Systems that totaled some 17 years. She earned her Doctor of Education from the University of Houston in 1989, then was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1991 and professor in 1997.

In the late 1980s, Marcus was approached by a representative of Cenikor Foundation, which ran a residential rehabilitation program in Houston for those recovering from substance abuse. Cenikor wanted to establish an on-site clinic for its residents. Through this experience, Marcus discovered that patients living with addiction were underserved and poorly understood.

“I realized I didn’t know much about addiction, and others in the health care field didn’t either,” she said. “That became my real interest, to increase the knowledge of addiction in nursing curricula.”

Marcus received a series of faculty development grants and became involved in interdisciplinary work with the Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse. She also effectively applied another area of interest – mindfulness-based stress reduction – to the rehabilitation environment. Through a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, her research demonstrated that mindfulness practice helped patients stick with recovery programs longer.

She also developed an educational program to help nurses and clergy recognize the signs of addiction and address them in a nonjudgmental way. Then through her contacts with local pastors, she established an interdisciplinary program to teach social skills, nutrition, and other topics at a local elementary school.

The highlight of her career came in 1999, when physician and philanthropist John P. McGovern, MD, took note of her expertise and offered her an endowed professorship in addictions nursing.



“THAT BECAME MY REAL INTEREST, TO INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE OF ADDICTION IN NURSING CURRICULA.”

— MARIANNE MARCUS, EdD, RN, FAAN

“That was probably my proudest moment as a faculty member, to have him say that, ‘I want to recognize this one,’” she said.

Marcus speaks with pride of the current members of the Cizik School of Nursing faculty whom she mentored as PhD students, including Assistant Professor Chukwudi Ekwemalor, PhD, MBA, MSN, PMHNP-BC, and Associate Professor Angela Nash, PhD, APRN. She has a special connection with her long-time research assistant, Deidra Carroll Coleman, DrPH, who is now a postdoctoral fellow at the school.

“Since we both began our doctoral studies in our later years and were interested in helping people with addictions, we had much in common, so we became fast friends,” said Nash, who credits Marcus with helping her expand from clinical experience to research. “She wore many hats and worked so hard – even into her 80s – yet she kept her composure and unfading smile.”

Ekwemalor described Marcus as an accomplished academician and research scientist as well as a “genuine nurse” who is highly regarded by students and peers alike.

“Dr. Marcus is a teacher’s teacher with attention to detail,” he said. “She’s altruistic, easily accessible, unassuming, and an excellent nurse educator.”

Dean Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, also draws inspiration from Marcus’ work, having recently received an NIH-funded grant to test a mindfulness-based intervention for youth staying in homeless shelters.

Marcus remained engaged with Cizik School of Nursing after her retirement in 2014, regularly lecturing on

substance use in the elderly. Her adventures with Otto included attending PARTNERS events and occasionally adopting alter egos as standardized patients for diagnostic simulations. Marcus’ portrayal of “Mrs. Kowalski” kept the students on their toes.

“Dorothy Otto was Mrs. Malone. Mrs. Malone was nicer, but Mrs. Kowalski could be really tough,” Marcus explained. “She is a mean, nasty woman who screams and yells at the students and does a lot of drinking. Then at the end of the class, they were introduced to me as who I really am, and we talked about how they responded to me.”

The Marcuses, now both professor emeriti, moved into the same retirement community as Otto a few years ago. Marcus delivered a eulogy for her long-time friend, neighbor, and colleague in January 2020.

“It was a very sad experience for me when she passed away,” Marcus recalled.

Yet Marcus – always the teacher – focused on helping others deal with the isolation, stress, and grief caused by COVID-19. At heightened risk due to leukemia treatments, Marcus is riding out the pandemic in the apartment she shares with her husband and two cats, Roger and Louise. Her weekly mindfulness classes for residents were among the last in-person activities the retirement community canceled. Her neighbors are still using the skills she taught, Marcus noted.

Watch an excerpt of a recent oral history interview with Dr. Marianne Marcus at go.uth.edu/MarianneMarcus.

NURSES IN THE

IN-PERSON COMMENCEMENT HITS A HOME RUN FOR GRADUATES

The 2020-2021 graduates of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston certainly faced their share of curve balls during their educational journeys, so celebrating commencement at Minute Maid Park seemed fitting.

Most of the undergraduate students walking across the stage on the field where the Houston Astros normally play completed their entire program amid a pandemic unlike anything we have faced in our lifetimes. Many of our students at all educational levels worked on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis and vaccinated our community while completing rigorous degree programs.

The May 2021 event marked the first time UTHealth Houston held commencement at a Major League Baseball park and the first time it combined the commencements of multiple schools – nursing graduates shared the stadium with students from UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry and UTHealth School of Public Health. Most importantly, students, families, and faculty celebrated together as COVID-19 restrictions eased for the moment.

To the more than 750 nurses honored at the 2021 commencement, we say congratulations and thank you. Your educational foundation is deep. Your strength amid adversity is proven. You will do great things in your careers!



CLASS OF 2020 + 2021



OUTFIELD!



MORE THAN 750 NURSES HONORED!



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



STACEY CRANE, PhD, RN

Stacey Crane, PhD, RN, is developing the Smart Pediatric Oncology Tracker of Symptoms (SPOTS), a web-based interface designed to make it easier for kids with cancer and their parents to report symptoms in real time with the ultimate goal of improving kids' outcomes. In 2021, she received a K-23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research to support the development of SPOTS.



DIANE SANTA MARIA, DrPH, MSN, RN, FAAN

Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, FAAN, received a three-year, \$731,783 award from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health to expand her work with youth experiencing homelessness. This grant funds a pilot project to tailor and test a mindfulness-based intervention designed for delivery to youth staying in homeless shelters. This grant will run in parallel with Santa Maria's ongoing R01 grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research, which funds a nurse case management HIV prevention intervention among youth experiencing homelessness.



MAJA DJUKIC, PhD, RN, FAAN

Maja Djukic, PhD, RN, FAAN, received a substantial grant from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing to study the experiences of new graduates transitioning to nursing during the pandemic. Djukic also received the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Research Award bestowed by the QSEN Institute at Case Western Reserve University's Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing. In addition, she attended the Harvard Macy Institute leadership development program. In November 2020, she received a PARTNERS grant to analyze national data to identify gaps in quality and safety education among nurses.

OTHER CURRENTLY FUNDED PROJECTS INCLUDE:

Feasibility of a Patient-Centered, Telehealth-Delivered Diabetes Foot Care Educational Program

PI: Hsiao-Hui "Joyce" Ju, DNP, RN, FNP-BC.
Funded by the Endocrine Nurses Society.

Post-Master's Certificate-Seeking Nursing Students' Outcomes on Advanced HESI Examinations

PI: Kathleen Siders, DNP, APRN, FNP-C.
Funded by STTI Zeta Pi.

South East Texas Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Grant (SETx-GWEP)

PI: Vaunette P. Fay, PhD, RNC, FNP, GNP.
Funded by Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program-HRSA-19-008 subcontract to Baylor College of Medicine, grantee institution.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS FROM MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS:

Facial and Body Motion Technology to Detect Psychosocial Distress in Stroke Survivors and Informal Caregivers Living at Home

PI: Jennifer E. S. Beauchamp, PhD, RN, FAAN. Funded by Maria C. and Christopher J. Pappas Family Distinguished Chair in Nursing.

An AI-Powered Chatbot for Supporting the Medication Information Needs of Older Adults

PI: Kirk Roberts, PhD, MS.
Co-investigator: Mary Ross, DrPH, MSN, RN, GCNS-BC; and Mandi Lyons, DNP, MSN, RN, WHNP-BC. Funded by Maria C. and Christopher J. Pappas Family Distinguished Chair in Nursing.

Aging in Place with Cognitive Impairment: Toward User-Centered Assistive Technologies

PI: Sabrina Pickens, PhD, MSN, GNP-BC, ANP-BC.
Funded by Rice University ENRICH Program.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY AND LEADERSHIP



Jessica Shank Coviello, DNP, APRN, ANP-BC, joined Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston in the Fall 2021 semester as associate dean for faculty development. Previously, she held a joint appointment at Yale School of Nursing as an associate professor in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program and as an adult nurse practitioner in cardio-oncology at Smilow Cancer Hospital in New Haven. Coviello is widely published in the area of cardio-oncology, and programs she has developed include the TakeHeart Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Yale New Haven Hospital. She led the curriculum development and CCNE certification for the DNP program at Yale and most recently developed a mentorship program for junior clinical faculty.



Jessica Hartos, PhD, was named assistant dean for education and assessment effective March 1, 2021, focusing on program evaluation, assessment, and accreditation. Most recently, Hartos was assistant dean of assessment and quality improvement at the University of Houston College of Medicine. Previously, she was responsible for program evaluation, assessment, and accreditation at the University of North Texas Health Science Center Department of Physician Assistant Studies, The University of Texas at Austin's College of Natural Sciences, the Texas Department of State Health Services' Mental Health Transformation program, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Department of Public Health Sciences, where she also received tenure.

DEPARTMENT OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Linda Roussel
PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CNL, FAAN
Professor

Haley De La Garza
DNP, CRNA
Assistant Professor,
Nurse Anesthesia

Sydnee Lucas
DNP, APRN, FNP-BC
Assistant Professor

Carolyn Tran
DNP, APRN, GNP-BC, PMHNP-BC
Instructor

DEPARTMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Riza Mauricio
PhD, APRN, CPNP-AC/PC,
FCCM, CCRN
Assistant Professor-Clinical

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH

Carina Katigbak
PhD, RN, ANP-BC, FAHA
Associate Professor

Karla Abela
PhD, RN, CCRN-K, CPN
Assistant Professor

FACULTY HONORS



Susan D. Ruppert, PhD, RN, FNP-C, ANP-BC, FCCM, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN, has become the first faculty member of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston to receive the prestigious Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award in recognition of her effectiveness and dedication to teaching. Ten Piper Professors are selected each year from among educators nominated by colleges and universities throughout Texas. Ruppert is the school's associate dean for graduate studies and a PARTNERS Endowed Professor in Nursing.



Cathy L. Rozmus, PhD, RN, FNAP, FAAN, was selected to be part of The University of Texas Kenneth I. Shine, MD, Academy of Health Science Education. Rozmus is a PARTNERS Professor and vice dean for academic affairs at Cizik School of Nursing. She is also assistant vice president for institutional assessment and enhancement in the UTHealth Houston Office of Academic and Research Affairs. In addition, she is a faculty associate in the McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston.

- **Jennifer E. Sanner Beauchamp**, PhD, RN, FAAN, associate professor, received the 2020 Founders' Award for Genomic Nursing Research from the International Society of Nurses in Genetics.
- **Linda Cole**, DNP, RN, CCNS, CPHQ, CNE, FCNSI, assistant professor, was inducted as a Fellow of the Clinical Nurse Specialist Institute (FCNSI).
- **Stacey Crane**, PhD, RN, CPON, and **Deniz N. Dishman**, PhD, DNAP, CRNA, both assistant professors, were among recipients of "20 for 2020 Awards" from the Texas Nurses Foundation and the Texas Nurses Association.
- **Maja Djukic**, PhD, RN, FAAN, associate professor, was named the John P. McGovern Distinguished Professor in the School of Nursing.
- **Doncy J. Eapen**, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, assistant professor, was selected as a 2021 Academy on Violence and Abuse Scholar.
- **Allison Edwards**, DrPH, MS, RN, CNE, assistant professor, received a Hall of Fame award from The University of Texas Medical Branch and was elected vice president of the Texas Board of Nursing.
- **Anitra Frederick**, PhD, RN, CNE, assistant professor, was named an American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing editorial fellow.
- **Hsiao-Hui "Joyce" Ju**, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, received a silver award in the Good Samaritan Foundation's 2021 Excellence in Nursing Program, while six other Cizik School of Nursing faculty members were honored with bronze awards.
- **Mary Ellen Trail Ross**, DrPH, MSN, RN, GCNS-BC, associate professor, received a Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing Award and Recognition at the National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence Leadership Conference.
- **Beth Ulrich**, EdD, RN, FACHE, FAONL, FAAN, professor, received second place in the Medical-Surgical category of the American Journal of Nursing Book of the Year Award for the second edition of "Mastering Simulation: A Handbook for Success."

OTHER FACULTY FELLOWS

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

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

Inductees designated as Distinguished Teaching Professor

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

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

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

THANKS AND BEST WISHES TO OUR RETIRING FACULTY

Rebecca L. Casarez, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, retired May 31, 2021, after more than 15 years of teaching and advancing research at Cizik School of Nursing. She also provided mental health counseling for individuals and families at UT Health Services. Over the years, she served on various institutional bodies, including Baccalaureate Council, Faculty Life Council, and PhD Council.

Susan Parnell, PhD, MSN, MPH, RN, CIC, retired October 23, 2020, as director of UT Health Services. In her 25 years at UTHealth Houston, she served in many positions: coordinator of Communicable Disease and Travel Health Programs, clinical nursing instructor at Cizik School of Nursing and UT Health Services, associate director of Occupational Health for Nurses Program at UTHealth School of Public Health, and associate director of the Occupational Health Nursing Program at the Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at the School of Public Health.

HELP CELEBRATE OUR 50 YEARS OF SUCCESS!

In 2022, Cizik School of Nursing at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston will mark 50 years of preparing nurses for leadership in practice, education, and research. We are calling on alumni, students, supporters, retirees, staff, and faculty to help us celebrate by sharing memories, mementos, and photographs.

Use the link go.uth.edu/CizikMemories or QR code to tell us a story, upload a photo from your time at UTHealth Houston, or lend us an item for display for our golden anniversary.

Watch for announcements about events throughout 2022, and join us for the festivities!



 **UTHealth Houston**
Cizik School of Nursing

50 YEARS

ENDOWED FACULTY POSITIONS

As of September 2021

DISTINGUISHED CHAIRS

Diane M. Santa Maria, **D^rPH, MSN, RN, PHNA-BC, FAAN**
The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair

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

Seeking two candidates
The Jane and Robert Cizik Distinguished Chair

CHAIRS

Diane M. Santa Maria, **D^rPH, MSN, RN, PHNA-BC, FAAN**
Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair
in Nursing Education Leadership

Seeking candidates
Isla Carroll Turner Chair in Gerontological
Nursing

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIPS

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

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

Maja Djukic, **PhD, RN, FAAN**
John P. McGovern Distinguished Professorship
for Nursing Research

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

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

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

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

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

PROFESSORSHIPS

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

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

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

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

Seeking candidates
Joan and Stanford Alexander Professorship
in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Seeking candidates
Theodore J. and Mary E. Trumble Professorship
in Aging Research

2021-2022 SCHOOL OF NURSING ADVISORY COUNCIL

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FACULTY OPPORTUNITIES

Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston offers enriching opportunities for faculty to grow their careers with outstanding interprofessional collaborations in the Texas Medical Center. Open faculty positions include those listed below.

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT:

- Several endowed chairs and distinguished professorships
- Cizik Nursing Research Institute Director
- Tenured and tenure track assistant, associate, and full professors

DEPARTMENT OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

- Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- Family Nurse Practitioner
- Adult/Gerontology Acute Care
- Adult/Gerontology Primary Care
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist



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