The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing

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Cathy L. Rozmus, Ph.D., R.N.
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(As of September 30, 2013)

ON THE COVER:
During a Nurse Anesthesia simulation lab session, Assistant Professor Matthew Lewis, DNP, CRNA, with a laryngoscope in his left hand and endotracheal tube in his right, demonstrates intubating the bronchial airway trainer as MSN student Carla Elder observes. (Photo by Dwight C. Andrews)

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Greetings from Dean Patricia Starck
“New faculty, new ideas”

Nursing faculty members receive endowment medals at dinner

“AccPhD” program proves model for faculty growth
First scholars complete innovative three-year pilot project

Gifts topping $1.3 million support studies of future nursing educators

Rozmus selected for 2013 Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award

New Practice Doctorate Advances Training for Nurse Anesthetists
BY ANISSA ANDERSON ORR

Partners 2013 Spring Luncheon
CODY UNSER SHARES OUTLOOK WITH PARTNERS

Graduating students select 2013 McGovern Outstanding Teachers

Diabetes researcher Wang named a 2013 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ‘Nurse Faculty Scholar’

School celebrates 40th Anniversary

UTHealth School of Nursing
By the Numbers

Armstrong inducted as 2013 FAAN, receives $2.4 million NINR grant

TURN study aims to change traditional approach to preventing pressure ulcers

Marianne Marcus retires after three notable decades on faculty

For information about programs and opportunities, please contact:

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
School of Nursing Web site at https://nursing.uth.edu

Unless otherwise noted, all text was written by David R. Bates
The 2013-14 academic year at UTHHealth School of Nursing began with a bumper crop of new students. For the first time in our forty-one year history, we have topped 1,000 in total student enrollment. At the close of enrollment in the fall 2013 semester, we had 1,115 students (495 at the graduate level – 113 are doctoral students).

We have welcomed 22 new full-time faculty members – including 10 assistant professors that we eagerly anticipated adding from the fast-track PhD program that we pioneered in 2010 (see Page 4).

Growing our faculty
This three-year pilot program tested our ability to “grow our own” new faculty members. The unflagging commitment of our faculty to the “AccPhD” program and the inspiring success of these 10 outstanding students – Angela Nash, Lisa Boss, Susanne Lim, Anita Frederick, Stacy Crandall, Christina Nunez, Licia Clowtis, Luba Yammine, Sandra Branson and Faith Strunk – demonstrate that we are creating a model for addressing the nationwide problem of a shortage of nursing faculty.

Six more accelerated Ph.D. students were admitted in the fall 2013 semester, supported by more than $1.3 million in local philanthropy (see Page 7). Stipends and other support for this second cohort were raised entirely from local philanthropic sources over just 10 months.

This innovative program has proved its value to our donors and our university – and the long-range payoff for our community will be the hundreds of additional nurses that will be added to the healthcare workforce as these first AccPhD graduates advance through their teaching careers. In addition, as demonstrated by the high quality of their dissertation projects, we expect that these 10 new faculty members will make significant contributions to nursing research and scholarship.

With new leadership put in place in May/June 2013 for our development and public affairs teams, I ended a stimulating two years as leader of the Office of Advancement. I should mention how much I enjoyed working with our fine team of development and communications professionals to advance UTHHealth’s philanthropic enterprise and increase public awareness of the university’s outstanding people and programs.

Last summer, at the request of UTHHealth President Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., I accepted additional executive responsibilities as Senior Vice President for Interprofessional Education, in which I will be working on a new initiative involving all six schools that make up UTHHealth.

The education of healthcare professionals typically occurs in silos. In this model, students learn very little about the roles and responsibilities of colleagues in other disciplines. This lack of knowledge impairs working in collaborative teams upon entering professional practice. This too-narrow perspective is known to result in preventable medical errors, as well as decreased patient satisfaction and quality of care.

IPE means collaboration
Interprofessional education (IPE) involves shared learning experiences among health profession students and across disciplines, with goals for building stronger clinical teams and improving health outcomes. Leading authorities, including the World Health Organization, Institute of Medicine, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing all have identified IPE as an effective way to improve the preparation of the nation’s healthcare workforce and optimize delivery of care.

The basic premise is irrefutable: If we all work together better, understand each other better and value one another as fellow professionals, we can reduce the chances of bad outcomes and provide more effective care to improve the health of our patients.

A successful IPE program requires a commitment from university leadership and calls on the faculty to embrace new ideas and think creatively. We are fortunate at UTHHealth that we already have natural partners on our campus. Six schools within our institutional framework provide a
variety of possible educational and clinical settings. Also, the sprawling Texas Medical Center is an ideal location for seeking partnerships outside our own university.

Three-year plan
Our three-year plan for successful implementation of IPE is, essentially, a grassroots effort. It requires determined champions from among administration, faculty and students to teach the continuous interaction and knowledge-sharing that produces this new “interprofessionalism.”

As a first step, UTHealth is offering a new, collaborative IPE pilot program, the Deans’ Honors Colloquium, for students in each of the university’s six schools. The Colloquium will focus on teamwork and collaboration, including the basic principles of Team STEPPS (“Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance & Patient Safety”) training. Participants will be placed in IPE teams that will meet face-to-face four times during a semester. At the end, participants will share findings and outcomes from interprofessional team-based case scenarios.

For more information about the course, please visit: http://www.uth.edu/ipe/.

We know with certainty that, nationwide, we are going to see a surge in patients as our population ages and as the Affordable Care Act expands the health insurance marketplace to cover more people than ever. Healthcare resources will be hard-pressed, and all of us will need to work in sync as never before to deliver for our patients the best hope for a healthier future.

Patricia L. Starck, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN
Dean, UTHealth School of Nursing
John P. McGovern Distinguished Professor
Huffington Foundation Chair for Nursing Education Leadership

December 2013

Nursing faculty members receive endowment medals at dinner

“The great strength of this university rests on the partnerships we forge, and one of the most profoundly important collaborations is that between our distinguished faculty and the donors who contribute to their work,” said Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., UTHealth president and Alkek-Williams Distinguished Chair, at the Nov. 7, 2012 Faculty Endowment Dinner. The on-campus dinner honored the UTHealth benefactors who have committed resources to establish endowments, and the faculty members who hold these generous endowments.

This dinner was the first formal recognition of endowment holders and contributors in several years. The guest list comprised the faculty recipients and donors of endowments from 2006 - 12.

During the event, endowment donors presented faculty members with their individual, engraved medals. “The medals represent this partnership. They are heavy with substance; they are inscribed as a testament to their longevity; they are to be worn as a symbol of a gift given in perpetuity to support the work of the recipient” said Colasurdo.

Honorees at the dinner from the School of Nursing and their endowments were: Dean Patricia L. Starck, the Huffington Foundation Chair for Nursing Education Leadership (2011); Cathy L. Rozmus, Ph.D., R.N., the PARTNERS Professorship (2011); Joan C. Engebretson, Dr.P.H., R.N., the Judy Fred Professorship in Nursing (2010); and Nancy H. Busen, Ph.D., the Margaret A. Barnett/PARTNERS Professorship in Nursing (2008).

Endowments represent a partnership between a donor and a university.

“The language used in endowment documents in all American universities contains the words “in perpetuity,”’ remarked Julius Glickman, chair of the UTHealth Development Board. “Endowments are in place as long as the university exists, for the purpose of perpetuating excellence. To donors, endowments are an expression of gratitude and faith in the importance of universities and their central role in our democracy.”

— by Jenna C. Taylor,
Office of Advancement
The UTHealth School of Nursing’s original 10 accelerated Ph.D. students have completed their coursework and ambitious research projects in just three years. All 10 received their Ph.D. in Nursing degrees in December 2013. Now, all 10 are assistant professors on the school’s faculty.

The infusion of 10 new, well-prepared nursing educators has arrived none too soon, because student enrollment is at an all-time high. With 620 undergraduates enrolled in fall 2013, undergraduate enrollment increased by nearly 27 percent from fall 2012.

Five of the graduating “AccPhD” students were recognized for special honors at the Awards and Pinning Ceremony at the Bayou City Event Center on August 16, 2013. Licia Clowtis received the School of Nursing Spirit Award for “demonstrated accountability, maturity and peer support.” Angela Nash and Stacy Crandall both earned a Community Health and Service Award. Anitra Frederick took home the Harris County Medical Society Alliance Clinical Excellence Award in recognition of “the ability to work well with physicians and other members of the healthcare team.” And Luba Yamine was one of two recipients of the SON Faculty Award of Excellence.

“Our donors made a $2-million investment in the community that is paying off with 100 percent success,” says Dean Patricia L. Starck. “All ten graduates are teaching and have allowed us to increase enrollment, resulting in more nurses taking care of patients in the future.”
Support and mentorship

“The amazing work ethic of the 10 exceptional students who are now on our faculty, the faculty’s dedication to this innovative model, and the success of the entire program demonstrate that we are creating a model for addressing the nationwide problem of a shortage of nursing educators,” says Dean Starck.

The AccPhD scholars often cite the faculty’s dedication and mentorship in helping them to overcome time constraints and the inevitable setbacks due to things they could not control (like health problems, long commutes and even wildfires). “The faculty was crucial in helping us get through the program in the three-year time period,” says Nunez.

Clowtis describes the accelerated curriculum as “very focused” and says: “There’s really one word that summarizes the benefit of it – support.”

The AccPhD scholars also express appreciation for the clinical sites that helped with their research projects. For example, participation by the Clarewood House Senior Community in Houston was crucial in the dissertation projects of Lisa Boss and “Sandy” Branson, assisted by her two-year-old therapy dog, Bailey.

“I feel like, because of the donors’ sponsorship, because of the ability to focus on my studies alone, that I’ve been able to really throw myself into it,” says Frederick. “It’s really been very much a gift.”

All of the 10 graduates talk enthusiastically about the “intensity” of the program, the challenges of their individual research projects and the esprit de corps among the first group that has sustained them “through thick and thin.”

New alumnae, new faculty members

“I love teaching – it’s my thing!” says Nunez, who already is comfortable on her own in the classroom.

If each AccPhD graduate teaches for just three years, an additional 300 nurses may be added to the available nursing workforce. If each of the 10 in the first AccPhD cohort embarks on a teaching career of about 20 years, this number could grow to 2,000 additional nurses.

The alumnae of the successful first cohort already have plans for partnering on future research projects and publications, as well as pursuing their own interests as faculty members.

Frederick is teaching clinical groups at Texas Children’s Hospital and the TCH-Pavilion for Women. She hopes to continue exploring “maternal role confidence” and ways to improve the attachment experience.

Clowtis calls the cohort’s camaraderie a “wonderful experience” and says, “I don’t see that going away, we’ve bonded so strongly – it’s so special.”

Faith Strunk, who is retired from the Army Nurse Corps., has been very involved with volunteer efforts supporting the Fisher House at the Michael E. Debakey VA Medical Center. She reported on the School of Nursing’s continuing commitment to enhancing the preparation of nurses to care for veterans, service members and their families at the “Joining Forces to Restore Lives: Nursing Education and Research in Veterans Health” conference Oct. 21, 2013 at the Center for Advanced Medical learning & Simulation in Tampa Fla. “The UTHealth School of Nursing knows that by increasing the number of highly-qualified faculty members it can help meet the growing demand for nurses and ultimately improve the overall health of our community, friends, and family members,” says Dean Starck.

The pioneering educational initiative was conceived in 2009 in response to the shortage of nursing faculty. As a tribute to Starck’s more than 25 years of service as dean of the nursing school, it was named in her honor in 2010.

Dr. Mara M. Baun bestows excellence award.
First “AccPhD” Scholars Complete Three-Year Program, Join Faculty

**Legend Healthcare Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Nursing Systems  
Lisa Boss, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“Examination of stress, depression, and cognitive function in the elderly: A biobehavioral approach”

**Cullen Trust for Health Care Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Nursing Systems  
Christina Nunez, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“*A Retrospective Cohort Study: Tuberculosis in Four Major Metropolitan Areas of Texas.*”

**Hamill Foundation Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Nursing Systems  
Sandra Branson, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“The Dosage Effects of Therapy Dog Visitation on Biobehavioral Responses Among the Aging”

**George Foundation Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Nursing Systems  
Angela Nash, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“The Alternative Peer Group: What can ‘winners’ from this innovative program teach us about recovery from adolescent substance use disorder”

**Texas Children’s Hospital Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Family Health  
Anitra Frederick, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“Exploring the Skin-to-Skin Contact Experience Post Cesarean Section”

**Vivian L. Smith Foundation Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Family Health  
Licia Clowtis, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  

**Memorial Hermann Hospital Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Family Health  
Luba Yammine, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“The Relationship between Depressive Symptom Severity and Circulating Level of Endothelin-1 among Males ≤50 years of Age and Females ≤55 years of Age with ACS”

**UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Acute & Continuing Care  
Faith Strunk, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“Symptoms in Early and Long-Term Breast Cancer Survivors Who Have Completed Primary Therapy”

**SON Advisory Council Scholar**  
Assistant Professor, Family Health  
Susanne Lim, PhD  
*Dissertation Topic:*  
“A Behavioral Intervention for Mothers of Colicky Infant”
An outstanding second group of named scholars has started the fast-paced accelerated Ph.D. curriculum and set their eyes on graduation from the UT Health School of Nursing in 2016. The cohort of six includes a former military intelligence officer, a nurse anesthetist, a former elementary school nurse, a nursing quality specialist, an experienced clinical instructor and an engineer from Nigeria.

An unprecedented gift of $450,000 from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ helped to launch this second group of students in the Accelerated Ph.D. Scholars Program, which is supported by a total of nearly $1.37 million in philanthropy from area healthcare organizations, foundations and other philanthropic sources raised over just 10 months.

"The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is dedicated to supporting Texas students with their educational endeavors," said Don D. Jordan, Executive Committee member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. "The UT Health School of Nursing program offers a creative way of addressing the shortage of nurses in the medical field, which will have a direct impact on our local economy. The Show is proud to be a part of this program."

The successful model for the accelerated Ph.D. (AccPhD) program provides highly qualified and motivated candidates with annual stipends of $69,700 for each student – or $230,000 per student over three years, including faculty stipends – to help offset the costs of the program and cover basic living expenses. The stipends enable full-time study so that the students complete their degrees much sooner than the eight years of part-time study it traditionally takes to complete the rigorous doctoral curriculum of 66 post-master's credits.

"These six students represent diverse nursing backgrounds"

"These generous gifts will support these most-deserving students during their studies and research," says UT Health School of Nursing Dean Patricia L. Starck, Ph.D., R.N. "A lot of people will be helped through the continuation of this philanthropically-funded program, because if each accelerated doctoral graduate teaches for just three years, as required, this could mean nearly 200 additional nurses added to our region."

Each doctoral scholar carries the title of an organization that made a gift to the AccPhD initiative of at least $60,000 per year for the three years. These named scholars are: the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholars (two): Seema Aggarwal, M.S.N., R.N., and Chukwudi Ekwemalor, M.S.N., M.B.A., R.N.; the Memorial Hermann Hospital System Scholar: Laura Santibáñez, M.S.N., R.N.; the Texas Children’s Hospital Scholar: Patricia Bryan, M.S.N., R.N.; the Vivian L. Smith Foundation Scholar: Mona Cockerham, M.S.N., R.N.; and the School of Nursing Advisory Council Scholar: Joy Corcione, M.B.A., B.S.N., R.N.

"We will always remain grateful to Dr. Starck and her team and all of the donors for this opportunity," says Chukwudi Ekwemalor, who goes by “Chudi.”

The second group, like the first – all of whom officially received their Ph.D. in Nursing degrees in December 2013 (see Page 6) – will fulfill the program’s
post-graduation commitment of teaching at the baccalaureate level at a nursing school within the Gulf Coast region for at least three years.

“These six students are a diverse group and represent a variety of nursing backgrounds,” notes Geri L. Wood, Ph.D., R.N., coordinator of the Ph.D. in Nursing Program. “They are excited by the opportunity to obtain a Ph.D. as a full-time student and to conduct doctoral-level research.”

The youngest scholar in the group is 31, the eldest is 54. Two hold M.B.A. degrees. Four of the six graduated from Houston-area high schools, and five of the six earned previous nursing degrees at UTHouston.

Creating nurse scholars

“This generous scholarship, from such a prestigious school, has enabled me to use my skills to further conduct research in the art and science of holistic nursing, creating a positive influence in the art of healing worldwide!” says U.S. Army veteran Joy Corcione, who is a 2009 graduate of UTHouston’s accelerated B.S.N. program and most recently worked in the telemetry unit of the Methodist DeBakey Heart Center.

The youngest in the group, Laura Santibáñez has practiced as a nurse anesthetist at Texas Children’s Hospital. She is an enthusiastic double-alumna of UTHouston School of Nursing (see Page 10) – and she currently has a brother, Ricardo Gonzalez, in the Nurse Anesthesia program!

Chudi Ekwemalor knows for a fact that he is a lucky man. He was an engineer in Nigeria and won the government’s visa lottery. Chudi received a visa and green card for himself and his family, which allowed him to pursue his dream of working in health care in the United States. Chudi’s focus is on substance abuse and addiction in adolescents, stemming from his clinical practice as a board-certified psychiatric and mental health nurse.

At graduation in 2012 from UTHouston’s adult nurse practitioner program, Seema Aggarwal received the Faculty Award for Excellence. Having worked in an elementary school and in a busy sports medicine clinic, she says: “I look forward to being able to research concussions to protect adolescent athletes and to expand my area so that I can help influence the future of nursing.”

A 2010 graduate of UTHouston’s M.S.N. program in nursing leadership and administration, Mona Cockerham’s research emphasis has been influenced by her most recent job. “My last several work years have been focused on aligning quality indicators and outcomes for Methodist Willowbrook Hospital in preparation for Magnet designation,” she says. “Excellent health care does not just happen; it is planned and orchestrated to occur.”

Anyone talking to Patricia Bryan can’t help but notice her passion for teaching and improving the health and lives of children. “I love to care for critically ill children and their families – nursing just came naturally to me,” she says. Aside from being an expert clinical instructor who loves to get students excited about being a part of discovery, Patricia also is very committed to researching the pathology of childhood diseases.

In addition to the AccPhD scholars, another 111 doctoral-level students currently are enrolled in the traditional curriculum at the School of Nursing.

To make an online gift in support of the nursing school’s Annual Fund and pacesetting programs like this one, go to http://giving.uthouston.org/SONW13

– includes reporting by Susan Diederich, UTHouston Director of Annual Giving

“This scholarship is a dream come true. I will soon be a part of the solution to the nursing shortage by training new nurses after my graduation.”

– Chukwudi Ekwemalor, a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholar

“This program will give me the opportunity to contribute to the health of the community by providing a quality education to nursing students. I am so grateful that I get to say, that in this world, I am a nurse, a teacher and a scientist.”

– Patricia Bryan, the Texas Children Hospital Scholar
Rozmus selected for 2013 Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Cathy L. Rozmus, Ph.D., R.N., holder of the PARTNERS Endowed Professorship in Nursing, was among 10 UTHealth faculty members chosen in 2013 for The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ highest honor in recognition of their performance in the classroom and laboratory. Rozmus also serves as UTHealth’s assistant vice president for Institutional Assessment and Enhancement.

The Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Awards (ROTA), among the most competitive in the nation, recognize faculty members at UT System institutions who have demonstrated dedication to innovation and advancing excellence. Each of these distinguished faculty members receive a $25,000 award. The ROTA program is funded at $1 million per year through fiscal year 2017.

“These are world-class educators who are critical to the success of UT health institutions and who are critical to the ultimate success of their students. And the students they mentor and teach will become this state’s future outstanding health care providers,” Regents Vice Chairman Gene Powell said. “The combination of great research and great teaching will ensure the UT System continues to be a place of intellectual exploration, educational excellence and unparalleled opportunity.”

Only 39 UT System faculty members received awards for 2013. This year, the UT System is educating more than 216,000 students, and it employs 87,000 faculty and staff statewide.
New Practice Doctorate Advances Training for Nurse Anesthetists

BY ANISSA ANDERSON ORR

Photos by Dwight C. Andrews

With the addition of a new doctoral program in nurse anesthesia, the UTHealth School of Nursing gives students the skills and education to succeed in today’s rapidly changing healthcare environment.

The post-B.S.N. to D.N.P. Nurse Anesthesia program builds on the School of Nursing’s well-regarded M.S.N. in nurse anesthesia – ranked 26 out of 100 programs nationwide by U.S. News & World Report. The new program provides additional focus on healthcare management and policy, ethics, finance and evidence-based practice principles.

“It is going to be important for the nurse anesthesia provider to have this doctoral education in order to be the type of provider the next round of healthcare reform requires,” says Nurse Anesthesia Division Director Kristen Starnes-Ott, Ph.D., CRNA.

NURSE ANESTHESIA TRAINING ADVANCES

The move toward a doctorate is the latest step forward in education for nurse anesthesia – a profession that dates back to the 1800s as the first clinical nursing specialty. In the past 80 years, training to become a certified nurse anesthetist (CRNA) has evolved from a hospital-based program to a baccalaureate degree, master’s degree and now, a doctorate.

“What’s been most exciting is that within the last six years, the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists in conjunction with our accrediting group, The Council on Accreditation (COA) of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs, decided to support doctoral education in nurse anesthesia,” Starnes-Ott says. The decision was spurred by the Institute of Medicine’s 2010 recommendation that nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training. “Because the UTHealth School of Nursing is at the forefront of healthcare education, we decided to go forward with the post-B.S.N. to D.N.P.”

The COA requires all nurse anesthetist programs to transition to a Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P) by 2022.

The change is necessary to keep up with demand for advance practice nurses, Starnes-Ott explains. With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, and an aging population, more people will access healthcare services in the near future. However, there are not enough healthcare practitioners to treat them, especially in rural areas. CRNAs holding practice doctorates will help fill that gap.
PROGRAM PROVIDES RIGOROUS TRAINING

The post-B.S.N. to D.N.P. Nurse Anesthesia program will enroll its first class in May 2014. The school anticipates admitting about 20 students for the 2014-15 academic year.

The post-B.S.N. to D.N.P. program is open to registered nurses who have their B.S.N. and a minimum of one year of critical care experience. The degree is 112 credit hours and takes 36 months to complete. In comparison, the master’s degree is 90 hours and takes 32 months to complete. Both are full-time programs of study. The UTHealth School of Nursing is the only public university in the state to offer a practice doctorate in nurse anesthesia, Starnes-Ott says.

Like the M.S.N. program, the post-B.S.N. to D.N.P. offers a strong academic focus anchored in basic sciences and in-depth study of anesthesia practices, paired with extensive clinical experience. Students spend the first part of their education in the classroom. During the final four to five semesters of the program, they spend an average of 50 hours a week rotating through 14 clinical sites in the Texas Medical Center and suburban healthcare institutions, experiencing a wide variety of medical specialties and patient populations.
“Our goal is to produce a well-rounded practitioner who is knowledgeable in a variety of anesthetic modalities, and who can practice in a variety of settings. Whether they go to a rural setting or an inner city setting – they will be prepared,” Starnes-Ott says. She credits the program’s rigorous training for students’ remarkable pass rate on the National Board on Certification and Recertification’s National Certification Exam (NCE). One-hundred percent of the last graduating class of nurse anesthesia students passed the NCE exam on their first attempt. (See photo on Page 13.)

The program also offers small classes organized in cohorts of 18 to 20 students, which promotes teamwork and collaboration among students and closer interaction with the faculty. And because all faculty members continue to practice clinically, students gain valuable insight into the day-to-day life of nurse anesthetists.

“It is great that the faculty maintain clinical practice, because in academia there can be a disconnect between what faculty are teaching and what’s currently going on in practice,” says Johnny Dang, M.S.N., CRNA, a 2012 alumnus of the Nurse Anesthesia program and a doctoral student in the UTHealth post-M.S.N.-D.N.P. program, currently practicing at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. “They teach us technique and also have valuable anecdotal information from their clinical experience.”

“We throw curveballs at them and teach them how to respond,” says Myron Arnaud, M.S.N., CRNA, assistant track director of Nurse Anesthesia. The goal is to simulate once-in-a-lifetime events in a safe setting, much like a pilot simulator or space simulator would. “It is a very non-threatening environment,” Arnaud says. “We want them to make their mistakes here.”
SIMULATION LAB OFFERS HANDS-ON TRAINING

Adding to their preparation, students like Catherine Gable and Nathan Jones (see photo on opposite page) train in a state-of-the-art simulation lab, which recreates the experience of administering anesthesia in an operating room. The lab uses a high-fidelity patient simulator, nicknamed Stan, whose functions and responses mimic those of a human – right down to his dilating pupils. Students administer the anesthesia, like they would with a real patient, and monitor Stan’s vital signs. Faculty members control the treatment scenario by computer.

GRADUATES HAVE MANY CAREER OPTIONS

• Program graduates can choose to practice as part of an anesthesia team with an anesthesiologist, or can start their own practice – providing anesthesia for surgeons, obstetricians, podiatrists and other physicians.

• An estimated 30 percent of graduates from UT Health’s nurse anesthesia program are practicing in rural Texas, an area severely lacking in anesthesia services.

• City or country, a rewarding job awaits qualified nurse anesthetists when they graduate – offering autonomy and an attractive salary. CRNAs are one of the best-paid nursing specialties. New graduates can earn $120,000 to $150,000 depending on where they practice, Starnes-Ott says.

• “The return on investment (for nurse anesthetist graduate education) is substantial,” she adds. “So while the programs are rigorous, the benefits are considerable.”

Nurse Anesthesia students and alumni are enthusiastic about becoming CRNAs and about the preparation they received at UTHealth School of Nursing. Here’s what some of them told Anissa Anderson Orr:

**Why nurse anesthesia?**

“The CRNA program was the next logical step for me,” says Nathan Jones, R.N., a second-year student in the M.S.N. program. He adds that the typical work schedule of a CRNA allows more time for family than other health professions.

“I followed a CRNA while I was at Texas Children’s Hospital, and I absolutely loved what she did,” says Susan Dixon, R.N., a first-year student in the program. She adds that she likes the autonomy and additional responsibility of a CRNA.

**What do you like most about the Nurse Anesthesia Program?**

“You get an excellent education, and I didn’t feel like I would be buried under school loans by the end of the program,” says Cindy Kwok, R.N., a second-year nurse anesthesia student.

“Because I had to move across the state, and move my husband, getting to stay in Houston (for clinical rotations) is nice,” says Shayla Jones, R.N., a second-year student from Abilene, Texas.

“The simulation lab is fantastic for preparing students for emergency situations,” says Jennifer Jones, M.S.N., CRNA, a 2012 graduate of the nurse anesthesia program and now a doctoral student in UTHealth’s post-M.S.N.-D.N.P. program, currently practicing at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

**What advice would you give someone interested in becoming a CRNA?**

“Shadow a CRNA,” says Laura Santibáñez, M.S.N., CRNA, who now is the Memorial Hermann Hospital System Scholar in the nursing school’s Accelerated Ph.D. program (see Page 6). “And bring something unique to the table. Nurse anesthesia is a profession that is uniquely different because CRNAs are very autonomous. We want people who are going to be leaders.”

Working nurses should focus on building their skills, adds Jennifer Jones. “If you are working in the ICU, take the sickest patient you can. That type of experience really does translate how well you do in the curriculum in school.”

For information: https://go.uth.edu/bsndnp
Quality-of-life campaigner Cody Unser's upbeat, “Stand on the Gas!” attitude found a rapt audience during the PARTNERS “Share The Care” Spring Luncheon at the River Oaks Country Club, benefiting the UTH Health School of Nursing. About 450 guests eagerly joined in the “great adventure” of the keynote speaker, who is the daughter and granddaughter of Indy 500 car-racing legends.

Now a tireless proponent of therapeutic scuba-diving, Cody Unser suddenly developed transverse myelitis at age 12 and became paralyzed from the chest down. At 13, she founded the Cody Unser First Step Foundation, a New Mexico not-for-profit corporation aimed at raising research funds to fight paralysis and to build awareness of Transverse Myelitis. Cody has dedicated herself to “giving a name and face to a disease most people don’t know about.”

Transverse myelitis (TM) is a rare neurological syndrome that inflames the spinal cord, causing pain, weakness and often paralysis. About 1,400 new cases of this disorder are diagnosed each year. Today, the Albuquerque native travels the country raising awareness for paralyzed persons while striving to improve their quality of life.

Her foundation’s Adaptive Scuba Program was born of Cody’s transformative scuba-diving experience in the water, which she believes can “change lives one dive at a time” and potentially benefit all people with disabilities. “Once I learned scuba diving and got my certification in the ocean, I got my freedom back, my independence,” Cody said. “You’re FREE in the water…”

Cody encouraged the audience to “Stand on the gas!” and not accept limitations on fully experiencing life. Her presentation at the PARTNERS luncheon included video of a 2011 CBS documentary with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, showing that some paralyzed patients had improved feeling and function after they had been scuba diving. Researchers are testing the theory that nitrogen build-up in the subjects’ tissues, as a result of repeated scuba dives, may increase levels of the chemical serotonin in their central nervous systems. That serotonin influx might “jump-start” nerves in the spine without input from the brain.

Likening the healthcare professions to auto racing, Cody said: “Teamwork is at play in both, and every team member is essential. I’ve been deeply touched by so many nurses who got me ‘back on the road’ when I really needed it.”

Praising nurses
She described the rehabilitation and recovery process as “dealing with the small, everyday things first, then the big things everyone wants.” Saluting nurses as the “warming heart of healthcare,” Cody credited compassionate care and encouragement by nurses for helping her reclaim her independence.

Now 27, Cody is seeking a master’s degree in public health at George Washington University and looking for new ways to influence politics and policy-making on behalf of medical research, women’s health and disability rights issues. “We all have our own individual stories in life and our struggles – and everyone sometimes needs help,” she said. “What counts is what we share with each other and how we show we care.”

**PARTNERS 2013 SPRING LUNCHEON**

**Cody Unser shares “Stand on the gas” outlook with PARTNERS**

PARTNERS Board Chair Carolyn Moody Drake with her mother, Marie Moody, and daughter Becky Drake Conser.
Cody is an honorary member of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and she also was recently awarded the Red Cross Adult Humanitarian Award. She continues to help veterans from current and past conflicts to heal.

In opening remarks at the luncheon, PARTNERS Board Chair Carolyn Moody Drake observed, “How wonderful it is to be a part of all who ‘Share The Care’ and give of themselves – authentically, creatively, and lovingly.”

Drake, a 1975 B.S.N. graduate of UT El Paso and now a patient advocate, noted: “The nurse is born to serve – when there is a disaster, the nurse is among the first responders willing to risk life, health and his or her own well-being.”

Philanthropist Jan Duncan, a PARTNERS lifetime member, was honored as “an ardent community leader who states her life purpose as ‘Love in Action,’ as well as being a true friend of the UTHealth School of Nursing.” In observance of April 25 as international “Pay It Forward Day,” Drake invited the audience to take away from the table settings a Gerbera daisy in its vase (donated by former PARTNERS chair Leslie Bowlin).

“Give it to someone you care about, so we may continue to inspire one another,” Drake said.

Kathrine McGovern and the John P. McGovern Foundation were the major underwriters of the event. Others underwriters included: PARTNERS Lifetime Member Jan Duncan; PARTNERS Lifetime and Board Member Sheri Henriksen and her husband Ron Henriksen; PARTNERS Lifetime and Board Member Soraya McClelland, her husband Scott McClelland and H-E-B; and Texas Children’s Hospital, represented by Lori Armstrong.

Proceeds from the annual PARTNERS Spring Luncheon help to support programs and services for the UTHealth School of Nursing.

The Unsers around town

Accompanied by her mother, Shelley Unser, Cody visited the School of Nursing the afternoon before the PARTNERS luncheon on April 24 to show nursing students her 70-minute documentary Cody: The First Step, which is narrated by six-time Academy Award nominee Glenn Close. The film describes her treatment over many years by Johns Hopkins physicians. It also includes footage taken at the University of Redlands in California, where Cody earned a degree in biopolitics in 2009, and a closer look at her foundation’s innovative scuba study.

Before leaving Houston, the Unsers and several PARTNERS members visited Fischer House in the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, which provides free or low-cost lodging to veterans and military families receiving treatment. They also toured TIRR Memorial Hermann and the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute.
The UTHHealth School of Nursing’s graduating class of 2013 selected an undergraduate and a graduate honoree from the faculty as winners of the John P. McGovery Outstanding Teacher Awards. The annual faculty honor was announced during May 10, 2013 commencement ceremonies at the downtown George R. Brown Convention Center.

Renae R. Schumann, Ph.D., R.N. – who, at the time, was an associate professor in the Department of Acute and Continuing Care – was named as the nursing school’s undergraduate teacher of the year. Her students praised her as “a great professor, coach and motivator!!”

The graduate teacher of the year was Robert G. Hanks, Ph.D., R.N., assistant professor of clinical nursing in the Department of Family Health.

The 2013 graduate teacher of the year is co-director of the school’s new Accelerated FNP-DNP Program. “Thank you, Dr. Hanks, for all of your positive feedback and constructive criticism!” wrote a nominating graduate student. “You were a great introduction to what being a family nurse practitioner is all about.”

Nominators praised Hanks as “most deserving,” “the best!” and “a passionate instructor who really cares!” Another of his students wrote: “Dr. Hanks is always very helpful when I need anything – very approachable, and he never makes me feel like I have inconvenienced him.”

In addition to teaching appreciative graduate nursing students, Hanks also serves as academic project manager of the school’s component of the Texas Gulf Coast Graduate Nurse Education (GNE) demonstration project in collaboration with three other area schools of nursing and Memorial Hermann Hospital.

Schumann, who also is one of five new Distinguished Alumni of UTHHealth School of Nursing (see Page 19), took up a new challenge in June 2013 as dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health at Houston Baptist University.

Students at each of the six UTHHealth schools choose a John P. McGovery Outstanding Teacher for stimulating curiosity, promoting professional development and contributing to students’ abilities to think creatively. The awards, announced at commencement ceremonies, are made possible by an endowment from the John P. McGovery Foundation.

The two honorees were chosen from among 19 other School of Nursing candidates for the 2013 McGovery Outstanding Teacher Award.

This graduating class of nursing students brought total alumni of the UTHHealth School of Nursing to 9,170 as it celebrated its 40th anniversary as an institution.
Diabetes researcher Wang named a 2013 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ‘Nurse Faculty Scholar’

Jing Wang, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., assistant professor in the Department of Nursing Systems at the UTHealth School of Nursing, is one of just 12 nursing educators from across the United States to win a highly competitive grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) “Nurse Faculty Scholars” program in 2013. Wang received a three-year, $350,000 award to promote her academic career and support her research. The Nurse Faculty Scholar award is given to junior faculty who show outstanding promise as future leaders in academic nursing.

“This award provides a wonderful opportunity to develop and test an interface to connect smart-phone collected diet and physical activity self-monitoring information to Chronicle Diabetes, an existing electronic health record system,” Wang says. “We are aiming to provide a better tool to not only support patient self-management behaviors but also facilitate patient-provider communication, thus, creating a true patient-centered medical home for those with chronic illnesses.”

During her research project, Wang plans to conduct a multi-site randomized clinical trial to examine the efficacy of this interface. If found effective, the user-centered interface in Chronicle Diabetes will be used to support patient self-management education and support, and can be implemented in all diabetes education programs recognized by the American Diabetes Association to potentially benefit millions of patients with diabetes and obesity.

Her mentors for the work will be: Nancy Bergstrom, Ph.D., R.N., associate dean for research at UTHealth School of Nursing; Jiajie Zhang, Ph.D., dean of the UTHealth School of Biomedical Informatics; and Linda M. Siminerio, Ph.D., R.N., professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh.

“Jing is dedicated to improving outcomes of patients with diabetes by changing behaviors and improving communication with providers,” says Bergstrom. “We are pleased that her growth as a scholar and a leader will be nurtured and honed by the opportunities provided by the RWJ Faculty Scholar Award.”

Supporting junior faculty

The RWJF Nurse Faculty Scholars program’s goal is to strengthening the academic productivity and overall excellence of nursing schools by developing the next generation of leaders in academic nursing. Wang is part of the program’s sixth cohort.

“Supporting junior nurse faculty will help curb a shortage of nurse educators that could undermine the health and health care of all Americans,” UTHealth School of Nursing Dean Patricia L. Starck points out. “The Affordable Care Act is vastly increasing the number of people who can access health care in the United States. As the number of patients increases, there will be greater demand for skilled nurses as well as faculty to educate them.”

Receiving the award

To receive the award, scholars must be registered nurses who have completed a research doctorate in nursing or a related discipline and who have held a tenure-eligible faculty position at an accredited nursing school for at least two and no more than five years.

“Right now, many schools of nursing are turning away qualified applicants because they do not have the faculty to teach them,” says Starck. “The RWJF Nurse Faculty Scholars program is helping more junior faculty succeed in, and commit to, academic careers. The program also enhances the stature of the scholars’ academic institutions, which will benefit fellow nurse educators seeking professional development opportunities.”

The Nurse Faculty Scholars program is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered through the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.
a first-class postage stamp cost eight cents,
and Dallas defeated Miami, 24-3, in Super
Bowl VI. Also that year, the School of
Nursing joined The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Houston (now
UTHealth) with 10 faculty members.
Under its first dean, Elizabeth Jones
Snyder, Ph.D., the nursing school admitted
its first class, totaling 98 B.S.N. students.
Celebrating the School’s 40th
Anniversary, nursing historian Adrian
Melissinos, Ph.D., R.N., treated guests to
a retrospective of the school’s four-decade
history in her keynote presentation,
“Recollection and Anticipation:
A Rendering of History,” June 25, 2013
at the Denton A. Cooley, MD and Ralph
C. Cooley, DDS University Life Center.
Remarkably, the School has been led
by only three deans in its history – Snyder,
the late Arlowayne Swort, Ed.D., R.N.,
and Dean Patricia L. Starck.
Melissinos, the current PARTNERS
chair, noted the founding of PARTNERS
(“Promoting Advancement Resources
to Nursing Education, Research and
Students”) in 1994. Other highlights
included the opening of the clinical
practice now known as UT Health
Services (UTHS) in 1991, a swift
expansion of enrollment and academic
programs, and the move into the school’s
first building of its own in 2004 after
construction of the $57-million School of
Nursing and Student Community Center.
Entering its fifth decade, Melissinos
concluded, the School of Nursing “truly is
founded on excellence, focused on
the future!”
The 40th-anniversary special event
honored five new Distinguished Alumni,
who joined 35 others named during
previous anniversaries. Selected for this
distinction are the five honorees listed on
the sidebar to the right.
“We are honoring them for
contributions made to nursing through
patient care, research, education, advocacy,
philanthropy and related endeavors, as
In 1972, Carole King’s “You’ve Got a Friend” was a huge
hit on the radio, the Watergate Scandal was at its height,
The 40th-anniversary special event honored five new Distinguished Alumni, who joined 35 others named during previous anniversaries.
Selected for this distinction were:

**Debbie Adams,**
**B.S.N. Class of 1984**
After 16 years as a nurse, she now is president of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Greater Houston/Galveston, Inc., and she currently chairs the UTHealth School of Nursing Advisory Council.

**Christine “Christy” Blanco,**
**D.N.P. Class of 2010**
Started an organization led by nurse practitioners to provide care to the homebound in El Paso and energetically served on the Texas Nurse Practitioners Executive Committee, advocating for removal of legislative barriers for broadened access to care by APRNs.

**Elizabeth Mann-Salinas,**
**Ph.D. Class of 2011**
A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, she is a frequently-published nurse scientist at the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research at Fort Sam Houston who has received the 2012 Clinical Research Award from the American Burn Association. (She was unable to attend the 40th-anniversary event due to deployment to Afghanistan.)

**Renae Schumann,**
**B.S.N. Class of 1985**
As a UTHealth faculty member for more than 12 years, she was an active supporter of community involvement by nursing students and led a variety of charitable events. May 2013 graduates voted her the undergraduate program’s John P. McGovern Outstanding Teacher (see Page 16). Dr. Schumann now is dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health at Houston Baptist University.

**Carolyn St. Clair,**
**B.S.N. Class of 1979**
Her experience as a nurse included assisting legendary heart surgeons Dr. Denton Cooley and Dr. Michael DeBakey. After earning a J.D. degree, she was a briefing attorney for the Supreme Court of Texas, and now is “Of Counsel” to The Nations Law Firm, representing clients harmed by dangerous drugs, defective medical products and the negligence of others.
The School of Nursing raised $1,371,500 to support a second class of Accelerated Ph.D. Scholars who entered the program in fall 2013 (see Page 7). In FY 2013, the School of Nursing received a total of $3,170,208 in new gifts and pledges – a 120 percent increase over last fiscal year. The School received 543 gifts (18 percent more than in FY 2012) from 400 individuals, foundations, corporations, employees and alumni. Two new endowments from planned gifts resulted in a total gift of $1.5 million. One gift of $500,000 would establish a chair in nursing and one gift of $1 million would establish a scholarship endowment for students interested in global health.

Prepared by Sara Ouissar, School Development Director
Among a number of achievements in 2013, Terri Armstrong, Ph.D., the John S. Dunn Distinguished Professor in Oncology Nursing at the UTHealth School of Nursing, received a $2.4-million grant for her R01 study and also was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN).

In June 2013, the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) awarded a Research Project Grant to “Toxicity profiling: creating novel paradigms to personalize cancer treatment,” which is a multidisciplinary effort that includes work by nurses, epidemiologists and physicians in conjunction with the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG). Armstrong and Michael Scheurer, Ph.D., M.P.H., associate professor at Baylor College of Medicine, serve as principal investigators.

Toxicity is a potential short- or long-term complication of anticancer therapy. The study builds on the team’s previous work, which examined clinical and genomic predictors of myelotoxicity associated with the alkylating agent temozolomide in a population of brain tumor patients.

“My hope is that we will be able to develop a clinical calculator that a physician or nurse practitioner can use in the clinic to enter in the patient information and come up with risk score,” Armstrong says. This could then be used to identify who may benefit from additional genomic testing to assess risk and allow the introduction of preventative and prophylactic measures by the clinical team to avoid toxicity.

Armstrong says the grant can aid in validating and expanding the team’s previous work to include other agents and toxicities. She says it will also look at developing this same type of system for a drug that is commonly used to treat brain cancer, as well as other solid tumors.

The research is supported by the NINR under Award Number R01NR013707 and is funded through March 31, 2018.

Joining 13 others

On Oct. 19, 2013 in Washington, D.C., Armstrong was inducted as a Fellow with a 2013 class of 172 of the nation’s top nurse researchers, policymakers, scholars, executives, educators and practitioners during the American Academy of Nursing’s 40th annual meeting and conference.

Thirteen of the 2013 FAAN inductees were from Texas, and Armstrong joined 13 other current faculty members of the FAAN-designated. She is a professor in the School of Nursing’s Department of Family Health and an adjunct professor in The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center’s Department of Neuro-Oncology.

The AAN includes about 2,068 fellows. With more than 2.8 million registered nurses in the United States, selection is a very high professional honor.

### Sources of Philanthropic Funding

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<th>Source</th>
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### Areas of Philanthropic Support

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A study led by Associate Dean for Research Nancy Bergstrom, Ph.D., R.N., found that nursing homes that utilize high-density foam mattresses may not need to turn residents every two hours to prevent pressure ulcers, a practice that has been used for over 50 years. A randomized controlled trial of at-risk residents demonstrated that there was no difference in the incidence of pressure ulcers for residents turned at intervals of two, three or four hours.

“We are very interested in preventing pressure ulcers. It’s a serious health problem. Also, we’re interested in improving care for nursing home residents,” Bergstrom said. “Turning residents every two hours throughout the night awakens them, and many people can’t go back to sleep, therefore decreasing their quality of life.”

The “Turning for Ulcer Reduction” (TURN) study, with nursing home residents at moderate or high risk of developing pressure ulcers, randomly assigned participants to turning intervals of two, three or four hours for three weeks. Certified nursing assistants turned residents according to the randomized schedule.

A nurse, blinded to turning frequency, documented skin condition every week. A checklist was used to document type of reposition, heel position, brief condition and skin care at each turn. No serious pressure ulcers developed during the study. “The findings of the TURN study highlight that turning residents every two hours may no longer be necessary when high-density mattresses are in place and nursing time can be used to attend to other resident needs, such as feeding, assisted mobility and ultimately develop a stronger relationship with their residents,” said Susan Horn, Ph.D., co-principal investigator at the Institute for Clinical Outcomes Research.

Previously, mattresses exposed residents to higher pressure, requiring more frequent turning to relieve pressure. Nursing homes formerly used mattresses that were made of spring coils and covered in thick plastic. Newer high-density foam mattresses expose residents to less pressure, and as this study shows, two-hour turning may no longer be necessary.

“We hope using high-density foam mattresses and being very much aware of resident’s skin at every turn will decrease the necessity of turning residents every two hours to prevent pressure ulcers and allow residents to sleep more, improving quality of life,” Bergstrom said. “Of course, clinical judgment is necessary when implementing results of this study; these findings do not mean that turning is unnecessary.”

The TURN study was funded for more than $2.5 million by the National Institute of Health’s National Institute of Nursing Research, under grant number 1R01NR009680-01A1, and the National Institute on Aging. Additionally, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Toronto Health Economics and Technology Assessment (THETA) Collaborative at The University of Toronto contributed resources to this study. More than 960 residents in 29 nursing facilities in the United States and Canada participated over 19,000 resident days.

The article was published Oct. 2013 by the Journal of the American Geriatric Society.
Marianne Marcus retires after three notable decades on faculty

After 33 years of service, Marianne T. Marcus, Ed.D., R.N., FAAN, assistant dean and chair of the Department Nursing Systems, retired from the UTHSC School of Nursing after a send-off celebration on December 5, 2013.

School of Nursing Dean Patricia L. Starck said: “Dr. Marcus was on the search committee when I was interviewed for my current position 29 years ago, and I recognized her then as a leader not only in the nursing school, but in the university as well.”

In 2012, Marcus – who is the John P. McGovern Distinguished Professor of Addiction Nursing – received The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ highest honor, the Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award (ROTA), in recognition of her performance in education and research. She also is a member of The University of Texas Academy of Health Science Education. “She has been an excellent teacher and mentor,” Starck said. “She has conducted ground-breaking, federally-funded research and contributed greatly to solving the problems of substance abuse in our community, working with vulnerable populations.”

The UT System Board of Regents has approved the title of “Professor Emerita” for Marcus, effective Jan. 2, 2014.

Project SMART innovator

Marcus is well-known as co-founder of Project SMART (“St. Mary’s Academic Research Team”). The after-school program is an ongoing collaboration between two UTHSC schools and the community of St. Mary’s United Methodist Church, working with the principal and school nurse of HISD’s Foster Elementary in a historically underserved neighborhood of southeast Houston.

Project SMART uses evidence-based health promotion strategies to improve nutrition, physical activity and avoidance of risky behaviors in fourth and fifth grade children. Project SMART participants and B.S.N. community nursing students plant and maintain a seasonal garden at Foster Elementary that included lettuce, carrots, cabbage and mustard greens.

Marcus has mentioned that she “hopes to do some writing” and remain involved in teaching in the field of addictions and education, as well as continuing to contribute to the School of Nursing in whatever ways are possible.

“We wish her the very best in her retirement!” Dean Starck said.


