On the Brink of Precision Health
Connections is the official magazine of the VCU School of Nursing and is published annually. Comments and letters may be directed to the editor.

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Hello Alumni and Friends.

As you have probably noticed, health care and higher education are in the midst of significant change. Changes in both areas are being fueled by a number of factors, including advances in science and technology, changing student demographics, policies, politics, and economics. Schools of nursing sit at the intersection of higher education and health care and are challenged to thrive in a continuous “whitewater” state of change. The VCU School of Nursing remains at the forefront to improve health and health care by advancing science, educating the most well-prepared nurses for the workforce of the future, leading community-based interprofessional practice teams, and influencing the profession of nursing through extraordinary leadership.

Our dynamic legacy of biobehavioral research prominence, guided by a team of renowned researchers, led to important discoveries that have improved the management of symptoms experienced by patients. As we continue building on their great work and include quality and safety among our foci, our faculty are well-positioned to lead in the new era of health care and engage in research aligned with where health care is headed — precision health. Our investigators are already conducting studies related to genetics and epigenetics. In order to support these advancements, we have created a vibrant and sustainable infrastructure that supports the work of our nurse scientists and students.

In this edition of Connections, our cover story focuses on how our Office of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation has adopted forward thinking strategies to support researchers in their quest to conduct current and future cutting-edge studies. This edition also includes a feature story on one of our new faculty members, Dr. Theresa Swift-Scanlan, who brings senior-level research expertise in epigenetics and genomics. As the newly appointed director of our Biobehavioral Research Laboratory, she is an important part of enhancing our research capability, especially as it relates to nursing research contributing to this world of precision health.

We continue to have a lot of great news to share, including being ranked among the top 50 graduate nursing programs in the country, attaining accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, offering students exceptional learning experiences in global learning opportunities, interprofessional education, and establishing exciting new collaborations with a variety of stakeholders. I’m so proud and appreciative of the individual and collective efforts of our extraordinary faculty, staff and students.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our magazine. I am sure you will all agree that we have much to celebrate! Thanks to all of you for your support!

Jean Giddens
Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Professor and Dean
Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair
Imagine having your medical care customized just for you, based on your genetic makeup, needs and personal variables. Known as individualized or precision health, this targeted approach is shaping the future of the biomedical arena.

At the VCU School of Nursing, investigators conduct cutting-edge research that’s on the brink of precision health. Through examining a variety of diseases and conditions, such as leukemia, postpartum depression, sickle cell and asthma, the school’s researchers study biobehavioral factors with the goal of improving symptom management in these conditions.

In the biobehavioral approach, researchers explore the interaction between behavioral, biological and environmental factors. For example, in a current VCU Nursing study, Patricia Kinser, Ph.D., RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, assistant professor, is examining how motivational interviewing and prenatal yoga might reduce or prevent depression during and after pregnancy. The study involves looking for changes in epigenetic patterns, which measure how the psychosocial environment can affect genetic expression.

With precision health, the aim is to identify the best prevention or treatment approach based on an individual’s genetics, environmental factors and lifestyle. In this approach, if a patient has cancer, the physician would assess the genetic variation specific to that individual’s disease, as well as environmental and lifestyle factors to determine the best course of treatment.
“The concept of using precision health to identify key individual factors related to disease and then building those factors into interventions to improve health is one of the most exciting scientific advancements in years, and has great relevance for nursing,” said Deborah B. McGuire, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, associate dean, Office of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation.

Supported by state-of-the-science facilities and a highly efficient and comprehensive research enterprise, the VCU School of Nursing is positioned to be on the forefront of the latest discoveries for improving health outcomes. The school’s Office of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation provides unique resources and facilities that allow investigators to advance their work, despite a challenging funding environment.

Among the resources are a state-of-the-science biobehavioral research laboratory unlike any other at a nursing school, a dedicated team of biostatisticians and data management staff, accomplished project management staff, and a unique funding model that makes the innovative discoveries possible.

A research lab with optimal capabilities

The Center for Biobehavorial Clinical Research is the nexus of biological sample storage and analysis for some of the most robust research focused on biobehavioral symptom science. Notably, it is one of only a few research centers in the country that houses a “breath lab” with the capability of analyzing exhaled breath condensate (EBC), a noninvasive method of detecting biomarkers, mainly coming from the lower respiratory tract.

The 3,800-square-foot laboratory suite, which includes two bench laboratories, a tissue culture laboratory, a physiological monitoring laboratory, and office space for laboratory personnel, serves as the background for a collaborative research process that includes expanded consultation services. The Physiological Monitoring Lab is equipped with state-of-the-science portable equipment for measuring exhaled breath, heart rate variability, vital signs and other important physiologic states. The Biobehavioral Research Laboratory houses all equipment for analysis, including multiplex and molecular biology applications. For example, processing of clinical samples can include isolation of high quality DNA, RNA and protein, said Theresa Swift-Scanlan, Ph.D., RN, associate professor, who recently joined the school and will serve as director of the Biobehavioral Research Laboratory, effective July 1.

“Changes in any of these molecules can then be used as ‘biomarkers’ to guide nursing interventions for various health conditions,” she said.

When investigators begin planning their projects, they meet with laboratory staff to identify project needs, everything from supplies to processing and storage of samples, to analysis and interpretation. Operating as a “store,” the research lab maintains supplies in bulk, allowing investigators to save on overall research expenditures and stretch their funding further, Swift-Scanlan said.

“The materials and equipment needed for research can be costly,” she said. “Instead of researchers being responsible for their own lab needs, we offer centralized services. This is an innovative way to cut down on research costs.”

This centralized approach is especially helpful when investigators are conducting pilot studies, she said.
“We do all we can to ensure that funding does not impact researchers’ ability to continue their work,” Swift-Scanlan said.

Dedicated biostatistics and data management support

Along with its advanced biobehavioral research lab, the school offers biostatistics and data management support services through its Research Support Services unit in the Office of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation. The support team uses an integrated way of helping investigators design studies on the front end for collecting data that are usable at the back end. Among the support team are two Ph.D.-trained biostatisticians – Leroy Thacker, II, who serves as director of research support services; and R.K. Elswick, who has been at the school for more than 10 years, and founded this unit. With a combined 70 years of experience in statistics, Thacker and Elswick also serve as School of Nursing faculty who teach in the Ph.D. and DNP programs, and perform service and scholarship like other full-time faculty.

“We’re fully integrated as faculty within the School of Nursing, and we also provide an important research resource to other faculty members,” Thacker said.

He noted that the support team includes two full-time data management staff members, who both have been with the school for 15 years and have a combined 35 years of data management experience. They’re also fully dedicated to SON researchers, and occasionally offer services to other researchers as time permits.

“They stick with the researcher through the course of the project to ensure data is collected, cleaned and provided to biostatisticians in a readily analyzable form,” Thacker said.

The data base administration and data management are unique for the VCU School of Nursing’s size and in this region, according to Thacker.

“In many universities, nurse researchers can get similar support but the data management staff are not housed in the actual school. As a result, they don’t necessarily have a long-term relationship with the researchers,” he said. “At our school, the relationship is continuous. And it certainly helps that we know nursing data, and we know nursing research.”

A unique funding model

School of Nursing researchers, as do others nationwide, face an increasingly competitive funding environment in advancing their work. The funding landscape has changed significantly since a dedicated team of nurse scientists obtained P20 and P30 grants from the National Institute of Nursing Research to establish the school’s Center for Biobehavioral Clinical Research.

“We’re moving into a new era for our research and a paradigm shift in how we support, expand and sustain our resources.”

–Deborah B. McGuire
Through setting up funding that uses several revenue streams, the Office of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation has been able to creatively manage resources to build on the school’s legacy of research prominence. The model includes direct and indirect costs from grants; philanthropy such as contributions to the McGain-Grap endowment or outright gifts to nursing research; and limited funding (education and general expenses). In addition, the Biobehavioral Research Laboratory’s comprehensive capabilities have led the school to acquire approval from the university to offer services to researchers outside of the school and VCU through a service center mechanism as a way to generate additional revenue.

“We have reinvented ourselves in order to sustain our excellent work,” McGuire said. “We’re moving into a new era for our research and a paradigm shift in how we support, expand and sustain our resources.”

Although the major strength of the school’s research program continues to be its biobehavioral capability, health care quality research is an emerging area, according to McGuire. Some of the projects will involve collaboration with the school’s Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation.

The uniqueness of the school’s research and laboratory capabilities was recently highlighted in VCU’s overall fundraising efforts. When the university kicked off its largest fundraising campaign last fall, tours of the School of Nursing’s research laboratory were an exciting part of the weekend’s activities.

In addition to attracting donor interest, the school’s research capabilities are also expected to continue attracting top talent like Swift-Scalan to be a part of this innovative enterprise.

“With such a rich history and efficient resources, our school is positioned to be a research powerhouse and leader in developing improvements in health outcomes,” Swift-Scalan said, noting that she is grateful for the efforts of her predecessor, Dr. Jamie Sturgill, and the other scientists who helped build the school’s laboratory capabilities. “I’m excited to be a part of the energy and innovative collaboration that are taking this program to an even higher level of excellence.”
Theresa Swift-Scanlan explores individualized patient care

When women are diagnosed with breast cancer, their treatment is usually based on characteristics of the general population of women fighting this disease.

“They’re making life-changing decisions based on probabilities, and those probabilities are based on population predictors,” said Theresa Swift-Scanlan, Ph.D., RN, associate professor at the School of Nursing.

Swift-Scanlan intends to change that.

“I want to explore how those decisions could be based on their individual risk factors; the context of their environment,” she said.

Recently named director of the school’s Biobehavioral Research Laboratory, Swift-Scanlan conducts research on the epigenetics of chronic illness; specifically, the study of variables that mediate or moderate interactions between environmental influences, biology and behavior.

“My goal is to improve risk assessment and help guide treatment for a range of complex illnesses, including cancer and neurologically-related disorders,” she said.

Swift-Scanlan’s research expertise aligns with where the future of health care is headed — individualized health. Also known as precision health, individualized health involves tailoring a patient’s prevention or treatment based on his or her specific genetics, environment and lifestyle instead of the general standard of care.

Swift-Scanlan’s interest in individualized health was budding even before she knew she wanted to be a nurse. The Northside Richmond native started out as a biology major, going on to earn a B.S. from Old Dominion University. She served in various positions on her path to becoming a nurse, including an administrator in the Peace Corps Dominican Republic and a first aid instructor for the Dominican Red Cross.

Following her Peace Corps work, Swift-Scanlan earned a master’s degree in marine molecular biology from the University of Maryland and then served as a senior research technician at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. She recalled volunteering at a local hospice, where one of the nurses motivated her to pursue a life-changing career path.

“She used to tease me and suggested that I should try genetics with nursing,” Swift-Scanlan recalled with a smile.

Thinking of how her Peace Corps experience fits with community health and her hospice experience fits with oncology and chronic illness, Swift-Scanlan decided to pursue nursing. She earned an accelerated B.S. in nursing from Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing while working as a faculty research associate on a psychiatric genetics project at the School of Medicine. Through this work she was inspired to pursue a Ph.D. in nursing/cancer genetics, focusing on combining genetics and epigenetics to explore early detection and improved risk assessment for people with cancer.
For her next career move, Swift-Scanlan joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as an assistant professor. It was there that the many accomplishments coming out of the VCU School of Nursing caught her attention.

“I was familiar with the P20 and P30 center grants, and I read a lot about the researchers’ work,” she said. “This made me smile because I was looking for multi-disciplinary research opportunities.”

Other highlights that stood out to her were the collegial environment and the communication from the school.

“I saw the tagline (Creating collaboration. Advancing science. Impacting lives.) in the correspondence, and it resonated with me,” she said. “I could really see this was a positive environment of hard working collaborators.”

Swift-Scanlan also made an outstanding impression on the School of Nursing, said Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, dean and the Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair.

“We’re thrilled to have a senior researcher of Theresa’s caliber to contribute to the innovative research underway at our school,” Giddens said. “Her background and interest in precision health care support our goal of being on the forefront of discoveries designed to improve health care.”

Swift-Scanlan’s senior-level research expertise is one of the reasons she was appointed as the Ellen Fontaine Winston Distinguished Professor at the School of Nursing. She will be formally invested in this esteemed appointment at a ceremony in the fall.

“Two words come to mind when I think about this professorship — gratitude and opportunity,” Swift-Scanlan said.

Swift-Scanlan has already demonstrated her ability to successfully leverage opportunities. Prior to joining VCU, she earned a patent for her invention, “A Novel Method for Quantitatively Analyzing Methylation in Biological Samples.” Licensed by Cepheid, Inc., the approach allows researchers to measure epigenetic markers even with a small amount of tissue.

Swift-Scanlan has also served as the principal investigator for several National Institutes of Health-funded studies, published numerous articles, and presented at various national and international conferences. In addition, she serves on several journal editorial boards and is a member of the International Society of Nurses in Genetics Research Committee.

Although she’s a senior researcher with many accolades, Swift-Scanlan is most proud of being a mom to her 15-year-old daughter, Sasha. She treasures the time she gets to spend with her family and friends, especially now that she has returned to her hometown.

“I enjoy making a really nice meal and inviting people over to dinner,” she said. “It feels good to be back home in the Richmond area.”
Angie Smith
strives to empower patients to self-manage their health

Angie Smith, AGACNP-BC (B.S.’13/N; M.S.’15/N), made frequent visits to the hospital as a little girl because her mother was very ill. At a young age she realized she wanted to be a nurse. Smith told her Mom, “I will take care of you.”

Originally from New York, Smith moved to Puerto Rico with her family when she was three years old. Later she joined the military, which led her to move to Virginia. Her time in the Marine Corps taking care of injured Marines inspired Smith to obtain a degree in biomedical engineering from VCU. Back then she wanted to help improve prosthetics for injured veterans. But her goals soon changed.

“I realized that instead of working in a lab, I wanted to be with patients and provide compassionate medical care,” said Smith, a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the VCU School of Nursing. “I wanted to experience the connection with patients to help them get through whatever illness or condition they have. Unexpected things happen to people, and I wanted to help them overcome traumatic situations.”

Smith decided to pursue a career in nursing. She earned her B.S. and M.S. degrees at the VCU School of Nursing, becoming board certified as an adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner.

Today Smith splits her time working as an adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner with Southside Physicians Network and its satellite clinic Tindall Wellness Clinic. Both located in the Crater District of Virginia, they serve the cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell and Petersburg, and the counties of Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Surry and Sussex. Southside Physicians Network focuses on internal medicine with patients being referred after hospital visits, while Tindall Wellness Clinic is a free clinic for patients with urgent health care needs.

“I love working at Tindall Wellness Clinic,” Smith said. “I see patients in need of medical services, and I provide the care that they need at no cost to them. They can’t go to a regular doctor, either due to financial hardship or work-related commitments, but I can help treat and educate them regarding their conditions and general health topics.”
Education is one of the aspects that she enjoys most about being a nurse practitioner. Smith loves empowering patients to take better care of their overall health.

Despite her busy schedule as a nurse practitioner and a DNP student, Smith also volunteers with the SYNC program, a partnership with the Virginia Department of Health that serves Petersburg, Prince George, Colonial Heights and Dinwiddie. SYNC looks at the population’s needs and tackles different chronic diseases affecting the community, such as hypertension and heart disease. In addition, Smith is an active member of the Virginia Nurses Association and the Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners.

During her time in the DNP program, Smith has worked closely with Shelly Smith, DNP, APRN-BC, clinical assistant professor and director of the DNP Program. She feels that Shelly Smith is an inspiration and a wealth of knowledge.

“Dr. Smith focuses on enhancing the practice of and empowering nurse practitioners,” Angie Smith said. “She makes sure that her students continue to grow.”

Shelly Smith described Angie as “really a delight” and said she has been “a pleasure to work with.”

“Angie receives feedback well and has an optimistic attitude. Her positivity about her work is contagious, and her passion about her work is visible,” Shelly Smith said. “With the valued added by our DNP program, I know Angie will build on these qualities and her leadership abilities. I believe her DNP project will help empower patients to care for themselves and lead healthier lifestyles. That is the exciting part about VCU’s DNP program, watching our students transform health care; it doesn’t get any better than that!”

Smith feels that her education at VCU is preparing her for her goals.

“This program and the curriculum give me the tools to help make changes in the community,” Smith said. “I chose the DNP program at the VCU School of Nursing because of the school’s reputation and knowledgeable professors. The research focus and affiliation with the VCU Health System are what I need to gain a wealth of knowledge to continue to grow as a nurse leader and help improve health care in our communities.”

After her May 2018 graduation, Smith said she plans to continue working at the clinics but the SYNC project has led her to want to do so in a different way.

“Richmond is rich with multiple free clinics but unfortunately the Crater District area is not,” Smith said. “I want to create more free clinics in this area.”
Growing up in Short Pump, a small suburb outside of Richmond, Keri Geiger, RN, ACRN (B.S.’11/N), always had nursing in the back of her mind. She said, “It’s a family tradition to be in the medical field.”

Geiger’s father, Dr. Frederick Klein, is a retired urology surgeon with ties to VCU Health System. Her mother, Kathryn Gouldin Klein (B.S.’74/N), is a retired nurse and VCU School of Nursing graduate. Despite her parents’ career choices, Geiger didn’t initially choose nursing as her career path.

After graduating from high school, Geiger received her undergraduate degree in biology from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. She contemplated attending veterinary school and medical school after graduation. However, neither of those options seemed to be the right fit for her.

Continuing the family tradition, Geiger moved back to Richmond and enrolled in the VCU School of Nursing’s accelerated B.S. program.

“The nursing field has always appealed to me because of the variety of careers,” Geiger said. “From working on the floor in a clinical environment to conducting research, there are so many options in nursing, which really attracted me to the field.”

During her time at VCU, Geiger recalls having the desire to travel abroad and work as a nurse after graduation. She first worked in South Africa with HOPE Africa from August 2013 to August 2014. Upon her return, Geiger worked briefly with the Richmond City Health District as a public health nurse on the communicable disease team. She then signed up for a nine-month assignment, which began in April 2016, in Central African Republic with Doctors Without Borders.

“My assignment in Central African Republic included supervision and administration duties as well as hands-on nursing care,” Geiger said. “The focus was on training and mentoring the local staff.”

According to a recent Doctors Without Borders report, Central African Republic was identified as a country to watch because of its rapidly growing HIV rate, said Geiger. During her assignment, Geiger supervised both the inpatient department and HIV team. For the inpatient department, she worked closely with the expatriate doctor to make sure that the team understood and followed his orders appropriately.

With the HIV team, Geiger supervised the diagnosis, treatment and education of nearly 1,400 patients.

“My work on the HIV team was very interesting because we saw patients from as far as 250 kilometers away,” Geiger recalled. “We were located on the border of Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There weren’t many health care services available so people would come to us for a reliable source of HIV drugs.”

Keri Geiger engages in global health care

Keri worked with Dr. Dorly Legrand during her Doctors Without Borders assignment.
Geiger recalls that providing medications for patients in the Central African Republic created some problems. Internal conflicts and armed groups made traveling to the hospital dangerous for patients. There were issues with patients being late or missing their appointments because they weren’t able to get to the hospital safely.

“One of our new initiatives was helping patients form ‘groups’ within their own communities,” explained Geiger. “The group leader could come to the hospital and take the HIV drugs for the entire group back to their village. When I left the assignment, we had already formed several groups.”

Geiger feels that her education at VCU prepared her to be successful on her overseas assignments.

“The skills learned in my public health clinicals were very valuable during my Doctors Without Borders assignment,” Geiger said. “I was able to draw on the skills that I learned at the VCU School of Nursing when treating HIV patients and children with malaria. The strong emphasis on the clinical program has been very useful, and I’m really proud of the variety of education that I received.”

During her time in the accelerated B.S. program, Geiger was mentored by Fay Parpart, M.S.N., RN, ANP-BC, affiliate faculty with the VCU School of Nursing and former clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Health. The two also worked together at the Richmond City Health District after Geiger’s graduation.

“Keri is a ‘big picture’ person. She sees how one illness or health problem impacts individuals as well as communities,” Parpart said. “At the School of Nursing she learned how to develop individual treatment plans, community programs and policy guidelines. It was evident that she would succeed in her desire to work globally.”

In April 2017, Geiger traveled to Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, and worked in the newborn unit of a maternity hospital with Doctors Without Borders.

“There are a lot of hardships over there, including the living conditions which are very different from the States,” Geiger said. “But I’m looking forward to continuing my work with Doctors Without Borders. I love the opportunity to do something different. At the end of the work day, I feel that I’ve made a huge impact in people’s lives.”
Alumni receive 2016 Virginia Nurses Foundation awards

The Virginia Nurses Foundation presents awards each year to exceptional nurses from throughout the Commonwealth, as well as those who have been friends of nursing. The following School of Nursing alumni received 2016 awards:

**Donna Bond**, DNP, RN, CCNS, AE-C, CTTS (B.S.'94/N) clinical nurse specialist with Carilion Clinic Roanoke Campus – the 2016 Magnet Consortium Excellence Award for Advanced Practice Nursing;

**Kevin Shimp**, RN (B.S.'04/N) nursing director with VCU Health System – the 2016 Magnet Consortium Excellence Award for Nursing Leadership;

**Trina Trimmer**, M.S., RN (B.S.'82/N) nurse clinician with VCU Health System – the 2016 Virginia Nurses Foundation Leadership Excellence Award for Direct Patient Care – Patient Safety.

Linda Hines named CEO of Virginia Premier Health Plan

**Linda Hines**, M.B.A., RN (B.S.'80/N; M.S.'99/N), has been named CEO of Virginia Premier Health Plan. Hines’ distinguished career began more than 20 years ago as a bedside nurse and a nurse manager. She rose through the ranks of management and leadership within Virginia Premier, culminating with her promotion to chief executive officer. In her current role, Hines has been responsible for business line and strategic plan execution, and overall management of the leadership team to ensure that Virginia Premier delivers exemplary customer service, while maintaining a strong culture of quality and innovation.

Sharon Pratt Lapkin selected to join the Nursing Board at the American Health Council

**Sharon Pratt Lapkin**, RN, CPHRM (M.S.'01/N) administrative director and senior risk manager at Bon Secours Health System, Inc., has been selected to join the Nursing Board at the American Health Council. Lapkin has more than 23 years of experience in the nursing field.

Leslie Wyatt retires after 40-year career in pediatrics

**Leslie G. Wyatt**, RN (B.S.'72/N; M.S.'76/N), retired as vice president for children’s services and executive director of Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU. Wyatt dedicated her 40-year career to advancing children’s health as a pediatric nurse and administrator. Wyatt led countless initiatives, including the development of the hospital’s Feeding Program, the Children’s Hospital Foundation Heart Center, a new pediatric emergency room, therapy and multispecialty centers across the community, and the new Children’s Pavilion.

Denise Lynch receives VCU President’s Service Excellence Award

**Denise Lynch**, RN (B.S.’89/N) hospital administrator at VCU Health, received the 2016 VCU President’s Service Excellence Award, which recognizes outstanding performance, achievement and service excellence in support of the VCU’s Code of Conduct and strategic plan. Lynch also received the School of Nursing alumni award for Outstanding Practice in 2014.
Crystal Farmer appointed chief nursing officer of Parham Doctors’ Hospital

Crystal Farmer, RN (B.S.’09/N; M.S.’11/N), has been appointed chief nursing officer of Parham Doctors’ Hospital. Farmer previously served as the CNO of Retreat Doctors’ Hospital, where she led the hospital to a top ranking in HCA patient satisfaction scores. In addition, she has more than 19 years’ experience in various nursing leadership roles as a registered nurse at Henrico Doctors’ Hospital, managing, coordinating, and overseeing the clinical operations of several departments and units throughout the hospital.

Paula Saxby receives VCU Volunteer Service Award

Paula Saxby, Ph.D., RN (M.S.’85/N; Ph.D.’92/N) deputy executive director at the Virginia Board of Nursing, was awarded the MCVAA Outstanding Alumnus Award at the 2016 VCU Alumni Volunteer Service Awards. In her current role, she oversees the approval for all registered nurse, practical nurse and nurse aide education programs in the state. A registered nurse since 1978, Saxby works with the Virginia Nurses Association on nursing education progression. On the national level, she serves as liaison between the state board and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing regarding licensure exams and nurse aide certification exams.

Lisa Feierstein merges sleep services company

Lisa Feierstein, M.B.A., RN (B.S.’78/N) president of Active Healthcare, Inc. in Raleigh, North Carolina, merged her company IntegraSleep and its CPAP division with SleepWorks and MedBridge Home Medical. She continues to operate the company’s asthma and diabetes businesses. Feierstein has received numerous awards, including being selected as one of the VCU School of Nursing’s 120 Visionary Leaders.

Alumnae recognized in annual OurHealth Best Bedside Manner awards

Amy L. Foster, RN, AGACNP-BC (M.S.’13/N) of Richmond Gastroenterology Associates was voted first place for the OurHealth Richmond Annual Best Bedside Manner Award. Lynn E. Woodcock, FNP (B.S.’95/N; M.S.’97/N) of Family Practice Specialists of Richmond was voted third. Ashley Beavers, ACNP (M.S.’13/N) of Pulmonary Associates of Richmond; Bonnie Johnson, ANP-C (B.S.’99/N; M.S.’01/N) of Virginia Cancer Institute; Karen Saunders, M.S.N., CPNP (B.S.’76/N) of Prime Care Family Practice; and Ife Torrence, NP (B.S.’04/N) of Bon Secours Primary Health Care Associates, all received honorable mention. Karen Martin, WHNP (M.S.’94/N) of Augusta Health Care for Women, and Shannon Ikenberry, RNC, WHNP (M.S.’05/N) of The Woman’s Center, both received honorable mention in OurHealth Charlottesville & Shenandoah Valley magazine. Janet Theimer, NP (M.S.’97/N) of Carilion Clinic Obstetrics & Gynecology, was voted third in Roanoke, and Melinda L. Barber, M.S.N., FNP-BC (B.S.’99/N) of LewisGale Physicians Dublin was voted third in New River Valley for OurHealth Southwest Virginia magazine. Glenda Ball, FNP-BC (B.S.’82/N; M.S.’88/N) of LewisGale Physicians Blacksburg, and Laurie Buchwald, WHNP, FNP (M.S.’95/N) of LewisGale Physicians Christiansburg, both received honorable mention. The 2016 Best Bedside Manner Awards, presented by OurHealth magazine specific to communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, honor medical providers voted on by the local community for their kindness, empathy and attentiveness.
Reunion Weekend 2017 Highlights

VCU School of Nursing alumni returned to campus April 7-9 to celebrate Reunion Weekend at a variety of events, from class-specific dinners to tours of the School of Nursing’s research lab and clinical learning center. The weekend’s activities also included an alumni breakfast, a State of the School address by Dean Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, and the presentation of alumni awards.

This year’s alumni awards recipients are Tonjanika Boyd, PMHNP-BC, (M.S.’15/N), psychiatric and mental health nurse practitioner and owner, Unique Holistic Care, LLC, Outstanding Young Alumnus Award; Anne Walpole, NP (M.S.’87/N), recently retired as a women’s health nurse practitioner, Henrico County Health Department, Outstanding Nurse Practice Award; Linda Dawn Cockram Baxter, RN, PMHNP/CNS-BC, ANP-BC (B.S.’92/N; Ph.D.’05/N), psychiatric and mental health nurse practitioner, Commonwealth Counseling Associates, Outstanding Nurse Service Award; and Deborah J. Jones, RN (M.S.’02/N; Ph.D.’07/N), associate dean for professional development and faculty affairs, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Outstanding Nurse Alumnus Award.

In addition, Vicki Tedeschi, RN, CPN (B.S.’12/N), clinical nurse with VCU Health and a May 2017 graduate of the master’s program in the family nurse practitioner concentration, received the MCVAA Scholarship Award at the MCV Foundation’s 50-Year Grand Alumni Society Induction Brunch. View more photos of the event on the VCU School of Nursing’s Facebook page.
CLASS NOTES

00s

Toni Green (B.S.’08/N), married Curtis Thomas on March 28, 2015.

Alexa Merchant (B.S.’05/N), is an assistant clinical professor in the nursing science program at the University of California Irvine.

90s

John Morgan (B.S.’96/N), moved to New Orleans in 2014 and is working as an RN in the float pool at Ochsner Medical Center’s main campus. He plays guitar and sings in two bands: Blue Biscuit, a blues and R&B band, and Hallelujah Hatrack, a Grateful Dead cover band.

Janet Routson (Cert.’95/N), retired in 2004 and relocated to the Houston area where she continues to research various issues for publication.

Robin Heath Kahn (B.S.’92/N), was promoted in September 2015 to senior director of performance improvement for clinical excellence at HCA’s Capital Division.

80s

Dennis Connell, DNP (B.S.’89/N; M.S.’94/N), graduated from Old Dominion University on May 7, 2016, with a Doctorate of Nursing Practice, Nurse Executive.

Stephanie Ferguson, Ph.D. (M.S.’87/N), was appointed to the Committee on Global Health and the Future of the United States by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. The committee will seek to demonstrate the importance of continued investment in global health initiatives to the new presidential administration.

Erin Saunders Reeve (B.S.’81/N), is a clinical educator for ortho/trauma/surgery with Winchester Medical Center in Winchester, Virginia. She became a basic life support instructor in 2016.

SAVE THE DATE!

Next year’s Alumni Reunion Weekend dates are set for April 20-22, 2018 and will recognize classes ending in 3s and 8s. If you are an alumnus and would like to be involved in the planning, please contact Amanda Mullins at amullins3@vcu.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

2000s
Diane Osborne (B.S.’02/N)
Lori Para (B.S.’03/N)
Rhonda Phillips (B.S.’06/N)

1990s
Mary Blount, Ph.D. (Ph.D.’99/N)
Margaret Craft (B.S.’91/N)
Judith Lane (B.S.’91/N)
Emily Smith (B.S.’90/N)
Valerie Smith (B.S.’94/N)

1980s
Nancy Geary (M.S.’85/N)

1970s
Barbara Pendergrast (B.S.’71/N)
Cynthia Faison (B.S.’78/N; M.S.’94/N)
Mary Ridley (B.S.’76/N)
Victoria Stapp (B.S.’72/N)
Hilda Woodby, Ph.D. (M.S.’76/N)

1960s
Shellie Bradford (B.S.’66/N)
JoAnne Spauls Smith (B.S.’66/N)
Mary Swisher (B.S.’61/N)
Betty Anne West (B.S.’66/N)

1950s
Barbara Hendricks (B.S.’57/N)
Patricia Holliday (B.S.’58/N)
Shirley Kirby (B.S.’58/N; M.S.’78/N)
Susan Lilly (B.S.’59/N)
Ira Loper (Dipl.’58/N)
Jacqueline Mardan (B.S.’59/N)
Clara Matz (B.S.’50/N)
Jocelyn Anne Mumpower (B.S.’54/N)
Patricia Ryder (B.S.’51/N)
Helen Cook Stiebel (B.S.’54/N)
Frances Tack (B.S.’54/N)

1940s
Dot Gardner (Cert.’48/N)
Margaret Starkey (B.S.’44/N)
Katherine Hare Tucci (Dipl.’43/N)

1930s
Jessie J. Landmesser (Dipl.’39/N)
Dear School of Nursing Friend,

Each of us can likely remember a time when someone supported us in a way that was immensely helpful. Small acts of kindness often have ripple effects that in turn yield tremendous impacts.

As you know, the mission of the School of Nursing is to improve health and the human condition through nursing research, education and service. By making a financial investment in the school, you show your support of the school's mission. You honor faculty and administrators who made an impact in your lives. You support the best and brightest, by enabling the school to admit students regardless of their financial situation. Ultimately, you place your vote of confidence in the school, by making a gift.

Over 700 of the School of Nursing’s alumni and friends helped shape the school this fiscal year with outright gifts and planned gifts, and by doing so, directly supported our students, faculty and staff. Thank you for your generosity, dedication and thoughtfulness. Now, more than ever, our society needs educated and empowered nurses. Your gift, no matter the size, helps make the education of these amazing individuals happen.

Warmly,

Kate

Beth Rodgers awarded VCU Medallion for Endowed Faculty

Beth Rodgers, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, chair of the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, was awarded the VCU Medallion for Endowed Faculty in recognition of her appointment as the Nursing Alumni Endowed Professor. This award serves to recruit or retain highly acclaimed nursing scholars who have made significant contributions to the mission of the VCU School of Nursing and are highly visible and personally involved in activities that directly benefit the alumni. Rodgers is a nationally renowned leader in nursing knowledge, theory and concept development, and qualitative research.
Alesia Gibbs is the executive assistant in the Office of the Dean. She most recently served as assistant to the general manager/chief executive officer for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission in Laurel, Maryland.

Dawn Goldstein, Ph.D., RN, PMHNP-BC, CCM, is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. She most recently served as psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner for Pasadera Behavioral Health Services in Tucson, Arizona. Goldstein graduated from the University of Phoenix with both a B.S. and an M.S. in nursing. She earned a psychiatric mental health NP certificate and a Ph.D. in nursing from the University of Arizona College of Nursing.

Lyons Hardy, M.S., RN, PMHNP, is a clinical instructor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. Hardy most recently served as an adjunct faculty member at the School of Nursing and as a nurse practitioner at the Center for Advanced Health Management at VCU Health. She earned a B.S. in religious studies from UVA, a B.S. in nursing from VCU, and an M.S.N. and post-master’s psychiatric NP certificate from UVA.

Jeannetta Hollins, Ph.D., is the director of the Office of Student Success, formerly known as the Office of Enrollment and Student Services. Hollins most recently served as acting dean of student services and campus financial aid director at Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia. She earned a B.S. in rehabilitation counseling from Indiana University of Pittsburgh, a master’s of education in school counseling from University of Pittsburgh, and a Ph.D. in community college leadership from Old Dominion University.

Gary Huff is the associate dean of the Office of Business and Administration. He most recently served as associate dean of administration at VCU’s School of the Arts in Qatar. Huff received his bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, an M.B.A. from HEC Paris, France and a certificate in LGBT Executive Leadership from Stanford University.

Wilda Jones is the project coordinator for the Office of Practice and Community Engagement. She most recently served as an administrative specialist at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Department of Nursing. Jones graduated from VCU with a B.S. in finance, and the Virginia Union University School of Theology with a master’s degree in divinity.

Monica Lozano is the academic program evaluation and analytics specialist in the Office of Academic Affairs. She most recently served as data analyst and senior project manager for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Lozano earned a B.A. in sociology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a master’s degree in public administration from the City College of New York.

Todd Smith, Ph.D., AGACNP-BC, FNP-C, FF/EMT-P, is an assistant professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. He most recently served as a nurse practitioner in the Emergency Department at VCU Medical Center. Smith earned a B.S.N. from Ohio State University, an M.S.N. (FNP) from Ohio University, and both a post-master’s certificate (AG-ACNP) and Ph.D. from UVA.

Theresa Swift-Scanlan, Ph.D., RN, is associate professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. She most recently served as a research collaborator at the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center at UNC-Chapel Hill. She earned a B.S. in biology from Old Dominion University, an M.S. in marine molecular biology from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and both a B.S.N. and Ph.D. in nursing/cancer genetics from Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

Jackie Van Dao is the customer support specialist in the Information Technology Office. Van Dao earned a B.S. in public relations with a minor in human resource management from VCU.
**Facts & Figures**

**Enrollment for 2016–2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Students</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>593</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pre-licensure and RN to B.S.</em></td>
<td><em>Master’s &amp; Post-Master’s Certificate</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average GPA in 2016</td>
<td><em>Ph.D.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Traditional B.S. Program</em></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>299</td>
<td><em>DNP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse practitioner students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students involved in community-based learning 2016-2017**

- 299 Undergraduates
- 57 Nurse practitioner students

**Average NCLEX pass rates**

- 2015: 93.1%
- 2016: 93.2%
Diversity

Students: 881 total

- 70% White
- 8% African American
- 3% Hispanic/Latino
- 3% Two or more races
- 8% Asian
- 7% Unknown

Faculty: 48 total

- 85% White
- 10% African American
- 2% Asian
- 2% Unknown

Grants submitted 2016-2017

- 26 + 20 subprojects

Total research funds received

$1.3M

Increase in faculty since 2013

37%
VCU School of Nursing among top 50 graduate schools nationwide

U.S. News and World Report announced in March that VCU School of Nursing is among the top 50 graduate nursing schools in the nation. The school is tied at No. 48 in the 2018 edition of U.S. News & World Report’s “Best Graduate Schools.” U.S. News factors in data on reputation, faculty resources and grade-point average when ranking the top nursing master’s programs.

Victoria Menzies inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing

Victoria Menzies, Ph.D., RN, PMHCNS-BC, associate professor, was inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) in 2016. Menzies is one of 164 nurse leaders nationwide who were inducted as fellows of the AAN. Selection as a fellow is considered one of the most prestigious honors in nursing.

Patricia Kinser reelected to SNRS Board of Directors

Patricia Kinser, Ph.D., RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, assistant professor, was reelected to the Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS) Board of Directors and as director of awards for a two-year term. The mission of SNRS is to advance nursing research through dissemination and utilization of research findings.

SON partners with UnitedHealthcare to provide free weekly meals to local seniors

The School of Nursing received a $25,000 grant from UnitedHealthcare to help reduce hunger and social isolation among seniors. The grant funds free weekly meals provided by FeedMore and served by nursing students at three senior apartment communities in Richmond. Pamela Parsons, Ph.D., RN, GNP-BC, director of practice and community engagement, wrote the grant to receive the funds for this program.

Tamara Zurakowski receives HRSA grant

Tamara Zurakowski, Ph.D., GNP-BC, clinical associate professor and director of the undergraduate program, received a $800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration to implement a program to increase the number of nurses in community-based clinical sites that provide care to underserved populations. Zurakowski received the grant for her project “Primary care Options to Maximize Opportunities to Transform Education in Nursing (PrOMOTE-Nursing).” The two-year grant will increase nursing students’ clinical experience in primary care and community-based settings with the goal of encouraging them to seek community-based positions when they graduate. The project aims to address the lack of community-based nurses who are prepared to meet the health care needs of the underserved.
Debra Shockey receives Clinical Scholars Fund award

Debra Shockey, DNP, RN, CPNP, clinical assistant professor, was selected to receive the 2016-2017 Clinical Scholars Fund award. She was awarded $15,000 for her project "REducing Anxiety in CHildren Undergoing Procedures: REACH UP!"

SON partners with HCA Virginia for RN to B.S. program

HCA Virginia and the VCU School of Nursing have partnered to offer a special cohort of the RN to B.S. program for HCA Virginia nurses. The school’s online degree allows registered nurses with a diploma or associate’s degree to earn a bachelor’s degree while maintaining full-time employment. The first cohort of 13 students began classes in fall 2016.

Melissa Dollings receives award for Neonatal Network article

Melissa Dollings, a Ph.D. student, won a $500 prize for her article’s selection as the 2016 Manuscript of Exceptional Merit. Titled “An Integrated Review of Intestinal Microbiota in the Very Premature Infant,” the article was published in the July/August 2016 issue of Neonatal Network.

Michele Olson Pancoast selected as an SREB Doctoral Scholar

Michele Olson Pancoast, RN, a Ph.D. student, was accepted into the SREB Doctoral Scholar Program. The SREB Doctoral Scholars Program provides financial assistance and research funding, as well as career counseling, job postings and a scholar directory for networking and recruiting.

Suzanne Ameringer and R.K. Elswick receive St. Baldrick’s Foundation grant

Suzanne Ameringer, Ph.D., RN, associate professor, and co-investigator R.K. Elswick, Ph.D., biostatistician, have been awarded a $50,000 grant from the St. Baldrick’s Foundation for their project “Improving Symptom Self-Management in Adolescents & Young Adults with Cancer.” This project will test whether use of the C-SCAT improves the self-management of symptoms and patient-provider communication about symptoms in adolescents and young adults with cancer.
Tamara Broadnax elected president of Central Virginia Chapter of NBNA

Tamara Broadnax, RN, NEA-BC, a DNP student and director of Telemedicine at VCU Health, has been elected president of the Central Virginia Chapter of the National Black Nurses Association (CVCNBNA) for a two-year term. CVCNBNA, in collaboration with the National Black Nurses Association, is a professional nursing organization working to reduce health disparities among African Americans and other minority communities in the Central Virginia area.

Nancy Jallo elected chair of Physicians for Peace

Nancy Jallo, Ph.D., RNC, FNP-BC, WHNP-BC, CNS, associate professor, is the first nurse to be elected chair of the Physicians for Peace (PFP) Board of Directors. PFP partners with communities in underserved regions globally to strengthen local health systems by addressing training and education needs within their facilities.

Marianne Baernholdt appointed chair-elect of American Academy of Nursing panel

Marianne Baernholdt, Ph.D., M.P.H., RN, FAAN, director of the Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation, was appointed chair-elect of the American Academy of Nursing’s Expert Panel on Quality Health Care for a three-year term.

Carla Nye joins INACSL as a faculty member

Carla Nye, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, CNE, director of the Clinical Learning Center, is now a faculty member for the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning - CAE Fellowship. INACSL is a leading organization for nursing simulation, and the fellowship program trains and mentors global simulation educators to design, facilitate and debrief a simulation using the INACSL Standards of Best Practice.

Kimberly Davis develops care coordination certificate program

A new post-baccalaureate graduate certificate program at VCU will provide health care professionals with strategies to become effective care coordinators for individuals with complex health needs. Kimberly D. Davis, M.S., RN, CNE, clinical instructor, is the program director for the Care Coordination Certificate and will be teaching two of the seven courses. Davis developed the program and created the curriculum along with an advisory group.
Jean Giddens receives Virginia Nurses Foundation award

Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, dean of the VCU School of Nursing, received the 2016 Leadership Excellence Award in the Nursing School Dean category from the Virginia Nurses Foundation. The award recognizes nurse leaders serving in an educational administrative capacity that demonstrate advocacy, vision and collaboration to improve patient care and the nursing workplace.

Debra Barksdale reappointed chair of PCORI committee

Debra Barksdale, Ph.D., FNP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FAAN, associate dean of academic affairs, was reappointed as chair of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute’s (PCORI) Engagement, Dissemination, and Implementation Committee (EDIC) for a two-year term. Barksdale is one of only two non-physicians leading a committee.

Pam Parsons receives leadership award, fellowship appointment

Pamela Parsons, Ph.D., RN, GNP-BC, director of practice and community engagement, received the Mary Creath Payne Leadership award from Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging (CAAA). The award honors an outstanding local leader who has made an exceptional contribution in the area of aging. Parsons has also been selected for the inaugural class of the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation’s Equity and Health Fellowship.

Tod Brindle named vice president of Integrated Healing Technologies

Tod Brindle, RN, CWOCN (M.S.’11/N), a Ph.D. student, has been named vice president of clinical affairs with Integrated Healing Technologies (IHT), a negative pressure wound therapy and advanced wound care company in Franklin, Tennessee. He previously served as nurse clinician and clinical administrator with the wound care team at VCU Health System for 12 years. In his new role, Brindle will lead IHT’s clinical team to help develop new technologies to deliver products and solutions to the advanced wound care and negative pressure wound therapy market. His Ph.D. research focuses on “Lipidomic Expression of Oxidative Stress in Deep Tissue Injuries.”

Debbie McGuire serves on National Cancer Institute subcommittee

Debbie McGuire, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, associate dean of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation, recently served on the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Subcommittee F (study section) reviewing cancer research training and education grants. The NCI coordinates the National Cancer Program, which supports research with respect to the cause, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of cancer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Name</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campbell, C.</td>
<td>Community health workers' palliative care learning needs and training: Results from a partnership between a U.S. university and a rural community organization in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Journal of the Poor and Underserved, 27(2):440-449.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In December, the VCU School of Nursing installed banners on the exterior of its building. Featured students are (left to right): Kyle Jones, Reyna Fuentes, Emily Cochran and China Mattex.