THE LANGSTON CENTER
A patient-centered hub of opportunities
The Langston Center
Cover Feature: The new center is a patient-centered hub of opportunities

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On the cover: The circular icon represents key areas of focus for the Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation.

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Hello Alumni and Friends.

When we think about the leading causes of death, most of us immediately think about cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease and traumatic injury. What most of us don’t think about is medical error. What? That’s right, medical error. According to a recent study published in the British Medical Journal, medical error is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Because medical errors are not often reported as the cause of death on death certificates, an underreporting of this phenomenon has occurred. It has only been relatively recently that an understanding of the consequences of medical error has been fully understood.

It should be no surprise that eliminating medical errors has become a national priority – it is a common concern among all health care professionals. In this issue of Connections you will read about the cutting-edge work being done at the VCU School of Nursing’s newly established Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation (LCQSI). Led by Dr. Marianne Baernholdt, the center’s director, LCQSI is an important and innovative partnership with VCU Health geared towards preparing health care teams for optimal patient safety and error reduction.

The national emphasis on patient safety has also given rise to the need for improved education and competence among nursing graduates. The School of Nursing faculty have embraced the need for enhanced quality and safety education through recent revisions to the RN-B.S., Nursing Administration and Leadership and the Doctor of Nursing Practice curricula. In addition, they have incorporated two required interprofessional education courses in the pre-licensure undergraduate curriculum in partnership with the VCU Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care.

Quality and safety science also represents a new emphasis for research at the School of Nursing. This new focus area, coupled with the longstanding prominence in biobehavioral research, will serve as cornerstones to the Ph.D. program – which will be celebrating 30 years with the fall 2016 cohort.

Our faculty and staff are committed to groundbreaking research, exceptional education programs, enhanced patient care outcomes and expanded collaborations with community stakeholders. These commitments have helped us recruit several talented faculty and staff this past year, including two notable nursing leaders – Dr. Debra Barksdale, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, and Dr. Beth Rodgers, Department Chair for Adult Health and Nursing Systems.

As you can see, VCU is clearly a nursing school on the move and we are reaching greater levels of distinction. We make nursing real.

Jean Giddens,
Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Professor and Dean
Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair
Dr. Marianne Baernholdt, director of the Langston Center
When Amy Dean, M.S., RN, CCRN, (M.S.’15/N) found out she had been chosen as one of 18 inaugural Langston Quality Scholars in January, she was thrilled. She and her Langston Scholar partner, Kristin Miller, M.D., M.S., assistant professor in the pulmonary disease and critical care medicine division at VCU, are now developing an experiential interdisciplinary project to roll out over the next few months.

“I feel fortunate to learn the skills needed to make a change in our patient safety environment,” Dean said. “It is an honor to be in this first cohort.”

The Langston Quality Scholars program pairs teams of clinicians to identify a potential safety issue and use it as a training tool to develop leadership and performance improvement. The program was developed in collaboration with the Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care, the Department of Health Administration, the School of Allied Health Professions, the School of Nursing, the Office of Assessment and Evaluation Studies in the School of Medicine, and the Department of Performance Improvement at the VCU Health System. It’s one of many opportunities targeted to professionals specializing in safe health care delivery offered by the Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation.

Named in recognition of Nancy Langston, Ph.D., retired dean of the School of Nursing who served for 22 years, the center opened in November 2015 and also offers programming open to community members and organizations interested in quality and safety in health care.

Programs and activities include academic partnerships, educational opportunities and resources for researchers, students and alumni.

“The Langston Center is dedicated to fostering patient-centered and quality health care that is safe, collaborative and cost-effective,” said School of Nursing Dean Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN. “Although the center is housed within the School of Nursing, it serves as a hub for work associated with quality and safety for the entire university, VCU Health and the community.”

INNOVATIVE THINKING AND COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT

The center is an outgrowth of VCU Health’s 2013 creation of its first chief safety and quality officer position, explained Marianne Baernholdt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, director of the Langston Center.
“They wanted to do something similar in nursing,” Baernholdt said. “Nursing schools are not directly connected to health systems the way medical schools are. We have great collaboration with the Health System, but it’s not automatic so the question was asked, ‘What can we do in nursing similar to the position we created at the school of medicine?’ That’s unusual.”

It’s that type of innovative thinking that led Baernholdt to VCU in August 2014 through a national search for a director to lead the Langston Center. She landed the job – with its place as a standing guest on several of the VCU Health System’s leadership committees (Quality Executive Council and Medical Executive Committee), which is equally unique in an academic setting – and set out on a cross-campus needs assessment focused on two areas: What would a center for quality and safety look like and how would it work?

“One of the things about VCU is its collaborative spirit,” she said. “Within and between the Health System and schools. The Langston Center wouldn’t have been possible without support. Many people say they will support an initiative, but here, they actually go out of their way to make things work.”

“The Langston Center is an example of how the VCU Health System is trying to think differently about the future of health care and how to change the way health care is delivered.”

– ALAN DOW

CHANGING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE

The Langston Center is a complement to the work of the VCU Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care (CIPE). Indeed, with a mission to improve health through collaboration, the CIPE looks to the Langston Center to bridge the School of Nursing to the VCU Health System.

“The idea came from the health system to recognize the importance of nursing in quality patient care,” said Alan Dow, M.D., director of the CIPE and member of the Langston Center’s executive committee. “The Langston Center is an example of how the VCU Health System is trying to think differently about the future of health care and how to change the way health care is delivered. Together, we’re thinking about the challenges we face at the bedside every day and how to come up with innovations to help our patients.”

A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH TO QUALITY AND SAFETY

The center’s mission is to improve health care quality and safety by facilitating new discoveries, and sharing and adopting evidence-based innovations in education, research, practice, organization, and policy. To support that mission, the center has three goals: to support and disseminate innovation, to provide educational

Members of the Langston Center advisory board are joined by former Dean Nancy Langston (center).
opportunities and to establish itself as a national and international resource.

In addition to the Langston Quality Scholars Program, the new quality and safety track in the school’s Ph.D. program, and the new Doctor of Nursing Practice program focused on quality and safety, the center’s programs and activities are varied and support each of the goals in specific and measurable ways.

An annual symposium features quality and safety experts, educational opportunities include lectures with continuing education credit, academic partnerships provide academic credit, and in the future a visiting scholar’s program will help position the center as a leading resource both at home and abroad.

**ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES**

Alumni are an integral part of the Langston Center and Baernholdt invites each alum to take advantage of the many resources available, which include continuing education offerings, expert listings in a faculty affiliate database and support for studies and projects. The door is open to those interested in quality and safety innovations, including students, faculty and the community at large.

With medical error cited in May as the third leading cause of death in the U.S., according to the British Medical Journal, Amy Dean is even more proud to be a Langston Quality Scholar.

“This is a call to action,” she said. “I firmly believe that people come to work to give great care, but the systems in which we work either enhance or prohibit great care. This is what the Langston Center is all about. The Langston Center will help us improve our health care systems. My project with Dr. Miller comes down to communication. We’re working to make sure our team members are all on the same page and that our focus is centered around the same thing – the health and safety of the patient. The Langston Center has very important work to do. We’re putting in place the skills needed to make a sustained change to enhance our health care culture of safety and the program is providing us with the tools to help chip away at the issue of medical errors.”
Debra Barksdale
strives to transform health care

Debra J. Barksdale, Ph.D., FNP-BC, ANP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FAAN, describes herself as an introvert. One would never imagine that based on the impact she is making nationally in nursing education.

A renowned educator, researcher, practitioner and advocate for improving health care, Barksdale is a highly requested keynote speaker at major nursing conferences and other health care gatherings nationwide. She has been the voice of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF), having served as its president for two years, president-elect for two years and two terms on the Board of Directors. She has also served on the Veteran’s Choice Act Blue Ribbon Panel and is the only nurse on the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Board of Governors appointed by the U.S. Government Accountability Office under the Obama Administration.

In all of these roles she has been a passionate, vocal leader. But there’s another side to her.

“Sometimes after talking to a lot of people I need to go somewhere and have my quiet moments. Someone once told me that’s where I get my energy from,” said Barksdale, who joined the School of Nursing as professor and associate dean of academic programs in January.

Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, professor and dean, said Barksdale is truly an innovative thought leader in nursing education.

“Her stellar record of working to transform health care will be a huge asset to shaping our current and future academic programs,” she said.

For Barksdale, VCU was the right fit. “I was looking for an opportunity to grow in my career, share my knowledge and help another school,” she said. “VCU seemed like it was that kind of place. It felt more collegial and like people were open to new ways of improving the school and the educational programs.”

Coming to VCU also felt like returning home since she grew up in the rural community of Nathalie in Halifax County.

During her childhood, Barksdale said a number of factors influenced her to become a nurse and educator. She recalled watching Julia, a weekly TV sitcom that starred Diahann Carroll as a young nurse. It was one of the first TV shows to depict an African American woman in a non-stereotypical role.

“She was my motivation,” said Barksdale, noting that she knew by age nine she wanted to be a nurse.

An early love for learning led her to immerse herself in reading whatever she could get her hands on when she didn’t have any books, including canned food labels. By the time Barksdale was in junior high school, her mother purchased a set of encyclopedias.

“Boy, I was in heaven then,” she said. “I used to just read, read and re-read them.”

She also used to make her siblings play school with her.

“I was the teacher and they used to have to sit there and listen to me,” she said, chuckling.

After graduating from Halifax County Senior High School, Barksdale began her path to become a nurse. She obtained a B.S. in nursing from the University of Virginia, worked at UVA Hospital...
and later obtained a master’s degree in nursing with an FNP concentration at Howard University, where she accepted her first teaching position. She also obtained a post-master’s certificate in teaching from the University of Pennsylvania and later a Ph.D. in nursing from the University of Michigan.

Several career moves later, Barksdale joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Nursing as assistant professor and coordinator of the FNP program. She rose through the ranks to become the school’s first minority tenured full professor. She was director of its Doctor of Nursing Practice program before coming to VCU.

Recently invested as the school’s Nursing Alumni Endowed Professor, Barksdale said she hopes to make the VCU School of Nursing a premier destination for prospective students.

“I want our school to become the place where everyone wants to come for a nursing education,” she said.

Looking ahead, Barksdale plans to publish the data from her previous National Institutes of Health-funded study “Hypertension in Black Americans: Environment, Behavior, and Biology,” the focus of her research.

A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Executive Fellow Alumna, she also expects to continue her involvement in shaping nursing’s future. One effort she proudly noted is a program she created to mentor six minority nursing faculty members at universities across the nation.

“They call themselves ‘The Delta Six’ and all are doctorally prepared,” she said. “They call me ‘momma Deb’ and some of them are close to my age.”

Barksdale also plans to continue serving on national boards and committees.

“For me I bring a unique perspective and a lot of my perspective comes from being a nurse of color – a person of color,” she said. “I didn’t grow up privileged so I can understand multiple perspectives.”

“When these opportunities come along and they’re in line with my values, I put myself out there,” she added. “I’m always trying to do good work.”
Lindsay Kunik was inspired to start the nonprofit Butterfly Kisses Care Baskets after meeting an 8-year-old pediatric patient named Ellie. The Charlotte, N.C.- based nonprofit organization aims to support children with cancer and other serious illnesses by providing care baskets, packages and other supportive measures to families. The organization also aims to raise awareness of childhood cancer and other underfunded pediatric diseases.

“After Ellie passed away in 2010 my close friend Holly Walsh and I decided that we wanted to do something in her honor to help other children like her,” said Kunik, a senior nursing student. “Butterflies were an important symbol to Ellie and her family during her illness. To me, they were also a sign of change and hope.”

Since 2010, Butterfly Kisses has served more than 300 children with life-threatening illnesses, both in local areas and throughout the country. Both Kunik and Walsh visit local children in hospitals and their homes and mail packages to families throughout the U.S.

“For families that are not local, we create a photo collage with photos that the family provides to us,” she said. In addition, the child and siblings receive a personalized goody box filled with small toys that are age appropriate, such as crayons, small art projects, jewelry, games, Play-Doh and stickers. “If the child is local, they receive a larger care basket filled with art sets, fleece blankets, decorated pillow cases, hand-held games, chalk and bubbles.”

The visits often vary in length from a few minutes if the child is feeling sick, to several hours.

“I can recall visiting a two-year-old with leukemia a few years ago,” Kunik said “She was in inpatient care and we ended up playing with her on the floor for hours.”

Kunik has also faced tough moments while running her nonprofit organization.

“We have had many children pass away after our visits and we have attended many funerals for these children,” she said. “We attended the
funeral for a one-year-old who had passed away. Her mom saw us and was brought to tears that the ‘butterfly girls’ were there,” she said. “I gave her a big hug and promised her that we wouldn’t stop fighting for her daughter and children like her.”

A traditional Bachelor of Science in nursing student, Kunik is able to balance her schoolwork, extra curricular activities and the nonprofit effectively. She currently carries a 3.95 grade point average, is on the executive board of Friends of ASK Childhood Cancer Foundation at VCU, is part of Nursing Students Without Borders, and volunteers as a doula.

“During the school year, it is harder to do as much as I would like, but I try to dedicate a little bit of time each day to Butterfly Kisses, even if it’s just updating the Facebook page,” Kunik said. “Butterfly Kisses definitely doesn’t feel like work to me – I enjoy it.”

She has been interested in nursing as long as she can remember and hopes to work in labor and delivery after graduation.

“We have projects that I did in preschool that described me as wanting to be a ‘baby nurse’ when I grew up,” Kunik said. She completed her women’s health clinical rotation last semester. “It felt great to have those interests affirmed,” she said, adding that she is interested in becoming a certified nurse midwife in the future.

Kunik’s passion for women’s health nursing was evident to Susan Lindner, M.S.N., RNC-OB, clinical assistant professor, who taught Kunik in the Health Assessment course.

“During our clinical experiences together she was always working and helping other nurses and her peers, but when she went to labor and delivery she fell in love,” Lindner said. “We have discussed her progression in labor and delivery and women’s health often.”

“Lindsay has also discussed at length with me her amazing gifts for the children in Charlotte, N.C. who have cancer and the impact her nonprofit has to children and their families,” Lindner added. “I believe she is truly one of the most humbling and caring individuals I have ever met during my years teaching at VCU.”

Kunik is confident her education at the VCU School of Nursing has prepared her for success in her future nursing career in women’s health, as well as in running her nonprofit.

“The School of Nursing has prepared me in many ways, far beyond technical skills,” Kunik said, “I have learned those skills, but the school has also taught me a lot about communication and has given me the confidence to walk into a patient room and assert myself as their nurse.”

For more information on the work Kunik is doing with pediatric patients or how you can support Butterfly Kisses Care Baskets, please visit www.facebook.com/ButterflyKissesCareBaskets.

Lindsay Kunik displays one of the care baskets her nonprofit provides to pediatric patients.
From nursing to entrepreneurship

Lisa Feierstein puts patients first

Lisa Feierstein, M.B.A., RN (B.S.’78/N), demonstrates each day how a nursing degree prepares one to make an impact in health care beyond the bedside, classroom or clinical practice. As president and co-founder of Active Healthcare, she brings a hands-on and educationally focused nursing approach to the medical equipment industry.

Her 30-employee, award-winning company specializes in CPAP products to treat patients with obstructive sleep apnea and provides respiratory nebulizers for patients with asthma, insulin pumps and supplies for patients with diabetes, and in-home living solutions for patients living with chronic conditions and disabilities.

A giant stuffed Gumby in Active Healthcare’s headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina serves as a reminder of one of the company’s core strengths. “We’re a leader in our industry in large part due to our superb customer service,” Feierstein said. “Staying at the top of our game in the face of tremendous industry change requires constant adaptation and flexibility, hence Gumby!”

“Flexibility starts with treating each other respectfully and encouraging input,” she added. “Team members feel involved and empowered and pass that on to our patients and referral sources.”

Feierstein’s focus on outstanding customer service dates back to her days as a student and subsequently a nurse. The Norfolk, Virginia native said she always wanted to work in a “helping field” so she choose to pursue a nursing degree at VCU.

When asked about her fondest memory at VCU, she said it was the close camaraderie of fellow students and the fun of living together in Cabaniss Hall. She also said her fellow students were her mentors.

“We experienced fear and anxiety together - our first shot or first death. I still have vivid memories of these,” she said. “We banded together forming a backbone for each other, encouraging each of us to go forward in a strong and healthy way.”

After she graduated from VCU, Feierstein worked as a nurse, rotating all shifts on 16 West, a medical-surgical floor at MCV’s main hospital. She moved into numerous nursing positions every few years from GI endoscopy to coronary intensive units. She then moved outside of clinical nursing into home health nursing administration, medical sales and education with a state department of health.

Feierstein said she left clinical practice for about eight years and then decided to go back to school. She co-founded her company with her husband, Steve, in 1990 while working as a labor and delivery nurse on the weekends to help fund it.

“While I did not have my sights set on starting my own business, when I started my M.B.A. five years later after the birth of two babies, a move to another state, a jump back into clinical nursing and the start of my business, I was able to
successfully complete it,” she said. “Life doesn’t always take an easy or direct path to your goal.”

Feirestein said she has not been afraid to take calculated risks to achieve her goals. She started Active Healthcare because she wanted to make a difference by providing medical equipment with a nursing focus, offering education in use of the equipment and showing respect for the patient and family.

One program she is most proud of is her company’s Back2Life program, which collects and refurbishes used nebulizers and sleep apnea equipment and then offers group training sessions to redistribute it to underserved populations. This program led to Feierstein earning the nickname “The CPAP Fairy Godmother” in some circles.

Although her days are jam-packed with meetings and other work commitments, Feierstein, a founding member of the Wake County Asthma Coalition of North Carolina, still finds time to present on asthma and sleep-related topics at local health conferences and support groups. She has also devoted considerable time to scholarship, having been published in numerous regional and national publications.

Her commitment to building awareness and helping to treat the dangerous and disruptive conditions of asthma and obstructive sleep apnea has not gone unnoticed. She has received numerous awards, including the Home Medical Equipment Excellence Award, Sleep Review Magazine Sleep Lab of the Year, Enterprising Women Magazine Woman of the Year, National Association of Women Business Owners Raleigh Chapter Business Owner of the Year, and she was selected as one of the VCU School of Nursing’s 120 Visionary Leaders.

“Lisa is clearly a phenomenal example of how well prepared our graduates are to assume leadership positions,” said Kate Haydon, VCU School of Nursing’s senior director of development. “We’re so proud of her and all of our alumni who are making their mark in health care.”

Feierstein said nurses have the ability to parlay their skills into various career paths within and outside of health care.

“Believe in the tremendous skills set that you have learned and gained in the field of nursing,” she said. “Don’t underestimate the incredible trust that people have in nurses, which is a powerful asset. You have the transferrable clinical and interpersonal skills that can take you into any field you desire.”
SON celebrates Clinical Scholars Honoree Ginger Edwards

More than 80 faculty, staff, alumni and friends attended a celebration hosted by the VCU School of Nursing to recognize Ginger Edwards, RN, FNP (B.S.’72/N; Cert.’75/N; M.S,’77/N) as the Clinical Scholars Program 2016 honoree. The Clinical Scholars Program provides flexible funds to support projects involving clinical practice, teaching, faculty development or clinical research for clinical, non-tenure faculty. The school will raise funds this year in honor of the clinical excellence Edwards demonstrated during her 40-year nursing career.

In addition to having a strong clinical practice, Edwards was a pioneer at VCU Health in applying the use of advanced practice to specialty areas. She also mentored many others in their pursuit of advanced practice nursing careers. To donate to the Clinical Scholars Program in her honor, please contact Kate Haydon, senior director of development, at khaydon@vcu.edu or call (804) 828-0020. To view photos from the event, visit the VCU School of Nursing Facebook page.

Keri Geiger helps HIV/TB patients in Central African Republic

Karen “Keri” Geiger (B.S. ’11/N) is working as the HIV/TB and inpatient department nurse supervisor for Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières in Zémio, Central African Republic (CAR) for a nine-month assignment. CAR has an ongoing health care crisis that is the result of a decades-long civil war that has left no functional government or health system in place. MSF had been present in Zémio since 2011, running a health center that provides primary and secondary health care, as well as maternity and HIV services to about 14,000 local residents, half of whom are refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Josephine Ensign to publish a memoir

Josephine Ensign (B.S.’82/N; M.S.’84/N) wrote a medical memoir, Catching Homelessness: A Nurse’s Story of Falling Through the Safety Net, which will be published Aug. 9, 2016 by She Writes Press. Named the University of Washington Health Sciences Common Book for Academic Year 2016/2017, the book tells the story of Ensign’s work as the first nurse practitioner to run the CrossOver Clinic at the Richmond Street Center in the 1980’s. It also tells the story of her spiral into and out of homelessness. In Catching Homelessness, Ensign reflects on how this work has changed her and how her work has changed through the experience of being homeless—providing a piercing look at the homelessness industry, nursing and our country’s health care safety net.
Alumni recognized in OurHealth Annual Best Bedside Manner awards

Lynn Woodcock, FNP (B.S.’95/N; M.S.’97/N) of Family Practice Specialists of Richmond was selected for the OurHealth Annual Best Bedside Manner Award. Shelley Woodley, DNP, FNP-BC (B.S.’01/N; M.S.’04/N) of Bon Secours Surgical Dermatology Center was voted second. Ashley Beavers, ACNP (M.S.’13/N) of Pulmonary Associates of Richmond Inc.; Julie Julian, FNP-C (B.S.’04/N; M.S.’06/N) of Virginia Physicians – Midlothian Family Practice; George Proffitt, NP-C (B.S.’02/N; M.S.’05/N) of Colonial Heights Medical Center; and Karen Saunders, CPNP (B.S.’76/N) of Primary Care Family Practice, received honorable mention. The 2015 Best Bedside Manner Awards, presented by OurHealth Richmond magazine and CBS6, honor medical providers voted on by the local community for their kindness, empathy and attentiveness.

Deborah Raines receives ELSIE Award

Deborah Raines (Ph.D.’92/N), associate professor at the University of Buffalo School of Nursing, recently received the 2016 Elsevier Leading Stars in Education (ELSIE) Award for Excellence in Clinical Education from Elsevier. The ELSIE Awards honor outstanding nurse educators who are committed to improving student and program outcomes through inventive teaching strategies.

Marilyn Tavenner named among top 100 in health care

Marilyn Tavenner (B.S.’83/N; M.H.A.’89/AHP), CEO of America’s Health Insurance Plans, was named one of the 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare in 2015 by Modern Healthcare magazine for the fourth year in a row. The program honors individuals in health care who are deemed by their peers and senior editors of the magazine to be the most influential individuals in the industry, in terms of leadership and impact.

Judith Collins receives MCV campus leadership award

Judith B. Collins, M.S., RNC, FAAN (Cert.’75/N), professor emeritus, is the 2016 recipient of the Eugene P. Trani MCV Campus Leadership Award. Established in 2009 in honor of Dr. Eugene P. Trani, who served as president of VCU from 1990 to 2009, the award is presented annually by the Board of Trustees of the MCV Foundation to recognize exceptional dedication and support of the MCV Campus.

Marian Altman receives Sigma Theta Tau grant

Marian Altman, RN (B.S.’83/N; M.S.’90/N), a Ph.D. student at the School of Nursing, received funding from the Gamma Omega Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International for a study titled “Moral Distress in Critical Care Nurses: A Biobehavioral Perspective.” This research will examine psychological and biological outcomes of the stressful Intensive Care Unit environment and provide a foundation for future work aimed at exploring interventions to reduce the experience of moral distress and influence retention in the specialty.
A Letter from the Alumni Chair

Writing this letter in the month of May, I find this to be one of those times when I best enjoy being a VCU nurse alum. At the recent MCV Foundation Endowed Scholarship Brunch, VCU President Michael Rao twice pulled me aside to praise the accomplishments of VCU nursing alumni. Soon afterwards, the School of Nursing celebrated alumni weekend with a packed house of graduates ranging from the last decade to the 1940s.

Often my letter speaks to our past; however, with the growth of our school and new opportunities for our alumni to become involved in student education, focusing on our history requires that we simultaneously look to the future. During alumni weekend we celebrated the investiture of Dr. Debra Barksdale, Associate Dean of Academic Programs, as the Nursing Alumni Endowed Professor. We also learned of incoming faculty who will maintain the standard for excellence in education put forth by long-serving professors who have influenced several generations of nursing practice. And in honor of our school’s tradition for innovative research and education, we heard of the impact that various endowments are having towards the shaping of new nurse graduates and scientists.

As our school grows, so does its means of expanding outreach and educational methodologies. The cultural makeup of our student body closely mirrors other nursing programs nationally, but efforts are underway to enhance our diversity and thus enrich our family of alumni. As students seek to develop their clinical knowledge, alumni have a new opportunity to apply their own experiences to real-world scenarios through the Alumni Standardized Patient Program that recreates actual patient encounters.

There is much to celebrate in our rich history, especially that which is about to be written.

James L. Jenkins, Jr., RN (B.S.’07/N)
Chair, VCU School of Nursing Alumni Division

Alumni participate in standardized patient program

“Simulation with standardized patients allows students to practice their skills and their critical thinking in an environment that is safe, and where each student has a consistent patient scenario,” said Carla Nye, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, CNE, director of the Clinical Learning Center. “We use simulation in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum to meet specific learning objectives and train the standardized patients to look for certain student responses.”

Alumni are able to provide immediate feedback to students and often find the roles rewarding.

“I’ve played the role of both a patient with orthopedic issues and a patient with gall bladder disease,” said Smigelski. “My favorite teaching moment was when a student did an exemplary job of obtaining a medical history, and after I validated her response she gave me a big hug!”

Suzanne Uzzell, RN (B.S. ’73/N), said she enjoys volunteering because “the program also allows me to pass the nursing torch to the next generation.”

Training is offered three times a year. For more information, please contact Nye at (804) 827-0629 or cnye@vcu.edu.
Sheila P. Englebardt (Ph.D. '93/N) was inducted into the North Carolina Nurses Association Hall of Fame at the annual convention in October 2015.

Sonyia Billingsley Elder (B.S.'87/N) completed a Clinical Pastoral Education certificate from the VCU School of Allied Health Professions.

Brenda Brickhouse (B.S.'87/N) published "Strategies for Providing Low-Cost Water Immersion Therapy With Limited Resources" in Nursing for Women's Health December 2015/January 2016, with co-authors Dr. Christine Isaacs, Meghann Batten and Amber Price.

Kristie Patrick-Austin (B.S.'84/N) is a full-time faculty member at Bryant & Stratton College. She is the simulation and lab coordinator for the Associate and RN to B.S.N. tracks in nursing and became a Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator (CHSE) in 2014.

Henrisa Tosoc-Haskell (M.S.'88/N; M.S.H.A.'02/AHP) was named director of member quality at the United Network for Organ Sharing, where she monitors the performance of member institutions and their compliance with Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network policy and bylaws.

The VCU School of Nursing distributes a monthly e-newsletter to share timely updates with alumni. If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please send your email address to vcu nursings@vcu.edu.
Reunion 2016 features an investiture ceremony, awards and more

The VCU School of Nursing celebrated its 2016 Reunion Weekend with a variety of activities, including an investiture ceremony for Debra Barksdale, Ph.D., FNP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FAAN, associate dean of academic programs, who received a medallion for being named the Nursing Alumni Endowed Professor. Other activities included an alumni brunch, a state of the school address by Dean Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, the Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair, as well as the presentation of alumni awards. This year’s nursing alumni award recipients are Trula Minton, RN (B.S.’79/N; M.S.’88/N), chief nursing executive, Chippenham and Johnston-Willis Hospitals, Outstanding Practice; Stephanie Ferguson, Ph.D., RN, FAAN (M.S.’87/N), international health care consultant, Outstanding Service; and Tracy Williams, DNP, RN (M.S.’88/N), senior vice president and system chief nursing officer for Norton Healthcare, Outstanding Alumna. View more photos of the event on the school’s Facebook page.

Scenes from Reunion Weekend 2016
Development Update
By Kate Haydon, Senior Director of Development

“The School of Nursing played a tremendous role in shaping the person I am today.” I have been privileged to hear this sentiment time and again from alumni who span generations, as well as from current students enrolled. Did the School play a role in transforming you into the person you are today?

Just as often, our students and alumni play a tremendous role in shaping the School. This year, the school benefitted from the extraordinary generosity of Mrs. Helen Shaw Birch, a graduate from 1947 who made a provision in her will in 2007 for the School to receive a $1,000,000 endowment for student scholarships. A $1,000,000 endowment generates approximately $50,000 each year to be awarded to students. The immediate and continued impact this gift will have is transformative. Mrs. Birch shared that she planned to create this endowment because her time spent at MCV School of Nursing was so formative. She stated, “My three years at MCV gave me lasting friendships. I received an excellent education and have always been a proud graduate of the MCV School of Nursing. The alumni decal on my car stands out like a shining star—I love it!”

Mrs. Birch passed away last May and her legacy to the School will never be forgotten. As incredible as $1,000,000 gifts are for the School of Nursing, all gifts, small and large, make an impact, because they collectively create opportunities. For example, 10 gifts of $100 provide a deserving student with a $1,000 scholarship which may reduce his or her work hours at a part-time job and instead increase time to study, conduct research or volunteer within our community.

Your support and involvement are an important part of the heritage of the school.

Kind regards,
Kate

Make it real.
C A M P A I G N  F O R  V C U

Make it ambitious.
The largest fundraising campaign in Virginia Commonwealth University’s history …

Make it timely.
… is launching this September.

Make it matter.
Join us as we kick off this momentous occasion with a celebration of how VCU makes it real.

Make it real.
A showcase of VCU’s finest talent, past and present.

Mark your calendar.
Sept. 22-24, 2016
SON hosts SNRS 2016

The VCU and UVA Schools of Nursing hosted the Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS) 2016 Annual Conference Feb. 24-27 at the Colonial Williamsburg Lodge in Williamsburg, Virginia. Several faculty and students conducted poster and podium presentations to showcase the outstanding research and scholarship underway at our school. Three faculty honored during the SNRS awards luncheon include: Kyungeh An, Ph.D., RN, D. Jean Woods Nursing Scholarship; Suzanne Ameringer, Ph.D., RN, Mid-Career Researcher Award; and Patricia Kinser, Ph.D., RN (B.S.’03/N; M.S.’04/N; Cert.’04/N), STTI/ SNRS Research Society Grant.

FNP student travels to India for clinical and cultural experience

Carrie Schlabach, a May 2016 FNP graduate, spent the last part of her clinical practicum in Mumbai, India. Schlabach was awarded a Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship Scholarship to support her international clinical experience. Lisa Landes, FNP, a medical provider for the U.S. State Department stationed in Mumbai, India, served as her preceptor. Schlabach provided primary health care to State Department staff and learned to consider differentials that reflect the local epidemiology. The experience is more than learning about health care, according to Landes. “It’s about learning to embrace a new culture and all or at least, much of what it has to offer!” she said. Within a few days of arriving, Schlabach and Landes participated in Holi, the Indian festival of colors in which the community celebrates by spraying dry paint colors on each other to celebrate the coming of spring.

Jamie Sturgill selected as a VCU Emerging Scholar

Jamie Sturgill, Ph.D., director of biobehavioral laboratory services, was recently selected as a VCU Emerging Scholar by the Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTR). The Emerging Scholars Program is an opportunity for novice investigators to meet twice monthly with personnel from the CCTR and their peer researchers for mentoring, career development oversight, and educational programs to help them develop skills and build a foundation for their research careers.

Rachel Cloutier appointed VCNP president-elect

Rachel Cloutier, M.S., RN, ACNP-BC, clinical instructor, was recently appointed president-elect of the Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners. VCNP is the statewide professional organization for all nurse practitioners licensed in Virginia and is a council of the Virginia Nurses Association (VNA) Commission on Professional Practice.
Christina Wilson selected as a Jonas Scholar

Christina Wilson, RN, WHNP-BC (M.S.’13/N), a Ph.D. student, was selected for the highly competitive Jonas Nurse Leader Scholars Program of the Jonas Center for Nursing and Veterans Healthcare. She is one of 425 doctoral students nationwide chosen for the 2016-2018 cohort.

The Jonas Scholar program’s goal is to increase the number of doctorally prepared faculty available to teach in nursing schools nationwide, and the number of nurse leaders providing direct patient care and filling roles as clinical faculty.

In addition to her Jonas Scholars accomplishment, Wilson was selected to attend the National Institute for Nursing Research’s Summer Genetics Institute (SGI). The SGI provides participants with a foundation in molecular genetics appropriate for use in research and clinical practice.

Carla Nye receives Quest Global Impact Seed Funds

Carla Nye, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, CNE, clinical associate professor, recently received Quest Global Impact Seed Funds from the Global Education Office to travel to Cape Town, South Africa in July and meet with simulation leaders. Quest Global Impact Seed Funds are available to VCU faculty on both the Monroe Park and the MCV campuses to support initial steps in developing projects that will contribute to one or more of the VCU global priorities.

Genevieve Beaird passes CHSE exam

Genevieve Beaird, M.S., RNC-OB, clinical instructor, recently passed the Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator exam through the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. This is an interprofessional certification for educators with a simulation practice area.

R.K. Elswick named statistical editor of Cancer Nursing

R.K. Elswick, Ph.D., NREMT-B, professor and biostatistician, was named the statistical editor of Cancer Nursing. The primary purposes of Cancer Nursing are to feature the original work of the cancer nursing researchers in the global community and contribute to advancing the findings of evidence-based research.

Kyunghe An awarded Daisy Foundation funding

Kyunghe An, Ph.D., RN, associate professor, was recently awarded a $5,000 grant from the Daisy Foundation for her pilot study “Cardiovascular Risks In Cancer Survivors.” In collaboration with Massey Cancer Center and Virginia Commonwealth University’s Biomedical Informatics Core, this study will be a large secondary data collection and analysis design based upon 18 variable domains that encompass the inherited and cancer treatment related cardiovascular risk factors. The research team will work to develop prediction models for CVD incidence and mortality among breast and colorectal cancer survivors.
Patricia Kinser receives NIH grant to explore effect of yoga on depression during pregnancy

The National Institutes of Health recently awarded a grant to the VCU School of Nursing for a pilot study that will examine how motivational interviewing and prenatal yoga might reduce or prevent depression during and after pregnancy. Patricia Kinser, Ph.D., assistant professor, received the two-year, $456,579 grant for her project “Self-Management of Chronic Depressive Symptoms in Pregnancy.”

Through the grant, Kinser will work with an interprofessional team to study whether the self-management intervention will help women proactively address their current depression and prevent future occurrences. The team will use nurse-led motivational interviewing to engage 40 pregnant women in their self-care. The women will participate in prenatal yoga classes and at-home physical activity. The study will evaluate whether the intervention is feasible and has preliminary effects on symptoms. The team will also evaluate for changes in epigenetic patterns, which is a measure of how the psychosocial environment can affect genetic expression.

Mary Lynn Davis-Ajami named to the EC Diabetes and Metabolic Research editorial panel

Mary Lynn Davis-Ajami, Ph.D., M.B.A., MS, NP-C, RN, assistant professor, has been named to the Editorial Panel for EC Diabetes and Metabolic Research. EC Diabetes and Metabolic Research publishes articles related to diabetes and metabolism, diagnosis, management and prevention of diabetes and metabolic disorders.

Tara Albrecht selected for Emerging Nurse Researcher Award

Tara Albrecht, Ph.D., RN, ACNP-BC, assistant professor, was selected as the North America region recipient of the Emerging Nurse Researcher Award. She will be recognized during the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International’s 27th International Nursing Research Congress in July 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Shelly Smith accepted into AACN leadership program

Shelly Smith, DNP, APRN-BC, clinical assistant professor and director of the DNP program, was recently accepted into the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s (AACN) Leadership for Academic Nursing Program. Designed to prepare a more diverse pool of leaders for nursing programs, this year-long professional development experience encompasses an assessment and evaluation of leadership skills, opportunities for strategic networking and case study development, consultation to achieve long-term goals, and identification of key partnerships.
LaToya Blizzard is the executive assistant to the Dean's Office. Blizzard most recently served as an administrative staff specialist for the Department of Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Richmond. She received a B.L.A. in administrative systems management from Virginia State University.

Debra Barksdale, Ph.D., FNP-BC, ANP-BC, CNE, FAANN, FAAN, is a professor and the associate dean of academic programs. Barksdale most recently served as professor and director of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Nursing. Barksdale earned a B.S.N. from the University of Virginia, an M.S.N. from Howard University, a post-master’s certificate in teaching from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Ph.D. in nursing from the University of Michigan.

Mary Kay Goldschmidt, DNP, RN, CLCP, is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing. Goldschmidt most recently served as an adjunct faculty member at VCU for one year and at the University of Virginia for four years. She received her B.S. in nursing, M.S. in public health nursing leadership and DNP degree from the University of Virginia.

Beth Goodloe is a simulation center coordinator in the Clinical Learning Center. She most recently served as the program coordinator in the Department of Anesthesiology at VCU.

Ian Hines is the research lab manager in the Biobehavioral Research Laboratory. He most recently served as a lab specialist in the genetics lab with the Human and Molecular Genetics Department at VCU. Hines graduated from Virginia Tech in 2014 with a B.S. in biochemistry.

Morgan Martin is the department administrator in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. She most recently served as a technical assistant in the Office of Partnerships and Engagement at Virginia State University. Martin received her B.A. in mass communications and M.A. in media management from Virginia State University.

Beth Rodgers, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, is a professor and the chair of the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. She most recently served as professor and research chair at the University of New Mexico School of Nursing. Rodgers received her undergraduate nursing degree from Georgia State University in Atlanta, and subsequently earned her M.S.N. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Virginia.

Tamara Zurakowski, Ph.D., GNP-BC, is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. Zurakowski previously served as a project officer in the Medical Training and Geriatrics Branch, Division of Medicine and Dentistry at the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She received a B.S. in nursing and M.S. in community health nursing from New York University, a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University and an NP certificate from the University of Connecticut.
In January, Nursing Students Without Borders of VCU participated in its annual community service trip to Guatemala, where members provided health education to women villagers.