IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES WITH NURSES TRAINED IN PRIMARY CARE
IT’S AN EXCITING TIME of growth at The Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing.

In February, Loyola University Chicago announced the creation of the Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health, which builds on the foundation of exceptional health care education in the School of Nursing and the Stritch School of Medicine. Programs previously within the School of Nursing, such as health systems management, dietetics, and exercise science, will now be transferred to the Parkinson School where they will be able to grow. The Parkinson School will address the increasing need for health care workers who will be trained to be leaders, researchers, and caregivers of the future. You can read more about the new school on page 8.

Also on the horizon: new leadership. As many of you know, I am excited to return to a faculty position next year. Lorna Finnegan, PhD, RN, FNP, FAAN, will succeed me, starting July 1. She joins Loyola from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Nursing, where she is Executive Associate Dean and an Associate Professor of Health Systems Science. Dr. Finnegan’s impressive background as a dedicated nurse practitioner, scholar, and administrator, will continue to advance Niehoff’s mission, education, and research. Read more about Dr. Finnegan’s background on page 5.

You will read articles about alumni dedicated to our social justice mission, including how the introduction of new nursing educational initiatives in both the undergraduate and graduate programs expand our outreach to rural health and community nursing. You will also learn about how Dietetics graduate and current Loyola Health System employee Mary Mora addresses food deserts in Maywood, while exercise science alum Allison Rydberg works as a physical therapist on an Apache reservation in Arizona. Their stories are an inspiring reminder that so much of what makes a Niehoff student stand out continues to shine well after graduation.

Whether in the classroom, the workplace, the community, or even on the other side of the globe, Niehoff graduates and faculty understand that their work is rooted in our Jesuit mission. We provide a transformative education that prepares tomorrow’s health care leaders to minimize health inequities across individuals, systems, and communities. I am proud of the work we do and look forward to re-joining the faculty in July.

Sincerely,

Vicki A. Keough

Dean, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing
The new Downers Grove site for the School of Nursing has graduated its first class of students and the demand for the accelerated bachelor’s degree of nursing (ABSN) program is only increasing. Students earn their degree through one of two learning formats, sometimes in just 16 months. Students can either complete a majority of their classes online, followed by onsite skills labs, discussion groups, testing, and clinical rotations at the Downers Grove site, or complete the entire ABSN program with faculty in person at the Health Sciences Campus. The nursing skills lab at the Downers Grove site, shown above, features state-of-the-art equipment, medical supplies, and manikins that allow students to practice skills they are learning in the classroom in a lifelike setting. Procedures done in these labs include skills such as wound care, nasogastric tube insertion, physical evaluations, catheterization, and tracheotomy care. The simulations let nursing students think critically and problem solve in an environment without the fear of harming a patient. Students gradually develop their clinical skills and critical thinking ability in simulation prior to entering the complex health care environment. Teachers can then evaluate student approaches and better prepare them for their clinical rotations. ABSN students pursue clinical rotations at local health care partners such as Loyola University Health System, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and Rush North Shore Medical Center.

New Dean brings deep experience and a history of innovation

The next dean of the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing will be Lorna Finnegan, PhD, RN, FNP, FAAN. She will join Loyola on July 1, 2019.

Dr. Finnegan is an experienced nurse, family nurse practitioner, educator, and leader. She joins Loyola from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Nursing, where she is Executive Associate Dean and an Associate Professor of Health Systems Science.

Dr. Finnegan has held a variety of leadership roles at UIC including Head and Associate Head of the Department of Health Systems Science, where she oversaw the faculty and operations of the largest department in the College of Nursing. At UIC, she led strategic planning efforts, mentored and coached many faculty and staff across six campuses, exceeded enrollment goals for DNP programs, and helped automate and optimize faculty workload and teaching assignments, and other operational processes.

She also was the founding director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at Saint Xavier University School of Nursing where she created and led two academic practice partnerships in Chicago. She has practiced as a nurse in the ICU and family nurse practitioner in many underserved clinical settings.

Through her scholarship, clinical practice, and leadership, Dr. Finnegan’s innovative strategies have helped increase access to primary care and reduce health disparities in vulnerable and underserved populations. She has been principal and co-investigator on multiple grants, including R01 grants to identify clusters of symptoms and risk factors in childhood cancer survivors and other at-risk populations. Her research has been published internationally and she was a visiting scholar in Thailand, South Africa, and South Korea. Dr. Finnegan was named a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing in 2017 and is currently president of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties.

Thanks to Dean Vicki Keough for her years of dedication and service to the School of Nursing and Loyola as she transitions from dean to faculty member. Her leadership has positioned the school for a bright future.
The exciting work of Loyola’s engineering students is being put to use. In the Lake Shore Campus nursing simulation lab, students learn how to care for a patient with a feeding or breathing tube with the help of an anatomical 3-D model designed by a group of engineering students.

“Tell me where the tracheostomy goes? Where’s the trach?” said Joanne Dunderdale, MSN, RN, simulation instructor, as she demonstrated how to care for a tracheostomy tube.

Sophomore Piper Burnside points toward the throat of a 3-D model with an endotracheal tube attached. Dunderdale explains how the tube is positioned to go through the trachea, not the esophagus, so the patient can breathe.

Dunderdale definitely sees this collaborative partnership among students as a win-win for all involved. “These tools are so good for our students to visualize,” she said. “To have the engineering students do this serves two purposes: They’re getting an educational experience and our nursing students are getting it—they’re understanding and finally seeing where things like these tubes go.”

Designing tools and saving lives

To be a successful nursing leader in today’s dynamic health systems environment, the landscape has changed dramatically. The Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing re-configured its previous Health Systems Management program to the new Master of Nursing and Health Care Administration program to respond to the dynamic health systems environment.

Nurse leaders are being asked to expand their scope and influence. Service line strategies and the continued mix of ambulatory initiatives and acute care needs require leaders with expanded knowledge in a variety of areas. These include: program planning and marketing, population health management, health policy, advanced quality and safety strategies, health outcomes, fiscal budgeting and management of resources, leadership and staff development in addition to core concepts of ethics, nursing theory, and research.

While the program will continue as an online degree, Niehoff will add immersion weekends once a semester where students come together with the faculty to hear “lessons learned” from expert speakers. These immersions will help students develop professional and collaborative relationships while gaining additional skill sets.

Niehoff is recruiting nursing students interested in advancing their education to include administrative and executive roles to help translate the theory into the workplace environment. Admission into this program will begin in Fall 2019.
Niehoff programs move to new school

Loyola University Chicago’s new Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health embodies the University’s Jesuit mission to assist the marginalized of our society and go to the frontiers of education, research, and practice to meet health care workforce demand. The Parkinson School builds on Loyola’s leadership in nursing and medical education, and will address issues related to population and community health and improving health outcomes. Programs previously housed within the School of Nursing—Health Systems Management, Dietetics, and Exercise Science—now will be in the Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health. In addition, the Parkinson School will launch three new degree programs: a BS in public health sciences, an MS in exercise science, and an MS in health informatics. Within the next three years, the School will add 16 new degree programs.

The Parkinson School—named in honor of alumnus Robert L. and Elizabeth M. Parkinson, who gave a $20 million lead gift to the school—will bring together existing programs from Loyola’s Stritch School of Medicine and the Niehoff School of Nursing, and the Graduate School to better serve Loyola students, patients, and communities in the Chicago area and beyond.

“Loyola’s Health Sciences programs have a proven 40-year track record of innovative technology applications in health care education, clinical research, and academic medical center operations,” said Loyola President Jo Ann Rooney. “The Parkinson School is the next step in the evolution of Loyola’s Health Sciences Campus and another example of Loyola’s commitment to rolling up our sleeves and championing access and equity,” she said.

One Exercise Science undergraduate student, Stephanie Vasquez, chose Loyola because she wanted to be part of a program where she could work with athletes and the researchers in human performance. Vasquez will have the opportunity to do just that as the Exercise Science program will continue to expand. “This program could not have grown without the resources and the support of the nursing school, but people had a hard time understanding why we were housed there,” said Stephanie Wilson, director of the exercise science program. “But now, when you see it is in a school of health sciences, that opens the door to our students immediately—it is a more logical connection.”

One of the most important aspects of the Parkinson School is the interdisciplinary approach that mirrors how health care professionals work. This approach will forge new connections between the Health Sciences Campus in Maywood and the lakeside campuses. Wilson said she is looking forward to new opportunities to continue to advance interprofessional education, which will better prepare Loyola students for the workforce after graduation.

Niehoff Associate Professor Ann Solari-Twaddell, RN, PhD, MPA, FAAN, and her grant team, have a program that prepares graduate nursing students to work in primary care immediately after graduating. Solari-Twaddell wrote and received a four-year grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to develop the Primary Care Community Health Nursing Scholar Program. “This program speaks to Loyola University Chicago’s Jesuit mission of caring for people who live on the margins... .”

“Our funding allows us to pilot different approaches and conduct research to help improve care and reduce costs,” said Solari-Twaddell. “Acute care is a key driver of the country’s health care system and of skyrocketing health care costs. Providing preventive and primary care interventions earlier in an individual’s illness pattern can help avoid costly emergency room visits. Primary care also involves a level of follow up that emergency room visits lack. “To make real and lasting change, we are looking at educational, practice and policy change at both the state and national levels,” said Solari-Twaddell. “Students need to learn about primary care nursing and schools need to teach primary care nursing to improve patient and population health,” she said.
Engaging nurses in the legislative process

When legislators need to consult a medical expert before voting on a bill, Gretchen LaCivita (DNP ’18) wants them to call a nurse. She recently met an Illinois representative who solely consults physicians with questions about health care legislation.

“When doesn’t she talk to a nurse? That’s an important perspective on health care issues,” said LaCivita. As it turned out, that legislator simply did not have any nurses in her network.

“There are about four million nurses across the country. Imagine if we collectively came together and stood up and had voice over some of these health care issues,” said LaCivita.

So, she has made it her mission to make health policy and advocacy a focus in undergraduate nursing curricula, and to equip students with the skills to influence policy change.

LaCivita—who has a master’s degree in public health and teaches undergraduate nursing full time at Resurrection University—needed a doctoral degree to make this a reality, but had trouble finding a program that matched her goals. Most doctor of nursing practice programs specialize in informatics or clinical care. LaCivita needed a program that would recognize teaching as her practice and Loyola’s Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing embraced that vision.

“Loyola helped me achieve my goals in marrying my passion for health care policy and advocacy work with nursing education,” said LaCivita, a Chicago native. “I was looking at other programs out of state, but when I realized that this could be achieved here in my hometown, it really became a no-brainer.”

At the final project to her DNP degree, LaCivita created a way to engage more nurses and nurses-in-training in the legislative process. She worked with Pamela Andresen, PhD, RN, who teaches a Niehoff undergraduate course in clinical community health nursing, to incorporate a public policy project.

“We understand that we should be teaching more health policy, but with all the competing forces in nursing curricula, it is not something that students necessarily walk away feeling competent in,” LaCivita said. “So the impetus for this project was to dial in and become a bit more focused on the educational process of advocacy, so our students can then demonstrate better political astuteness.”

She believes a nurse’s expertise can help legislators make a more informed voting decision. LaCivita wants the nursing students to feel empowered to call their legislators and weigh in on bills that will affect patient care.

LaCivita accompanied a group of Loyola nursing students to the Capitol in Springfield to talk with legislators about opposing Senate Bill 0888, which would have allowed community colleges to offer bachelor of science in nursing degrees. They delivered a white paper opposing the bill written by nursing school Dean Vicki A. Keough detailing their opposition to creating such a program without any input or oversight from nurses.

Thanks, in part, to their efforts, the bill did not make it out of committee.

The 29 undergraduate nursing students in Dr. Andresen’s course were required to write to their local legislators about a health care issue of personal importance to them. The students also participated in in-person meetings with a number of local state representatives and U.S. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, who represents Illinois’ 9th congressional district, covering most of Cook County.

“The biggest takeaway for all the students was to build relationships. If one person calls an office and says, ‘Hey, what are you doing about X?’ it is not as impactful as when 10 people come together and call that same legislator to say, ‘Hey, what are you doing about X?’” LaCivita said. “Then a group of people is saying that they need to be paying attention to the issue. If we’re going to influence our profession, then we need to have that voice at the table. Our voices matter, if we choose to use them,” she said.
## 2019 Graduation Numbers

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Reducing health inequities

The Loyola University Chicago Health Equity Collaborative directs Loyola health disparities-related education, research, and community projects. Among the Collaborative’s goals: create health equity courses and programs, investigate mechanisms of health disparities and create programs and community partnerships that will reduce their impact, and how to strengthen community partnerships that promote health equality. These are some of the research projects Niehoff faculty are pursuing within the LUC Health Equity Collaborative:

**Identification of Epigenomic Pathways Linking Social Adversity and Stress to Health Disparities**

**Primary Investigators:** Linda Janusek, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Herb Mathews, PhD

This project seeks to identify the differences in the methylation status of the 74 genes and associated regulatory regions in DNA derived from stress-vulnerable and stress-resilient African American men. It also will determine the extent to which methylation status of the 74 genes and associated regulatory regions interact with social adversity factors to predict stress reactivity (inflammatory and cortisol response to social stress).

To date, results demonstrate that exposure to childhood trauma, neighborhood violence, and indices of childhood social disadvantage and instability associate with dysregulated reactivity to social evaluative stress and altered DNA methylation. Those genes differentially methylated not only relate to greater inflammatory risk, but also included genes previously linked to early life adversity, low SES, suicide risk, stress exposure, anxiety, and resilience. It is significant that this risk was observed in young African Americans without chronic diseases. Over time, excess stress-induced DNA alterations may affect regulatory systems (i.e., allostatic load) and contribute to poor mental and physical health.

**Race-Based Stress Reduction and Resilience Program for African American Women at Risk for Cardiovascular Disease**

**PI:** Karen Saben, PhD, RN, APRN

This study evaluated the eight-week race-based Stress Reduction and Resilience program created to reduce chronic stress associated with perceived discrimination and racism among African American women at risk for heart disease. Reducing stress and inflammation in this population is crucial to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease health disparities. The study found that resilience is characterized by not only psychological characteristics but also biological characteristics.

**Community Context of Elder Care: A Culturally-Informing Healthy Aging Community-University Partnership**

**PI:** Lisa Skemp, PhD, RN, FGSA, FAAN

The project’s goal is twofold: describe the community context of elder care in the Edgewater neighborhood and develop a technology infrastructure to collect data and create an interdisciplinary health equity course for undergraduate and graduate students. The team is building relationships with local elected officials and non-profits in the community. The team is also developing a website for community-university partnerships and creating a syllabus for interdisciplinary experiential and service-learning modules.

**Freshmen Wellness Assessment: The First Step to Reduce Health Disparities Among Underserved Youth**

**PI:** Joanne Klaber, PhD, RD, Adriene Van Zwol, MJ, LCSW, Kelly Sierse, RD, Diana Hackbarth, PhD, RN, FAAN

Health equity and reducing health disparities are goals of Chicago’s Healthy People 2020, which identifies the social determinants of health as neighborhood, health care, social and community context, economic stability, and education. Based on the researchers’ previous work with the Proviso East High School school-based health center, this study implemented a new screening initiative for freshmen to identify teenagers with nutrition and behavioral risk factors. Results of the screenings indicated the need for mental health services, and also the ability to provide referrals to healthy eating programs and monitoring risk for diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.
RESEARCH

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Exercise partnerships promote health and wellness in Chicago Public Schools

Lexi Van Tiem, a senior exercise science major, cherishes the afternoons she spends at Goudy Technology Academy as "Coach Lexi," the assistant coach for the elementary school's after school soccer program. “To have the little kids calling me 'Coach Lexi,' that's a cool feeling. When I go there, I’m excited to be there and I want to give them the best I can," Van Tiem said. “I want to be a positive role model." Van Tiem has been involved at Goudy since the spring semester of her first year at Loyola, when she took the introductory exercise science class, which has a service learning component. She was assigned to Goudy, where she volunteered as a recess and gym class aid.

This service learning is part of the School of Nursing Health and Wellness Initiative (SHWI), a collaboration among the nursing school, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and community partners to promote health and wellness programs at CPS elementary schools.

“Service learning experiences give students an opportunity to engage with a community or people who are very different from themselves, or maybe are resourced or structured differently,” said Karen Berg-Helfgot, M Ed., the director of clinical placements and experiential learning at Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing. “It can be eye-opening for them to understand that not every school looks the same in terms of programs or sports equipment, that things are not always equitable,” she said.

Goudy is one of 13 schools where Loyola nursing and exercise science students volunteer through the HPF, facilitating recess, physical and health education classes, and after school sports programs. Urban Initiatives—a nonprofit that runs after-school soccer programs to promote physical fitness, team building, leadership and emotional learning—is a community partner that facilitates the soccer team at Goudy. Located approximately a mile and a half south of Loyola’s Lake Shore Campus, Goudy is a longtime community partner. The exercise science program is also instrumental in putting on Goudy's annual health and wellness fair.

The Health and Wellness Initiative fosters growth for Loyola students and the CPS students they serve. The exercise science students can put classroom concepts into practice, preparing them for careers down the road.

"CPS partnerships are a great opportunity for Loyola students to step out of the classroom and serve the community in areas of physical activity and nutrition," said Stephanie Wilson, MPT, director of the exercise science program. "Loyola students can learn firsthand how to engage, motivate, and lead individuals in exercise through games and activities," she said.

Van Tiem said she appreciated the opportunity to get involved in Loyola's neighboring communities during her first year on campus.

"I loved the fact that we went out into our community and incorporated what we learned in the classroom," Van Tiem said.

For schools like Goudy, the presence of Loyola student volunteers provides two benefits. First, it provides them with staff to meet city mandates for recess, physical activity, and nutrition education. Second, as Emily Fallon, the development and communications manager at Urban Initiatives, points out: "The Loyola students are positive role models for the elementary students."

"Many of our students don’t have as many positive role models as they could," Fallon said. "Loyola students come from diverse backgrounds with diverse career interests, and provide more role models to our students. They can think about whether that is someone to emulate when they are older." Being this positive role model is not always easy, she added. "It’s important to take care of yourself, so you can meet an individual’s unique needs."

"Precision Health," reflects the broad role nurses play in health – beyond medicine – and because precision health is more than tailoring treatment based on one’s genetic make-up. Precision health includes using biological (i.e. genomic information) as well as behavioral, social, and environmental data to predict symptoms, diseases, and quality of life, and to tailor treatment to best meet an individual’s unique needs.

"This year’s theme, "Precision Health," reflects the broad role nurses play in health – beyond medicine – and because precision health is more than tailoring treatment based on one’s genetic make-up. Precision health includes using biological (i.e. genomic information) as well as behavioral, social, and environmental data to predict symptoms, diseases, and quality of life, and to tailor treatment to best meet an individual’s unique needs."

In 2018, she received the inaugural Beatrice Renfield Term Professor of Nursing and Director of the Center for Biobehavioral Health Research at Yale School of Nursing. She holds an appointment in the Department of Internal Medicine (Division of Pulmonary Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine) at Yale School of Medicine and was Principal Investigator of the highly successful NIH/ NINR-funded Yale Center for Sleep Distur- bance in Acute and Chronic Conditions. Dr. Redeker’s research focuses on diversified tailored interventions to address sleep problems in individuals with chronic conditions. She is conducting studies, funded by the National Institute of Nurs- ing Research, focused on the sustained effects of cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia among patients with stable heart failure.

Because improving health and advancing health care requires the collaboration of interdisciplinary teams, the Palmer Research Symposium has grown in size and in breadth over many decades. From its start as a small group of nurse researchers discussing their work at Loyola, it now has grown into a regional research confer- ence that includes many other disciplines, such as medicine, psychology and social work.

2019 RUTH K. PALMER SYMPOSIUM

Research symposium brings together health care professions of all backgrounds

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Keynote speaker, Dr. Nancy Redeker, PhD, RN, FAHA, FAAN, addressed sleep health across chronic health conditions. Dr. Redeker is the inaugural Beatrice Renfield Term Professor of Nursing and Director of the Center for Biobehavioral Health Research at Yale School of Nursing. She holds an appointment in the Department of Internal Medicine (Division of Pulmonary Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine) at Yale School of Medicine and was Principal Investigator of the highly successful NIH/NINR-funded Yale Center for Sleep Disturbance in Acute and Chronic Conditions. Dr. Redeker’s program of research addresses the contributions of sleep and sleep disorders to symptoms, function, and quality of life among people with or at risk for acute and chronic conditions, and the development of ecologically valid behavioral interventions to promote sleep health. Sleep disturbances and disorders are very common: one in five Americans experience sleep disturbances.

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The last grocery store in Maywood, an AIDS-affected town on Christmas Eve of 2016. And with it disappeared the neighborhood’s easy access to fresh produce and the fiber, vitamins and nutrients that can help minimize chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and more.

But Mary D’Anza Mora, RDN, CDE, RD, is determined to help the neighborhood. Mora works for the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing at Loyola University Chicago, Loyola University Health System, and other partners who are collaborating to improve health equity and economic development in Chicago’s near-west suburbs. Drawing on her background as a registered dietitian nutritionist, a professionally trained chef, and a certified master gardener, Mora is on a mission to increase access to healthy foods in Maywood, Bellwood, Broadview, and Melrose Park.

“We know that a lot of health issues are within communities that don’t have fresh, affordable produce, and this is also a food equity issue,” Mora said. “I feel less like a registered dietitian and more like a social justice worker.”

An interest in social justice first attracted Mora to Loyola, where she completed her dietetic internship in 2002 and where she is working on her master’s degree in dietetics. She spent six years as a clinical diettian before transitioning into community health. “Health is not just in the hospital or in the doctor’s office; it’s how you live and your environment and your school,” explained Mora. “Teaching people in their daily lives was more meaningful to me.”

Mora partnered with Joanne Koubi, PhD, RDN, a Niehoff associate professor and director of dietetic education programs, whom she calls “a constant inspiration.” Before PP4H, Mora and Koubi worked together on I Can Grow, a healthy eating and nutrition program for kids, and the I-CARE PATH HRSA project, which focused on an alternative care model for patients with diabetes.

“Mary is so phenomenally good with community partnerships because she really listens to and thought expressed by community members and respects their perspectives,” Koubi said.

On an average work day, Mora might choose recipes for a cooking demonstration, lead a food justice discussion at a community garden, or work with a school to create healthier cafeteria options.

“Everything PP4H does has community members at the table. Ultimately, it’s about partnering with schools, parents and kids, and meeting them where they’re at,” Mora said. “Our goal is to make these community transformations sustainable.

Mora also leverages Loyola resources. She partnered with the public health program for a Food Summit and is working with the Bauman! Center for Social Enterprise to explore how business students can support worker-owned co-ops. One of her recent projects is Veggie Rx, a partnership with Windy City Harvest Youth Farm. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the project provides a free, weekly box of fresh produce to participants for 10 weeks. Participants attend a weekly cooking demonstration, which features easy, inexpensive and culturally appropriate meals, and then can use double-value coupons to purchase additional produce at Veggie Rx’s low-cost farm stand.

Mora recently started an urban garden connection group, which brings in speakers on topics ranging pruning tomatoes to medicinal herbs use. “It’s like a reunion,” she said. “It’s this whole cycle of supporting local agriculture.”

PP4H also runs community gardens, including the Giving Garden at Proviso East High School, which supplies more than 150 pounds of produce to local organizations. Area teens tend the gardens as interns. Mora will never forget one moment a couple of summers ago. “One night, one of the girls called me from the garden, and she said, ‘I just had to call you because I just feel so good and so free.’ And I started crying. Mora recalled. ‘That teenager thought, “I can do it for others always. Student nurses have basic research skills already because we are constantly bridging the gap of knowledge in clinical settings.”
Afshan Hussain (BS ’19)
A Portrait in Resilience

She takes patient vital signs at a community clinic. She studies enzyme function in a biochemistry laboratory. She mobilizes relief projects for Syrian refugees. She supports a free clinic serving the uninsured. Health Systems Management graduate Afshan Hussain has no empty moments. What drives her to do it all? Dial back to when Hussain was 12 years old. She attended a fundraiser for people who are disfigured,” said Hussain. “I recognized the meaning of my work as a nurse and set a goal to explore ways that I can better understand patients.”

After graduation, I stumbled upon a health care company that offers home care for medically complex and ventilator-dependent patients. I have worked as a field nurse there for almost two years. I have found a much better appreciation for this unique area of community health and experienced first-hand how to be a team member for patients and their families.

Why did you choose to work with this particular patient population? I came with an open mind to learn and a goal to discover what nursing means to me. This work has brought many emotional first-times and provided meaning for my work. I held my 89-year-old patient’s hands and prayed with her when the end of life conversation becomes unbearable to consider. I took my 18-month-old post-cancer patient on the swing at a local park for the first time after her long hospital stay. And I helped my 33-year-old patient use the eye-gaze communication device. The first words he typed with his eyes were “thank you.”

To take part and witness the daily resilience, courage, humanness, fear, and struggles has helped me better appreciate the population that I serve, unpack some of my questions, and encouraged me to keep learning.

How do you approach “cura person-alis” in home-based settings? Family has always had a vital role in the health of the patient, regardless of the health care setting. In the home, it is even more visible. Emotionally and physically, it is difficult for family members, whether the patient’s condition is new or genetically present. The chronic nature, unknown possibilities, and constant needs of an ill person can put much inward as outward. Hussain credits much of her resilience, courage, humanness, fear, and appreciation to the population that she serves, unpacking some of her questions, and encouraged her to keep learning.

Thy Vuong (RN, BSN ’17)
Providing home-based nursing care

Why did you choose to work in a home-based setting? As I participated in various clinical experiences in nursing school, I was filled with questions: What is the patient’s home environment? Do they have support? How can we better help? My questions only piled up. During college, I participated in community and global health experiences to further understand the role of health care beyond hospitals. I continued my journey in a deeper and more intimate setting in Uganda for two months of research. Each time, as I reflected, what I took most from those experiences was setting down and talking with people who, perhaps under a different circumstance such as in a hospital, would simply call patients. However, there, they were individuals with characteristics, stories, families, and unique circumstances. I met their families, held their children, learned about how many miles they walked to get care, and shared their worries and concerns. At those moments, I recognized the meaning of my work as a nurse and set a goal to explore ways that I can better understand patients.

After graduation, I stumbled upon a health care company that offers home care for medically complex and ventilator-dependent patients. I have worked as a field nurse there for almost two years. I have found a much better appreciation for this unique area of community health and experienced first-hand how to be a team member for patients and their families.

Why did you choose to work with this particular patient population? I came with an open mind to learn and a goal to discover what nursing means to me. This work has brought many emotional first-times and provided meaning for my work. I held my 89-year-old patient’s hands and prayed with her when the end of life conversation becomes unbearable to consider. I took

Allison Rydberg (BS ’15)
Respecting patients’ culture and beliefs on the Apache Reservation

For Allison Rydberg, Native American tradition is second nature. Rydberg spent the first nine years of her life on the Navajo Nation Reservation in northern Arizona, when her father, a doctor, was working with the Indian Health Service, a federal health program for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Then the family moved to Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona, close to the Apache Nation Reservation. Rydberg went to church and volunteered on the reservation, and went to school with Apache Native American children.

Today, Rydberg is in Arizona again, working as a physical therapist on the same Apache reservation where they spent their childhood years.

“This is the community that I grew up with, and a traditionally oppressed group of people in the U.S.,” said, and knowing that I can hopefully make a difference in people’s lives and get them more independent or more mobile, that’s a really cool thing to be involved in.” Rydberg said. “More mobility and more independence directly relates to your quality of life.”

Rydberg is a member of the U.S. Public Health Service, one of the country’s seven uniformed services. Loyola’s emphasis on service influenced their decision to enlist.

“I had the opportunity to go on some service immersion trips and retreats, and growing in that way during college was a big reason for enlisting,” Rydberg said. “I knew I found fulfillment and enjoyment in serving underserved populations.”

Rydberg majored in exercise science at Loyola, then earned a doctor of physical therapy at Northwestern University.

“I toyed with the idea of going to medical school, then realized that I am more interested in human movement and regaining mobility than medicine. The exercise science major definitely helped me realize that while I was at Loyola,” Rydberg said.

Adds Stephanie Wilson, director of the exercise science program: “leadership, dedication, demeanor and being a team player are only a few of Ali’s amazing qualities. These same attributes will help serve underprivileged communities. Ali- son made all efforts to serve the exercise science program and Loyola post-gradua- tion, serving to return an alumni panel and at exercise science events.”

Since moving back to Arizona, Rydberg started practicing in an outpatient clinic at a hospital near the reservation. The physical therapists there are the primary wound care specialists for the reservation, and provide post-surgery and post-injury physical therapy.

“A lot of patients here unfortunately have complications from diabetes, so they get foot ulcers,” Rydberg said. “We will see them two or three times a week to change out dressings and promote wound healing. It’s not in the realm of what people think physical therapists do, but it helps patients get back their mobili- ty,” she said.

The Native American patient popula- tion also comes with different challenges than Chicagoans. These patients often don’t have access to running water or electricity—that others take for granted. “They are a very traditional population, and I have to find a balance of my ther- apies with their viewpoints, traditions, and culture,” Rydberg said. “I don’t want to break rapport with patients by not respecting their belief.”

“Editor’s Note: Rydberg uses the pronouns they/them/their
Marylin Boyle

After Marilyn Boyle’s father died unexpectedly a month before her high school graduation, she wondered how she would pay for college. A U.S. Navy Nurse Corps scholarship made it possible.

“It was the era of tumultuous Vietnam War protests in Chicago and around the U.S.,” she recalled. “I looked into the military because of my desire to live and work overseas.”

After graduation, Boyle began active-duty service, shipping out first to San Diego, where she was the charge nurse in an Intensive Care Unit and helped open a new postpartum recovery room. Her next posting was at a Marine airbase in Japan, overseeing corpsmen and helping Navy wives deliver their babies.

At the end of her yearlong tour in Japan, she was the first female nurse at her duty station to get permission to take the long way back, stopping in the Philippines, Thailand, India, Russia, Switzerland, and Britain.

“A lot of my experiences with the Navy stayed with me forever,” said Boyle, who now volunteers with the Military Officers Association of America, which supports ROTC students through scholarships, and advocates for veterans and military families.

After leaving active duty, Boyle remained in the Reserves and settled in Northern California as a civilian nurse at Kaiser Permanente, where she worked in specialties ranging from the burn unit to cardiology to pediatric oncology.

Now retired, Boyle looks back fondly on her time at Loyola. “I learned a lot about taking care of people and putting their needs first,” she said.

Eileen Wayne, MD

Dr. Eileen Wayne still remembers observing Charlie Vygart, MD, perform retinal detachment surgery during her rotations as a nursing student. “I remember thinking ‘surgery’s not for me,’ but I saw those teeny-tiny instruments, and it made me want to touch every one of them.”

That fascination inspired Wayne’s path after graduation, and she attended the Stettich School of Medicine and completed her ophthalmology residency. Over the last four decades, she has treated patients at her eye surgery practice in Moline, Illinois, where she has worked on memorable cases, including repairing the cornea of a man whose eye was pierced by a screw. Today, his vision is 20/20.

Wayne developed and published several surgical techniques and protocols that helped turn complex cataract cases into routine, safe cases.

“I think I’m most proud of being able to show people how to mechanically open the pupil without cutting the iris,” she said. While she did not invent the technique, she perfected it by practicing on a pig eye.

Committed to sharing her discoveries pre-internet, she mailed binders, videotapes, and sample needle knife instruments to eye surgeons nationwide.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, her office fielded international calls from physicians with questions. These days, she shares her insights via YouTube and e-mail.

“It is the small, sequential changes that add up to huge, successful techniques and the rewarding eye surgery we have today,” she said.

Katherine Blachowski

No one like Katherine Von Sterenberg Blachowski’s family went to college, but she dreamed of becoming a nurse since childhood, and was determined to earn a bachelor’s degree. Her time at Loyola confirmed she was on the right path, and she will never forget the first time she saw a birth.

“That cemented my commitment to nursing,” she said. “It was messy, it was loud, it was scary. But there was this baby, and it just changed things for me.”

Not long after graduation, she taught student nurses at Christ Hospital. “There I was, only 24, teaching students who were 18 and 19,” she said. “But I was able to pull it off because of Loyola’s education. They taught us how to think and how to ask the right questions, and then you could do just about anything.”

In 1972, before the days of 911, Illinois was just building a statewide network of trauma systems that would become a national model. Blachowski, who already had some experience as an ER and ICU nurse, jumped on the opportunity to become one of the state’s first trained trauma nurses.

“It just blew my mind to be on the ground floor of that new program and to realize how powerful we had become.”

She and her husband, a surgeon, worked with children and was determined to earn a bachelor’s degree. Her time at Loyola confirmed she was on the right path, and she will never forget the first time she saw a birth.

“She had a kind of quiet confidence that intimidated me,” she said. “And she told me that I had the right path, and it just made sense.”

As President of Resurrection College Prep High School, Sister Wolowicki continues to enhance academic opportunities for its students. For example, students in the Health Science, Integration and Exploration Class participate in a simulation lab at a local hospital where they can view cardiac arrhythmias on a monitor and work with a patient mannequin.

Sister Wolowicki is on the board of directors of Maryville Academy, Solidarity Bridge, and the Michael J. McGorry Center of Hope and Healing. She received the 2012 Chicago Health Executives Forum Career Achievement Award, the 2013 Loyola University of Chicago Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award, and the 2016 Presence Resurrection Medical Center Inspire Award for Community Service.

Memories from the Class of 1968

It’s been 50 years since a group of newly minted Loyola nurses crossed the stage of the Auditorium Theatre to get their diplomas. Since then, members of the Class of 1968 have worked in a variety of specialties at hospitals and clinics across the nation. Several served in the military during the height of the Vietnam War, using their nursing skills at home and abroad. Many pursued advanced degrees and taught at various universities, including four who joined the Niehoff School of Nursing: Ann Solan-Twadell, Meg Gularek, Camilia Clark and Dana Hack-Barth. Here are three stories from the Class of 1968.

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DAMN AWARD

Sister Donna Marie Wolowicki, C.R. (BSN ’71, MSN ’75)

Named for Loyola University Chicago’s primary founder, Arnold J. Damen, S.J., this award is granted to an alumnaeus from each of Loyola’s schools and colleges. It recognizes the qualities of leadership in industry, leadership in the community, and service to others. The Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing recipient this year was Sister Donna Marie Wolowicki C.R. (BSN ’71, MSN ’75). As the President of Resurrection College Preparatory High School and the former CEO of Resurrection Medical Center, Sister Wolowicki initiated a number of new health programs for women, children, and families.

These important programs include a newborn home-visit program, community education and health-screening programs for women and children, a pediatric wellness clinic, and expanding the New Beginnings Prenatal and Postpartum Clinic for public aid families. She also initiated the design of family centered patient care units to address the needs of the whole person and the family.

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Faculty achievements and recognition

PUBLICATIONS


When long-time Loyola sign language interpreter Marisol Wimbish was diagnosed with rectal cancer earlier this year, fellow Loyolans rallied: Marcela Niehoff School of Nursing faculty Mary Margaret Sharp-Pucci and Myshel Rodenbeck along with Loyola Center for Fitness Personal Trainer Morgan Zaviska combined to compete in the Chicago Triathlon, a distance event that involves swimming, biking, and running.

MaryMargaret, Myshel and Morgan, all seasoned triathletes, came together to support MariJo’s fight with cancer. Since 1990, it has been MaryMargaret Loyola’s Loyola sign language interpreter as well as an interpreter for Loyola’s hearing-impaired patients through the years.

A triathlete, Marisol trains with Morgan at the Loyola Center for Fitness, and Loyola exercise scientist Myshel joined the team in a show of support.

On race day, MariJo was in Loyola University Health System hospital having undergone surgery earlier in the week. Under the care of Loyola surgeons, Drs. Jeff Eisenhart and Adrienne Cob, MariJo followed the triathlon’s progress from her bed.

The relay team trained all year with a single goal in mind: winning a trophy in honor of MariJo. They completed their mission: swimmer Myshel, cyclist MaryMargaret, and runner Morgan came away with an amazing 3rd place finish, bringing home some hardware for MariJo. The all-female team beat out a multitude of male and co-ed teams in less than ideal conditions on a brutally hot day.

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Nurse practitioners go to the frontiers

One of the most pressing shortages in medicine today is in primary care, where many people get treatment and manage of chronic diseases. A new, two-year, $1.1 million grant to the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing aims to help close this gap, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Jenny O’Rourke, PhD, APN-BC, associate dean of graduate programs at Niehoff, received a two-year Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Advanced Nursing Education Workforce Grant to develop the Primary Care - Promoting Access to Health Care (P-PATH) project, which will support the training of primary care nurse practitioners.

“This funding will really give us the resources we need to help our nurse practitioners provide care in rural and underserved areas,” said O’Rourke. “It also helps us build relationships with preceptors the organizations they’re associated with, to give students more options.”

The grant will partner nurse practitioner students in training at local sites such as the Hines VA, Cook County Health and Hospital Systems, Proviso School-Based Health Center, and Trinity Health System as well as the Appalachian Regional Health System in West Virginia. Students enrolled in this program will receive scholarship funding.

Another goal of the program is to help develop more nurse practitioners. Having preceptors at a variety of locations with different patient populations can provide students with varying care options once they graduate. A shortage of health care workers with mental health expertise exists, too. In Illinois, fewer than five percent of registered nurses are working in mental health. Nationally, only five percent of nurse practitioners are certified in psych-mental health.

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HEALTH CARE IS CHANGING. **SO ARE WE.**

The new Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health will train the health care workforce of the future, leverage data to improve patient care and outcomes, and reach new frontiers in medical research, all under Loyola’s Jesuit mission of excellence. This fall, programs previously in the Niehoff School of Nursing will move to the new Parkinson School for Health Sciences and Public Health. These programs are: Health Systems Management, Dietetics, and Exercise Science.

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