

# UWG Newsletter

## Tanner Health System School of Nursing

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## Welcome From The Dean



We are having another fantastic year at UWG. All of our programs are going strong thanks to our outstanding students, faculty, staff and clinical and community partners!

We have just admitted the largest class ever to our pre-licensure program. Students admitted to this program have an average GPA of 3.5 and once again, there were more qualified applicants than we have the capacity to admit. Our NCLEX pass rates continue to be well above the national average. Our RN to BSN program is 100% online and an innovative, student-supportive way for nurses returning to school to complete their BSN. Our MSN graduates are influencing health care as nurse educators, clinical

nurse leaders and nurse managers. Our BSN and MSN students have clinical and practicum rotations in a wide variety of health care institutions and educational settings. Further, we are actively pursuing expanding students' experiences to even more settings, with a special focus on increasing encounters in specialty areas and non-acute community settings. Finally yet importantly, our EdD graduates are functioning in academic roles at schools and colleges of nursing across the country. Seventy percent of students who have graduated from the program have published their dissertation research in refereed professional journals, truly a testament to excellence in the scholarship of teaching and learning we are known for!

The last year has been a banner year in terms of the growth and development of faculty and staff! Six colleagues stepped into new leadership roles and three received promotions. Nine new faculty and staff joined us in the Fall of 2017. I've shared a little about each of these colleagues in this newsletter.

We have also experienced an increased number of alumni and friends who have been supporting the school through contributions to the annual and scholarship funds. Your gifts are so important to allowing us to recruit and retain excellent students and faculty and maintain cutting edge technology in the School. With your help, we will further increase the number of excellent nurses and nurse educators in the State of Georgia and beyond. Our health depends on it!

As we look forward to another wonderful new year, I want to thank you for all you do to support us. Please enjoy these stories about some of the interesting things going on in the School.

Go West! Go Wolves! GO NURSING!!

Jenny Schuessler, PhD, RN, CNE

## New Leaders



**Dr. Linda Mason Barber**, Assistant Professor, was appointed Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs January 1, 2017. Dr. Mason-Barber joined the faculty in 2014. She is an Adult Nurse Practitioner and has been instrumental in reviving the School's Undergraduate Research Program. Dr. Mason Barber's scholarly program focuses on simulation in nursing education, creating caring environments, and cardiovascular disease in women.



**Dr. Susan Welch**, Associate Professor, was appointed Associate Dean of Graduate Programs July 1, 2017. Dr. Welch joined the faculty in 2006. She was Director of the EdD in Nursing Education Program and has served as the dissertation committee chair for many EdD students. Her research program focuses on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Dr. Welch is a Fellow of the Sigma Theta Tau International Experienced Nurse Faculty Leadership Program.



**Dr. Sally Richter**, Assistant Professor, was appointed Director of the MSN Program in Fall semester 2016. Dr. Richter is a graduate of our EdD Program and joined the faculty in 2015. Her research program focuses on the experiences of online graduate nursing students. She is providing visionary leadership in our MSN programs.



**Dr. Delene Volkert**, Assistant Professor, was appointed Director of the EdD in Nursing Education Program July 1, 2017. She joined the UWG faculty in 2016. The experiences of doctoral students and leadership in doctoral education are Dr. Volkert's areas of expertise.



**Shelly Crager**, Assistant Clinical Professor, was appointed Director of the Experiential Learning Center August 1, 2017. Ms. Crager has been a member of the UWG faculty since 2008 and teaches primarily in the senior level courses of the BSN program.



**Betty Speir**, was appointed Manager of the Experiential Learning Center Fall semester of 2017. Ms. Speir has been instrumental in the development of our outstanding simulation program since joining us in 2013. She is a certified health care simulation educator.

## Promotions

We are pleased to announce the promotions to Associate Professor and tenure appointments of **Dr. Mary Bishop** and **Dr. Cynthia Brown**. Drs. Bishop and Brown have been members of the faculty since 2012. Further, **Amy Farmer**, promoted to Associate Professor in the Clinical Professor track, is the only current faculty member holding the rank of Clinical Associate Professor! Congratulations to all three!



Dr. Mary Bishop



Dr. Cynthia Brown



Amy Farmer

## New Faculty

**Dr. Judy Ruvalcaba** and **Dr. Ethel Santiago** joined the faculty in Fall semester 2017 as tenure track Assistant Professors. Dr. Ruvalcaba comes to us with seven years' experience as an academic nurse educator and Dr. Santiago brings a wealth of experience from clinical practice as a nurse administrator.



Dr. Judy Ruvalcaba



Dr. Ethel Santiago

Four clinical track Assistant Professors have been appointed in the last year. **Nancy Capponi**, **Baylee Cates** and **Oliver Duah**, were appointed in Fall semester 2017 and **Kitty Whitley** was appointed Spring semester 2017. Mrs. Cates and Mr. Duah, both graduates of our MSN Nurse Educator track, bring a wealth of clinical expertise as well as an incomparable enthusiasm for teaching our pre-licensure students. In addition to being new faculty in the School, Ms. Capponi is in the dissertation phase of doctoral education and Ms. Whitley is in doctoral course work.



Nancy Capponi



Baylee Cates



Oliver Duah



Kitty Whitley

We are fortunate to have four new staff members in the School. **Brandee Otto** is our new Clinical Placement Specialist, charged with the huge task of leading in the planning of our clinical placements. **Malia Poole** and **Erin Backstrom** are Experiential

Learning Center (ELC) Nurse Educators, already contributing in innumerable ways to our students' experiences in the ELC. Finally, **Beth Mulvey** is the new advancement officer for the School of Nursing and the Newnan Center. With substantial experience in advancement in various settings, Ms. Mulvey contributes abundant skills and knowledge to this role.



Brandee Otto



Malia Poole



Erin Backstrom

## Soccer Nurse: Soccer Playing Nursing Student Finds Right Fit at UWG

By Sheryl Marlar

Move over soccer moms! The University of West Georgia would like to introduce Kelly Geary - soccer nurse.

Geary, a senior in the Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THSSON) will graduate in May 2018 with a bachelor's degree in nursing. During her four years at UWG, she also played soccer for the Wolves.

"A lot of coaches (at other universities) don't want nursing students," Geary said. "They want players who will just focus on soccer. Thankfully, here at UWG, they not only allowed it, but they encouraged me to do both."

[Read more](#)



## Student and Teacher: Faculty Member Presents Research at International Conference

By Sheryl Marlar

Kelly Dyar, Ed.D, RN,CCN,CN, is a clinical assistant professor in the (THSSON) at the University of West Georgia. As a student at UWG, she just made her mark by adding Ed.D. to her list of credentials.

As such, Dyar was chosen to represent UWG's THSSON in presenting her research and findings for her dissertation at the recent International Sigma Theta Tau Biennial Convention.

Sigma Theta Tau is the honors society for nursing. They invite schools to send their "rising stars of research" to the conference. A large number of nurses from other institutions were in attendance to hear the research.

"As a student, UWG helped me improve my critical thinking to evaluate research and develop a love for learning, specifically related to teaching strategies that I can implement in my daily practice as a nurse educator," Dyar said. "This has helped me become more confident of my abilities to help students discover their own love for learning."

[Read More](#)



# Where Credit's Due: Nursing Senior Thanks UWG for Successes

By Odera Ezenna

Part of the University of West Georgia promise is to provide new ways to enhance students' college experience and leadership development. This is done through a variety of services, programs and activities.

Senior nursing major Ashlyn Summerlin is a perfect example of how taking advantage of these opportunities has helped her experience this promise.

Summerlin is the president of the Pre-Nursing Student Association and also the vice president of the Student Nurses' Association here at UWG's Tanner Health System School of Nursing. This local chapter of the National Student Nurses' Association is run completely by nursing students and provides opportunities for them. But for Summerlin, these programs have a much deeper meaning. [Read More](#)



# Nursing Students Depict Their Work Through Art

By UWG News

It has been said that nursing is a form of art. Nursing students in the May 2018 cohort recently put their nursing skills on display in the form of an aesthetic art exhibit at the University of West Georgia's Tanner Health System School of Nursing. Their assignment was to create something—a painting, a poem, a story, or literally anything they desired—to depict how they view themselves as professional nurses.



[Read More](#)

# Program Gets High Marks: UWG Nursing Continues to Rise in the Ranks

By Sheryl Marlar

The University of West Georgia [Tanner Health System School of Nursing](#) continues to rise in the ranks . . . of the [U.S. News & World Report rankings](#), that is.

U.S. News released their 2017 rankings this week, and UWG's online graduate nursing program ranked 29th for 2017, rising from 31st in 2016 and 41st in 2015.

The evaluating committee of U.S. News grades the country's best online graduate nursing programs on factors such as faculty credentials and training, student engagement, peer reputation and admissions selectivity.



Dr. Jenny Schuessler, dean of the Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THSSON), is thrilled that the ranking improved once again.

“The importance of the recognition of our graduate program, which is 100 percent online, by U.S. News & World Report as a top-rated school for the fourth consecutive year cannot be overstated,” she said. “The fact that our ranking has increased each year with an impressive rank of 29th this year indicates the commitment of the faculty and staff to continuous assessment and improvement of teaching and learning practices.”

[Read more here](#)

## Facing the Odds: Only Black Male in Nursing Cohort Looks Forward to Graduation

By Sheryl Marlar

Raequon Jones came into this world as a surprise. When Ronette Jones-Milligan went into labor, she headed to the hospital to have her baby. But unbeknownst to her and her doctors, she was carrying twins.

The babies were positioned in such a way that Jones' brother was on top of him, hiding his very existence throughout the entire pregnancy. Imagine the surprise to his mother and her doctors.

Due to his positioning at birth, Jones had medical difficulties and needed immediate care. Perhaps that was one of the factors that influenced Jones to make his mark in nursing.

“They did their best to save me,” he said. “I’m here today because of them, so I’m going to do the best I can.”

[Read More Here](#)



## Service to Humanity: Nursing Alum's Experience Leads to Decision to Become a Nurse

by Sheryl Marlar

Born in Guyana and then moving to New York to work in the business sector, Nadia Prince-Williams found herself in need of medical attention. While reflecting on the need for compassion in healthcare, Prince-Williams met a wonderful nurse.

“She sensed my vulnerable state and met it with the patience and kindness I needed,” Prince-Williams said. “This experience moved me so much that I resolved to become a member of the healthcare profession, so I could provide compassionate care to patients.”

Prince-Williams later moved to Georgia and applied to the Tanner Health System School of Nursing after learning about the University of West Georgia through coworkers who were also UWG alums.



“These coworkers were knowledgeable and conducted themselves in a manner that led them to gaining the respect and admiration of their team,” Prince-Williams stated. “In conversations about their training, they always would speak fondly and express thanks to their alma mater for the part it played in molding them into the academically strong professionals they became.”

[Read more](#)

## Students and Faculty Care: Nursing Student Presents Research on Caring Curriculum

by Sheryl Marlar

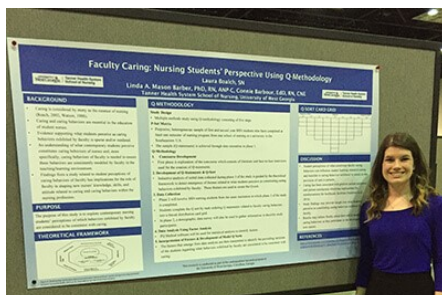
Katie Boalch didn't intend to come to the University of West Georgia. Instead, the Bremen native planned to go somewhere else—somewhere further away from home.

“Initially, I was not going to UWG,” Boalch said. “I live 20 minutes away. I wanted to be further away.”

Boalch applied to a private school in Alabama, but she did not receive a scholarship.

“So I applied at UWG and actually got a presidential scholarship, which I happily accepted,” Boalch added. “I knew I wanted to be a nurse, and UWG's Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THSSON) is well known as being very successful.”

[Read more](#)



## 2017 Daisy Awards

Two faculty members from University of West Georgia's Tanner Health System School of Nursing recently received the DAISY Award from the [DAISY Foundation](#).

Clinical Assistant Professor Jody Bryan, RN, and Simulation Nurse Educator Colleen Needham, RN, were honored at a special ceremony, along with all UWG THSSON nominees, by Tena Barnes Carraher, co-founder of the foundation.



[Read More Here](#)

## Nominations For The 2018 Daisy Awards Are Now Being Accepted

The purpose of the DAISY faculty award is to provide a national recognition program to colleges/schools of nursing. This award demonstrates appreciation to faculty for their commitment and inspirational influence on nursing students. The Foundation hopes that this program will contribute to a positive work environment for faculty in schools.

To nominate a faculty member, share an example of the nominee's excellence in education including specific Criteria for Extraordinary Nursing Faculty. All faculty members are eligible for nomination and can be nominated by students, faculty and administrators.

[Click here to find out more.](#)



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UNIVERSITY of  **Tanner Health System  
West Georgia School of Nursing**

UWG's Online Graduate Nursing Program is ranked among the best in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

## For More Information

For more information on our Graduate Programs contact Embry Ice at 678-839-5115 or via email at [eice@westga.edu](mailto:eice@westga.edu). Or visit the Tanner Health Systems School of Nursing web site [here](http://westga.edu/nursing).

### UWG Nursing Circle of Giving

UWG alumni and friends are invited to join the School of Nursing's Circle of Giving. You started your nursing profession here. Come full circle by supporting future nurse professionals. Your contributions will provide much needed scholarship assistance to our excellent and committed students. Make a gift of any amount or create a scholarship fund to support UWG nursing students in perpetuity.

Caring Circle \$10 - \$499... Stay connected to your school and profession.

Dean's List \$500 - \$999... Do your best for the future of nursing.

President's Circle - \$1,000... Join the Dean and UWG leadership at the President's Gala in the Spring at a special Evening of Gratitude.

Annual Named Scholarship - \$1,500/year for 5 years... Add your name to your support to celebrate your commitment to nursing.

Named Scholarship Endowment - \$5,000/year for 5 years... Create a legacy of perpetual support by creating an endowed fund at UWG.

Thank you!

Gifts are tax-deductible by law, and can be made at

[giving.westga.edu/nursing](http://giving.westga.edu/nursing)

Questions? Please contact Beth Mulvey, Director of Development,  
[mmulvey@westga.edu](mailto:mmulvey@westga.edu) or 678-839-6136