



Notes from Dean Jenny Schuessler

Happy Holidays from your School of Nursing! If you are one of our alumni, whether you graduated in 1976 or in 2019, I am pleased to report that YOU are an alumni of a School of Nursing that has been designated as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing!

Yes, we are one of only 10 schools across the United States earning that designation this year!!

Please see the story in this newsletter telling more about this extraordinary honor!

Also, enjoy reading about our new faculty, as well as the accomplishments of our alumni, students, and faculty.

The support of our alumni and friends in large part explains why we are recognized for living our mission "Academic Excellence in a Caring Environment."

Please consider a gift before the end of the year for

scholarships and expansion of clinical opportunities for nursing students, professional development for nursing faculty, and support of the SON state-of-the-art facilities. Contact Melissa Cox, School of Nursing Development Officer, for more information about giving to nursing! (mcox@westga.edu; 678-839-6136).

[CLICK HERE TO MAKE A YEAR-END CONTRIBUTION TO NURSING](#)

And finally, we would love to see you at our 6th Annual Community of Advisor's Breakfast and Meeting, December 13th, in the lovely School of Nursing Building at the Carrollton Campus. Breakfast is from 8:00am-9:00am. In the meeting you will hear the latest from our faculty, staff and students, and we also take the time to hear from you.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE COMMUNITY OF ADVISORS](#)

Happy Holidays! Go West, Go Wolves, GO NURSING!!!

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THS SON received a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education award from the National League for Nursing Annual Meeting in Washington, DC in September. The award is for 2019-2023.

THS SON Recognized as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education

by Sheryl Marlar

The **Tanner Health System School of Nursing** (THSSON) at the University of West Georgia has been recognized as one of 10 nursing programs across the country named as a 2019 **National League of Nursing** Center of Excellence in Nursing Education.

Dr. Jenny Schuessler, dean of THSSON, stresses the school's faculty and staff live its mission of offering academic excellence in a caring environment.

"It is rewarding to be validated in this significant manner for what we do best – educating caring nurses for practice and nursing education," Schuessler said.

In receiving this recognition, the THS SON is among notable nursing programs and leading hospitals in the country, including Johns Hopkins, Duke and Vanderbilt universities.

"This recognition is a testament to UWG's consistent dedication to excellence in preparing nurses and nurse educators," said UWG Interim President Dr. Micheal Crafton. "And to be recognized among such prestigious universities is certainly a credit to the efforts of Dean Jenny Schuessler and the THSSON faculty."

Dedicated to excellence in nursing, NLN is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education, offering professional development, networking opportunities, nursing research grants and policy initiatives to more than 40,000 individual and institutional members.

Since 2004, NLN has invited nursing schools to apply to become a Center of Excellence, based on their ability to demonstrate in concrete, measurable terms sustained excellence in faculty development, nursing education research or student learning and professional development.

According to NLN CEO Beverly Malone, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Centers of Excellence help raise the bar for all nursing programs by role modeling visionary leadership and environments of inclusive excellence.

"These programs will nurture the next generation of a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the health of the nation and the global community," Malone said.

Susan Welch, associate dean of THSSON, said the school holds itself to very high standards and is not satisfied with anything less than the very best.

"Excellence means striving to do the best you can do in everything you do," she said. "This prestigious recognition as an NLN Center of Excellence exemplifies our unwillingness to accept the status quo for ourselves or our students. We are honored to be recognized for our commitment to pursuing excellence in nursing education."

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THS SON Highlights:

- 2019 College of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing
- 2019 US News & World Report Best Online Program: Doctoral Degree in Nursing Education Ranked No. 53
- Recognized by College of Distinction: 2019-2020 Academic Year
- 2019 BSN, MSN, and EdD Enrollment: 497

State of the Art Facilities:

Carrollton 64,000 sq. ft. building
Newnan 9,000 sq. ft. simulation lab

New Faculty at THS SON

If you walk through the School of Nursing, you may see new faces. Seven new faculty members joined THS SON during 2019: Kala Crobarger, Marcia Davis, Lisa Gazan, Lisa Hesser, Michelle Venn, Tina Warren and Amy Yarbrough.

Dr. Kala Crobarger, EdD, MSN, RN, IBCLC; **Dr. Michelle Venn**, DNP, RN, CNE, C-OB, C-EFM; and **Dr. Amy Yarbrough**, EdD, RN, RNC-MNN joined the faculty as assistant professors, tenure-track.

Dr. Crobarger comes to us with eight years as an academic nurse educator and a strong background in maternal-child nursing. **Dr. Venn's** experience includes more than 15 years in nursing education including impressive roles in simulation teaching. Also an experienced nurse educator, **Dr. Yarbrough** has an established research and publication record centering on academic accommodations for nursing students.

We are likewise pleased to welcome four faculty recently appointed as assistant professors in the clinical track. **Marcia Davis, MSN, RN**, a UWG SON MSN alumna, is a psychiatric/mental health nurse who also has a passion for community and public health. **Lisa Gazan, MSN, RN** brings a wealth of experience in home and public health including a four-year assignment as a missionary.

Lisa Hesser, MSN, RN, OCN, possess extensive experience as an oncology nurse and is currently pursuing doctoral education. **Tina Warren, RN, MSN**, has more than 10 years' experience as an academic educator and is an emergency department nurse.



Kala Crobarger



Michelle Venn



Amy Yarbrough



Marcia Davis



Lisa Gazan



Lisa Hesser



Tina Warren

Thriving Under Thirty: Monica Grimaldo thrives in the healthcare profession

by Madison Murphy

"As a nurse, we bear it all," said Monica Grimaldo, a 2012 BSN graduate of the University of West Georgia's **Tanner Health System School of Nursing**.

Grimaldo was recognized by the UWG **Alumni Association's Thriving Under Thirty** program. Honoring young alumni under the age of 30 who have made significant impacts in their career industry, the program also acknowledges their dedication to and representation of the university.

As a first-generation high school and college graduate, Grimaldo invests daily in the pursuit of serving humanity as a registered nurse in the emergency department at **Children's Healthcare of**



Atlanta and WellStar North Fulton. She is also fluent in Spanish, a skill that has proven to be advantageous – giving her an opportunity to significantly expand her impact for supporting and helping others.

Grimaldo is certain that UWG's Tanner Health System School of Nursing furnished the necessary tools to ensure her personal success and to prepare her for new possibilities as a registered nurse.

On average, Grimaldo takes care of 16 patients per shift. She has learned that at any given

time, she will walk into a room and face various patient conditions and emotions.

"We have to continue on to the next room, the next patient and the next crisis, all while leaving the emotions of previous encounters behind us in the space they should belong," Grimaldo continues.

Pursuing her master's degree at the University of South Alabama, Grimaldo expects to graduate and then become eligible for board certification as both a family nurse practitioner and adult-gerontological acute care nurse practitioner, something that has been her lifelong goal.

"I have served as an emergency department nurse for the past six years," she concluded. "I am looking forward to the many doors that will open for me once I obtain my master's degree and become a licensed nurse practitioner."

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Homecoming Distinguished Alumni Panelists (l-r) Chris Cox (2009), Angela Egwu (2016), Martell Hawkins (2012), LaQuinta Grizzard (1994), Gideon Esuzor (2016) and Maryanne Sandberg (2017).

Nursing Students Use Art to Express Caring

by Allie Smith

The mission of the University of West Georgia's **Tanner Health System School of Nursing** is to exemplify academic excellence in a caring environment by providing quality undergraduate and graduate education to meet current and evolving health care needs within the global community.

As such, caring is an integral part of the curriculum for THSSON.

Nursing students in Dr. Kelly Dyar's class on professional concepts study professionalism and professional identity, communication, legal issues, clinical reasoning, informatics, teamwork assigning and delegating, and health care quality.



"We learn Jean Watson's theory of human caring, discussing how our students can use it to implement the professional concepts of the course," said Dyar, assistant professor of nursing. "In this project, students were asked to synthesize what they learned in the course and aesthetically represent the concepts and a theory of caring."

Watson's theory of human caring is an essential component of the course and the nursing profession as a whole. This theory

indicates that a nurses' role is to be the center of healing and to help patients move toward a sense of self-recovery. Through the framework of this theory, students are taught to care for patients with authentic presence and intentionality.

At the end of the course, Dyar's students created aesthetic representations of what they learned. In a variety of ways, students communicated their understanding of Watson's theory and other concepts learned in class, while being able to express their individual creativity.

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Aspiring Students Envision Futures in Healthcare

by Bryan Lindenberger and Sheryl Marlar

The nationwide opioid epidemic affects almost everyone. For young people planning to enter the healthcare profession, the crisis is of particular importance. Many such students will soon be on the front lines saving lives.

Recently, the nursing students themselves had an opportunity to share what they have learned with 250 high school students from across the country and as far away as China. This visit was a day of hands-on learning in THSSON's Experiential Learning Center (ELC) at the UWG campus in Carrollton and at **UWG Newnan**.

The **National Youth Leadership Forum (NYLF) on Medicine**, a program created by **Envision**, chose THSSON as a preferred site to bring the students. The program provides career, leadership and technological learning opportunities for high-aspiring students across the country.

The ELC team and THSSON nursing students provided authentic educational experiences ranging from assessment to CPR in realistic situations," said Shelly Crager, director of the ELC. "The goal was to allow the visiting students to have a fun and positive learning experience and discover a passion for healthcare."

She added that the day of learning would be of great value not only to the visiting students,



but also to the THSSON nursing students as they gained confidence in teaching what they have learned.

"We are excited to have been approached by Envision to provide healthcare simulated experiences to high school students interested in exploring various healthcare career options," Crager said.

The Carrollton campus and UWG Newnan hosted 125 students each for the day. Nursing students provided presentations to expose students to the opioid crisis and how to recognize an overdose situation.

Students then circulated through three separate nursing stations which simulated various crisis situations that included assessment and treatment, CPR on a realistically-responsive mannequin and, lastly, responding to a patient in a simulated emergency room.

Colleen Needham, the simulation nurse educator at UWG Newnan, described a scenario as one where a car pulls up outside the emergency room doors and literally dumps the patient there before pulling away.

"Staff brings him in and puts him in a bed, where he is

unresponsive," Needham said.

"Through the simulation, they must decide what they should check and how best to intervene when moments are critical," Needham said.

She saw the day as a great learning opportunity, not only for the visiting students, but for UWG's nursing students as they guided the activities.

"Our students are intimately involved as part of a service learning project," Needham explained. "Others are working with homeless or other populations across Coweta and Carroll County. Our students came up with the idea to address the national opioid crisis."

Nancy Capponi, associate dean of undergraduate programs, was instrumental in coordinating the student visit at THSSON and sees the benefits it provides.

"This event promotes collegiality between faculty, staff and nursing students in THSSON and with potential UWG students," Capponi concluded. "The event provided an opportunity for everyone involved to learn, teach, and share information and perspectives valuable to all."

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The University of West Georgia's Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THSSON) trains its students in how to cope with hands-on. issues.



Ethel Santiago, assistant professor of nursing in the Tanner Health System School of Nursing, presented her research at the Southern Nursing Research Society Conference in Atlanta.

The Experience of Learning: Research examines the lived experiences of RN Preceptors

by Sheryl Marlar

Dr. Ethel Santiago loves the notion of caring at the University of West Georgia, saying she sees members of the faculty live it every day.

Santiago's research, titled "Lived Experience of Registered Nurse Preceptor Participation in a Blended Preceptor Course," is focused on finding the lived experiences of RN preceptors who have participated in a blended preceptor course. In a blended preceptor course, some class time is face-to-face and some is online.

"In this era of engaging in different teaching and learning modalities, it is important for nurse educators to understand the experience of learning from the perspective of the student,"

Santiago said. "The training of registered nurses is important as they serve as clinical educators for nursing students and nurse orientees."

Santiago's research asks the question of how nurse preceptors—those who serve dual roles as practitioners and educators—can retain the information they learned in a blended course, rather than a strictly face-to-face course.

The health care system has long used the face-to-face module to train the people who will teach nurses and nursing students, but is now moving to a blended course.

"This is where the lived experience comes in," Santiago explained. "How did they feel about it, what was it like for them, and were they able to cope? If it isn't effective, we need to know. We can learn from those who have experienced this learning style."

Santiago's research found preceptors are satisfied with the blended learning approach, but it isn't without its challenges. Obstacles such as difficulties in accessing the online course and a lack of engagement in online learning were noted.

Conclusions showed blended learning is an effective teaching style, but it's imperative that preceptors receive knowledge to enhance the preceptorship

Santiago feels well prepared for her work teaching and researching in UWG's Tanner Health System School of Nursing.

When Santiago enrolled at UWG for her RN-BSN degree, it had been 10 years since she had earned her associate degree in nursing from Georgia Perimeter College in 1997.

"I came to UWG because of the caring philosophy here," Santiago said. "It took me 10 years to go back to school, and I needed someone to hold my hand, offer me the support I needed and tell me I could do it. I got that here."

Santiago would go on to earn her master's degree in nursing and Ed.D. in 2009 and 2017, respectively.

"The faculty here embrace and live the notion of caring," Santiago concluded. "UWG cares about you as a student."

###

From Battle to UWG: Martin treats patients on campus and around the world

by Sheryl Marlar

The U.S. Air Force knows him as Lt. Col. James G. Martin, a reservist who's served in the **Nurse Corps** for 14 years.

The University of West Georgia knows him as Jim Martin, nurse practitioner and proud alumnus, who earned a bachelor's degree in **nursing** in 1993.

As a nurse practitioner for the past 20 years, Martin has served patients in a variety of settings from the emergency room to UWG's **Department of Health Services**, where he has been employed for 10 years.

In addition, Martin's military career has kept him busy for the past 14 years.

In accumulating more than 500 flying hours, he has earned numerous medals and awards, including a Meritorious Service Medal, while serving as chief nurse executive for an aeromedical staging squadron.

He served as a flight nurse with deployments in 2005 and 2009 in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, which resulted in his being awarded the Air Medal and Aerial Achievement Medal.

Martin's most-recent deployment was at Al Udeid

Air Base in Qatar. There, he served as a family nurse practitioner in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

Martin didn't always plan on a career in the medical profession.

"I was originally

an aerospace engineer student minoring in physics," he said.

After coming to West Georgia in the 1980s, Martin saw new possibilities and became a student athletic trainer, which led him into emergency management work as a paramedic. He had previously attended North Georgia College in Dahlonega but fell in love with his soon-to-be wife, who attended West Georgia.

After their marriage, Martin and his wife, Kim, tried unsuccessfully to have children for several years.

"I believe centric to life's success over challenges is faith," Martin explained. "Kim and I had to rest our heartache of trying to have children for seven years."

But all that changed on September 11, 2001.

"September 11, 2001, was a day of tragedy and a day of reassurance as Kim was found to be pregnant," Martin said.

The tragedy of that day was one of the factors that influenced Martin to enlist three years later.

"Our faith has been a cornerstone to survive the burden and fears of many challenges in life to include dealing with combat trauma during three deployments," Martin said.



Martin had some strong advice for younger generations of college students.

"Turn the focus of your phone away from yourself and focus on the world around you," he said. "Stay true to your faith and values and care for others with a non-judging lens. And, lastly, champion the art of respecting others, despite cultural differences and life's circumstances."

Martin sees the balance of work and life as an ongoing struggle, with time management being paramount to success as a husband, father, military soldier and health services medical provider – a feat he feels he never could have accomplished without the enduring support of his wife, daughter, family and friends. "It is truly an honor and privilege to serve the men and women of this country as a medical provider," Martin said.

"They are willing to sacrifice their lives for our current freedoms, in which we engage on a daily basis. The ability to express ourselves freely as we walk on the very campus of UWG is a benefit defended daily by an American soldier."

Volkert Chosen for Highly Selective Program of the NLN Leadership Institute

by Sheryl Marlar

A faculty member in the University of West Georgia's **Tanner Health System School of Nursing** (THSSON), Dr. Delene Volkert, RN, CNE, was selected through a competitive application process for the **National League for Nursing's** (NLN) yearlong LEAD program, one of three tracks in the NLN Leadership Institute. As an initiative of the **NLN Center for Transformational Leadership**, under the direction of Dr. Janice Brewington, RN, FAAN, in its eighth year, LEAD is designed for nurses in both education and practice who have experienced rapid transition into leadership positions or aspire to advance their status as leaders in administration.

The 2019 NLN Leadership Institute cohort is a group of 46 nurse educators and practice leaders chosen from colleges, universities and healthcare institutions around the world. Each program requires a significant time commitment for an entire calendar year. Participants identify personal and professional goals, learn about what makes an effective leader and strategize how to re-tool skill sets and experiences to achieve individual benchmarks.

To that end, everyone receives intensive one-on-one executive

coaching in addition to attending online and live group coaching sessions, conferences and webinars, where they study leadership theory and development that includes case study review.

To kick off the program, all 2019 NLN Leadership Institute participants attended a joint orientation session in February in Washington, D.C., and the LEAD cohort returned in June for the annual NLN Intensive Leadership Retreat.

"To promote diversity among leaders in nursing education, at least 25 percent of program participants in LEAD have been selected from under-represented groups," said NLN CEO Dr. Beverly Malone, RN, FAAN.

"In addition, a key outcome initially identified for the 2019 Leadership Institute's LEAD program continues to apply – 80 percent of program participants commit to remaining in academic leadership positions following completion of the program."

Volkert came to UWG in 2016 as an assistant professor. In addition, she currently serves as director of the Ed.D. program. Beginning her nursing career in 2002, Volkert is professionally affiliated with NLN, the **American Association of Colleges of Nursing** and the **Georgia Association for Nursing Education**.

She has also served on several committees at UWG, including the Rules Committee and the Academic Assessment Peer Review Committee.



"I feel very fortunate and honored to have been chosen to participate in the prestigious leadership program led by the National League for Nursing," Volkert said. "This program will provide the opportunity for me to work with nationally respected nursing leaders, in addition to my peers from across the U.S. During the year of the program, I look forward to actively learning more about effective leadership and how I can help develop the profession of nursing and nursing education."

Dr. Jenny Schuessler, dean for the THSSON, feels Volkert's appointment to this prestigious institution is a reflection on her accomplishments and potential as a nurse educator

"It's a testament to the national reputation of the THSSON as educators of the nurse educator," Schuessler explained. "I eagerly await the many contributions that I'm sure Volkert will make to nursing and nursing education as a participant of this program."

Paying it Forward in Your Own Backyard: UWG THSSON Faculty Member Becomes Nursing Ambassador

by Sheryl Marlar

Dr. Lisa Robinson loves the University of West Georgia so much she wants to help students succeed in any way she can. So much so, that she has become a Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) Certification Ambassador.

Robinson, an associate professor in UWG's **Tanner Health System School of Nursing** (THSSON), feels that she owes her career to UWG, after earning her bachelor's degree in nursing here in 2000.

"I wouldn't be who I am without UWG," Robinson began. "I was a first-generation college student. Being from the small town of Bowdon, my parents were afraid for me to go away to Atlanta. They felt I was more safe nearby at West Georgia."

Robinson strives daily to use what she learned from UWG and in turn, pay it forward.

"UWG gave me the ability to have a better life," Robinson said. "And we do the same for so many students from the surrounding area – students whose parents are concerned about them going so far away from home."

As a CNL Certification Ambassador, Robinson feels she can help others achieve their dreams – and at the same time,



assist in expanding enrollment in UWG's CNL program.

According to the **Commission on Nurse Certification** (CNC), the CNL Ambassador program provides a vehicle for marketing the program at the state and local level. It is a voluntary program with any expenses incurred being the responsibility of the ambassador.

As an ambassador, Robinson makes herself available to anyone in Georgia who searches online for information on becoming a certified nurse leader. This places her in a position to bring attention to UWG's nursing education programs, especially the CNL program.

At this time, Robinson is the only ambassador who has stepped up to serve in this role in Georgia.

"The support of my colleagues, the administration and UWG as a whole has encouraged me," Robinson said. "We are supported and encouraged to be our best –

and to reach out and look for opportunities to better ourselves and take advantage of those opportunities."

Robinson sees this opportunity also as a chance to be a mentor to THSSON students.

"I want them to take a step beyond just going to work every day," she concluded. "I want these talented students to seek opportunities to better themselves and to take on leadership roles. Don't let those opportunities go by."

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