

UWG | Tanner Health System School of Nursing

Newsletter

Fall 2022

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Notes from Dean Jenny Schuessler

Happy Holidays from the
School of Nursing!

Fall semester is always an exciting time full of anticipation at the University of West Georgia. This is especially true this year, as the college is back feeling abounds! The campus is particularly gorgeous in the fall; freshmen are finding their way, and numerous student activities are in full swing!! Fall in the Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THS SON) includes welcoming our newly admitted RN to BSN, MSN, and EdD students and seeing our new BSN student cohorts begin their clinical rotations. In addition, some students are looking forward to their December graduations!!

This semester, we will also reinstate our annual

community of advisors December breakfast meeting (December 9th, 8:00 am – 10:00 am), which has been on a two-year pandemic-related hiatus.

Please [click here](#) to register for the breakfast meeting, and/or give us feedback about our graduates and programs.

The nursing profession has persevered through 2021 and is stronger than ever in 2022. For the 20th consecutive year, Americans ranked nurses as the most trusted profession in Gallup's annual poll. We are proud to be members of this noble profession and thrilled to share with you the latest news from the school in our annual newsletter.

Most Americans are aware of the nursing shortage, though many may not be aware of the nursing faculty shortage. In fact, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing reports that over 76,000 qualified applicants were denied admission to nursing programs last year, in large part due to insufficient numbers of faculty. That is, the faculty shortage exacerbates the nursing shortage.

In light of these facts, we are particularly proud to report that we gained two new faculty positions this

year, filled all of our faculty positions, and admitted the largest class ever to our BSN program. In this issue, you will meet our new faculty and staff!

This issue also highlights our extraordinary students, alumni, and faculty with unique stories to tell. For example, please note the story about EdD students recognized at the National League for Nursing's annual international summit for receiving NLN foundation dissertation scholarships. In addition, we had a faculty member recognized at the summit for receiving a research grant; her story is also featured in this newsletter. We were the only school of nursing at the NLN summit with recipients of both scholarship and research awards!

And finally, as we grow our programs and enthusiastically implement our strategic plan that takes us through the next decade, we invite all of you—students, alumni, clinical partners, parents, donors, faculty, staff, and colleagues—to join us in our initiatives.

Please consider a gift before the end of the year. Contact Melissa Cox for information about giving to nursing (mcox@westga.edu; 678-839-6136). [Give, by clicking here.](#)

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BSN Fall 2021



BSN Spring 2022



The Dean's Award for Academic Achievement



The UWG THS School of Nursing, Fall 2021 Semester, Dean's Award for Academic Achievement recipient – Chloe Glenn!

Now that you've graduated from the UWG THS School of Nursing, Chloe, what are you going to do?

"I'm going to Disney World!" Chloe said.

Having heard this response on television from other people who have just finished an exciting time in their life, we smile with Chloe. The Magic Kingdom is one of her favorite locations. She's been there more than 30 times!

Chloe is also advancing her nursing career. She's been a care tech on a med-surg floor at Piedmont Newnan and is now promoted to work as a registered nurse in the neonatal ICU.

Chloe's perfect 4.0 grade point average made her a clear choice for the Dean's Award for Academic Achievement and she was recognized at the Fall 2021 Pinning and Graduation Celebration.

"Receiving this award was the perfect end to this chapter of my life. I have always had the goal and desire to keep all A's in school and being able to achieve that means a lot to me. Though it didn't require recognition, I'm thankful I have this award to look back on and celebrate," Chloe said.

Having completed nursing school, we asked her what were her most memorable events in her nursing education.

"The obvious answer would be the COVID-19 pandemic, but I would say that the friendships that were made and strengthened throughout my time in the program are what I will remember most. The study sessions, the post-exam celebrations, and the encouragement are all things that kept me going no matter how hard school got," she answered.

"COVID was hard on everyone and going through nursing school in a pandemic was challenging," Chloe said.

A native of Newnan,

Georgia, an avid traveler and reader and one who enjoys spending time with her family, Chloe made her decision to pursue a nursing career early.

"I initially had a desire to be a labor and delivery nurse after my youngest sister was born. I didn't know anything about nursing other than the possibility that I could one day help bring new life into this world. I have since found my place in the neonatal ICU, but I'm thankful for that initial dream that got me into nursing. I also have a strong desire to take care of other people and I thought having a job where I could do that would be a perfect fit. I'm thankful nursing has so many avenues that I can explore and that I will always have such a special purpose in my work," she said.

She shares with nursing students, "Connect with your classmates. You will be with them for at least two years and will be experiencing the same challenges and celebrations. The road to nursing school is difficult and competitive but once you're in, you are in it together. Having a cohort that feels like family has made my nursing school experience so special. I encourage everyone to be kind, encourage those around you, and learn from one another." Chloe stated.

Congratulations, Chloe!

The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nursing Students



The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nursing Students is a coveted award for nursing students worldwide. We are pleased to announce that the Fall 2021 DAISY award for UWG THS School of Nursing is presented to Ephraim Dotson.

"Being awarded a DAISY is the biggest honor I have ever received," said Ephraim.

The DAISY Award website explains the award as, "The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nursing Students was created to recognize and celebrate nursing students for the above-and-beyond care and compassion shown to patients and their families."

Further, "DAISY is as an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune System. The DAISY Foundation was formed in November 1999, by the family of J. Patrick Barnes, who died

at age 33 of complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP). The nursing care Patrick received when hospitalized profoundly touched his family."

The Barnes family then created the DAISY to recognize nurses and nursing students who exhibit extraordinary care and compassion to their patients.

Ephraim joins the ranks of DAISYs as described in his nomination, "He works so hard, so diligently to help others. Not only is he dedicated to serving others, but Ephraim is also academically brilliant. Whenever someone has a question, he always has an answer. He presents himself as calm, cool, and collected, but I know he is physically exhausted. He has been through a lot, but he pushes through. Ephraim works an 11am-11pm shift, comes to class, and works a job at Tanner. He is truly a resilient nurse. If anyone deserves this award, it is Ephraim Dotson."

This Douglasville, Georgia native did not always plan to be a nurse. In fact, he was headed in the technology direction, surprising family and friends when he turned to nursing.

Clearly, nursing was the right direction for Ephraim. When

asked what he does in his free time, in addition to enjoying a Whataburger ("I make a semi-annual pilgrimage to Birmingham for a Whataburger"), he says he feels best working at the hospital.

"I have been known to play quite a few videogames . . . but most of the time I find myself signing up for an extra shift or two at the hospital. Being there is still relaxing to me. It gives me a sense of purpose and helps me feel like I'm putting my time to good use."

To nursing students, Ephraim advises, "Showing up to class is half the battle and stay humble. Not everyone is fantastic at getting across information to their peers and most people are not trying to hurt your feelings or judging you for mistakes they have most certainly made before. Listening to the head nurses will make you a better nurse overall. Remember, [most people] started in this profession wanting to help people."

Ephraim Dotson is no doubt a DAISY. He says, "I love people. I strive every day to help people feel better whether or not I'm at work. There is nothing more rewarding to me than coaxing a smile from someone having the worst day of their life."

Becoming a Nurse was an Easy Decision



A native of Hendersonville, Tennessee, Kristen Allen is the Spring 2022 MSN Outstanding Nurse Educator Track Award recipient.

She currently shares her skills and experience as a clinical and lab instructor in the Foundation of Experiential Learning courses at Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn.

Becoming part of the nursing profession was an easy decision for Kristen.

"I knew from an early age that I loved taking care of others," Kristen said. "Once when my grandmother was in the hospital, I watched how the nurse carefully repositioned her, administered medications, and comforted my family. At that moment, I knew I wanted to be a nurse."

"Before nursing school, I volunteered in a cancer center and fell in love with patient care," Kristen continued. "I remember sitting with the patients and feeling joy as I held their hands and cried as they shared stories from their past. I realized what a blessing it was to make someone feel noticed and cared for on what may be one of their darkest days."

Kristen sought more education with a Master of Science in Nursing Degree and selected the Educator Track to expand her already growing career. Receiving the MSN Outstanding Student Award in the Educator Track was an honor.

"I dedicated many hours to my studies in the MSN program and am thrilled to receive the MSN Outstanding Student Award in the Educator Track!" Kristen said. "The award recognizes my continuous dedication to being successful in the program and in my future endeavors as a nurse educator. I feel honored to be recognized by the THS School of Nursing. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in the education track and feel capable of teaching, leading, and shaping the future of nursing. Thank you to the faculty and staff who nominated me for this award."

To her current students, Kristen shares daily her philosophies.

"As a nurse educator, I share with my students that nursing is challenging, and there will be days when you want to throw in the towel, but remember that you have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life."

To upcoming nursing students, Kristen shares ideas she used throughout nursing school.

"Believe in yourself and never give up," Kristen advises.

"Sometimes you feel overwhelmed by an assignment or unsure how you will juggle your school work, career, and family, but do not give up! Create professional relationships with your faculty, and do not be afraid to contact them when you feel overwhelmed because they want you to be successful. Also, building community with your classmates is essential because there will be times when you need someone to lean on. THS School of Nursing creates caring groups for students, and I highly suggest investing time in your group."

Congratulations, Kristen!

The Future of Nursing is Bright



When Andrew Stewart started his nursing career in Fall 2019, he was ready to pursue nursing and ready to start classes. He had decided that nursing was what he wanted to do and he wanted to get on with it.

"I remember the day I got my acceptance letter to join the Carrollton 2022 Nursing Cohort," Andrew said. "I felt like I could finally breathe."

As Fall 2019 turned into Spring 2020, many people expected life to continue with work, school and recreation as they had planned. Little did people know that the COVID-19 Pandemic would arrive and change life and plans.

Healthcare professionals and people working in hospitals were a group whose lives were especially changed as this contagious and deadly virus sent more and more people to the hospital.

"For the past two years, each time I've told someone that I'm in nursing school or that I work in the hospital, I'm met with soft eyes and a quick, *I'm so sorry; it must be so difficult to go through this during a pandemic*," Andrew said.

Changes would also occur in the way students attended classes.

"Some of our classes were completely online; some were split into groups to minimize infection risks, and some were hybrid, online and in person," Andrew explained. "All of these things were completely foreign to previous nursing cohorts."

This group of nursing school graduates may be known as the "pandemic nurses" or as Andrew puts it the "new generation of nurses." Either way, they are ready and prepared.

"I believe that choosing to become a nurse during this time demonstrates a new level of resilience," Andrew stated. "Our adaptability, resilience, courage, and raw desire to care for others is unparalleled."

"Among us, we have Labor/Delivery nurses, Emergency nurses, future nurse practitioners and CNO's. I will be joining the Intensive Care Unit to care for the most critical patients alongside many other students in my cohort.

"So, to those who think what the future of nursing will be like, let me assure you, it is bright."

The Pre-licensure BSN Nursing Excellence Award

The Pre-licensure BSN Nursing Excellence Award goes to Kaylin Barr.

"I am incredibly honored to have been selected for this award," Kaylin said. "I am proud of myself and the hard work I put into nursing school. I hope to continue working hard and learning throughout my nursing career."

Currently, her nursing career is in the Tanner Medical Center ICU. She got there during a pandemic.

"Finishing my education in the middle of an ongoing global pandemic was not easy," Kaylin said. "Healthcare is a hard place to be right now, with so many demoralizing arguments and constantly being asked to keep going and give more and more.

"I think the whole world is tired. I really appreciated how the UWG School of Nursing addressed these issues head-on and worked with us to address adding tools to our psychological toolbox.

"I appreciated the intersection of mind, body, and spirit through discussions of self-care. The term self-care gets tossed around a lot with spending sprees and spa products, so it was great realizing how much more it is and how important."



Kaylin recommends that current and upcoming nursing students: "Stop comparing yourselves to everyone else. There will always be something someone else is better at than you. There's always something someone makes look easy, while you struggle with it. It doesn't mean you aren't smart, capable, or working hard enough. It just shows how we all bring forth different perspectives, as well as strengths and weaknesses—that's part of the teamwork that makes nursing work."

We asked Kaylin why she chose the nursing field and she said: "I went into nursing because I love science and I love people. At the end of the day, I am an extrovert who loves studying anatomy and pharmacology."

This avid reader from Newnan, Georgia, loves to take road trips, spend time with the people she loves, try new things and loves animals. Her home includes a bunny, a cat, an aquatic turtle with fish friends and her roommate's dog.

And because she loves to read so much, she had difficulty selecting one book as her favorite. Here are some of the books she's enjoyed reading: *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson, *The Anthropocene Reviewed* by John Green, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi, and *Release* by Patrick Ness.

The pandemic and all the challenges of nursing school will likely shape Kaylin and others but it's good to know that nursing school is unforgettable for other reasons too.

"What made my nursing education memorable (outside of COVID) was my classmates," Kaylin said. "We were always willing to fight for each other, help each other out, and share a laugh. I made some great friendships in nursing school and can't wait to see where everyone goes!"

UWG's Online MBA, Nursing Programs Ranked No. 1 in Georgia

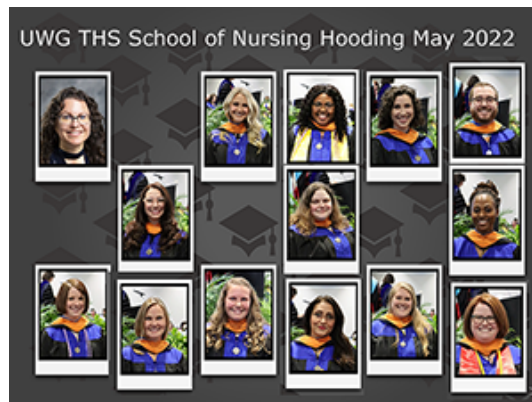
by Sam Gentry

The University of West Georgia is dedicated to producing positive outcomes for students inside and outside of the classroom. That commitment was again recognized nationally, as five online programs offered at UWG have been ranked among the nation's best by [U.S. News & World Report](#).

After assessing more than 1,700 programs nationwide, the publication recognized UWG on its lists of Best Online Business undergraduate degree, Best Online Bachelor's Programs, Best Online MBA, Best Online Education graduate degree and Best Online Nursing graduate degree.

Distinctives on the list include UWG's status as the No. 1 online MBA and graduate nursing programs in the state.

"We are honored to receive this prestigious recognition from U.S. News & World Report for our top-tier online degree programs," said Dr. Brendan Kelly, UWG president. "With our efforts focused on [curating a first-choice university](#), we are more proud than ever that our ability to adapt, forward-thinking educational endeavors and commitment to student achievement has received these accolades."



U.S. News employs thoroughly vetted academic data from surveys and reliable third-party sources to calculate each ranking, along with user feedback, discussions with schools and higher education experts, literature reviews, trends in existing data, availability of new data, and engaging with deans and institutional researchers at higher education conferences. Only the top institutions are then included in the rankings.

"As a globally connected institution, these rankings are a clear indication that we continue to be successful in our efforts to empower our students with the educational tools they need to meet industry demands," said Dr. Jon Preston, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at UWG. "Furthermore, it speaks volumes to the commitment and strength of our expert faculty members who manage a rich, student-centered framework where opportunities for learning and access to educational resources are available anytime, anywhere."

Surveys for the bachelor's programs ranked more than 360 institutions on the categories of engagement, services and technology, faculty credentials and training, and expert opinion, while the surveys for graduate degree programs measured those four categories as well as student excellence.

The rankings measure overall academic quality and are across varying disciplines such as master's in business and nursing. For the second year, the media company ranked undergraduate programs specific to business degrees and psychology degrees, and also included specialty rankings in master's level disciplines of engineering, education, MBA and nursing.

UWG began offering online courses in 1997 and is the operational home to the University System of Georgia's [eCampus](#), a service unit that includes [eCore](#) and [eMajor](#) and partners with USG institutions to provide quality post-secondary online degrees that address the needs of industries throughout the country and the world.

Doctor's Orders: Martin Family Names UWG Scholarship After Patriarch

by Julie Lineback

If you were born in Carrollton between 1981 and 2017, there's a good chance Dr. Rick Martin '73 helped deliver you into this world.

Today, the OB/GYN's family is honoring their patriarch with a scholarship bearing his name at the University of West Georgia, his alma mater, ensuring his legacy delivers powerful outcomes for generations to come.

The Dr. Rick Martin Endowed Scholarship will be awarded annually to support a biology or nursing upperclassman studying health sciences with an interest in a medical career.

"My education at UWG was invaluable in providing me with a framework to practice quality healthcare, and I am proud to say the university continues to educate professionals who excel," Martin said.

"There are many ways and avenues to impact the community's health and wellbeing. My family and I feel blessed to be able to give back and to know that it will empower more students to feel the same way and carry on the gift of giving."



Ever since he was 6 years old, Martin has known he wanted to be a doctor. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in biology from then-West Georgia College in 1973, earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia School of Medicine and completed his residency at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In 1981 he began practicing in Carrollton and later opened West Georgia OB/GYN, where he worked until his retirement in 2017.

Martin's practice operated on the belief that all patients deserve to be treated the same regardless of their circumstances, often delivering Thanksgiving turkeys and holiday gifts to patients in need.

In addition to practicing medicine, Martin served as a chairman of the UWG [A Day](#) campaign, UWG [Alumni Association Board of Directors](#), Carroll National Bank Board, People's Community Bank Board, Charles E. Flowers Society Member, Kiwanis Club president and [Open Hands of Carrollton](#) volunteer.

"We are grateful to the Martin family for their support and generous gift to UWG in our mission to [curate a first-choice university](#) for future healthcare providers," said Dr. Meredith Brunen, UWG's vice president for [university advancement](#) and CEO of UWG's foundations. "Because of Dr. Martin's love of UWG and his lifetime commitment to philanthropy, it is our hope that all who benefit from this scholarship will be instilled with the same sense of service to others."

UWG International Student Awarded Rotary Scholarship



Jang "Michael" Jeongwoo, a native of South Korea, came to UWG after finding an online ad maintained by ISAP as part of its marketing efforts. There he discovered Tanner School of Nursing and decided to apply.

"The thought of studying abroad was very intimidating at first," Jeongwoo said. "However, UWG and ISAP made it much more manageable with on-point international services like the Writing Center, the Shopper Shuttle and the out-of-state tuition waiver program. The professors are excellent, and I enjoy being in class."

When the Bremen and Paulding County Rotary Clubs approached ISAP about how to partner with UWG to offer scholarships for international students, a set of strong candidates for two separate scholarships this year were identified. Jeongwoo interviewed with a Rotarian and made a positive impression for this new scholarship.

"I was so excited to tell my family back home and looked forward to meeting other GRSP awardees and Rotarians," Jeongwoo said of receiving the award.

"I am learning to step outside my comfort zone, and I'm looking forward to UWG and GRSP events."

"We are very proud of Jang and so honored to receive this continued support from area Rotary clubs," said Brett Reichert, director of ISAP. "We know he will become an outstanding caregiver and wish him much success in UWG's Tanner School of Nursing."

UWG and GRSP have had a long and robust partnership. GRSP has just celebrated its 75th year in Georgia as a program of Georgia Rotary.

Faculty and Staff Join SON

The School of Nursing welcomed seven new faculty and six new staff members this year.

The new faculty include:

- **Stephanie Belim**, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor. Dr. Belim teaches NURS-3000 Holistic Health Assessment, NURS-3102

Professional Nursing Concepts II, NURS-3210 Medication Mathematics, NURS-3301 Clinical Practice I, and NURS-3302 Clinical Practice II.

- **Kimberley Crawford**, PhD, MPH, RN, RNP-BC, Assistant Professor. Dr. Crawford teaches NURS-4300 Clinical Specialty Practice, NURS-4301 Clinical Practice III and NURS-6900 Scholarly Writing.

- **Pamela Dunagan**, PhD, RN, Associate Professor. Dr. Dunagan teaches NURS-3400 Nursing Res & Evidence-Based Practice, NURS-4302 Clinical Practice IV and NURS-9009 Curr: Theory and Practice

- **Quetina Howell**, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor. Dr. Howell teaches NURS-4103 Prof Nursing Concepts Capstone

- **Sophia Robinson-Harris**, DNP, RN, FNP-C, PMHNP-BC. Dr. Robinson-Harris teaches NURS-3301 Clinical Practice I, NURS-4301 Clinical Practice III, and NURS-4302 Clinical Practice IV.

- **Judith Ruvalcaba**, EdD, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor. Dr. Ruvalcaba teaches NURS-3000 Holistic Health Assessment, NURS-3100 Pathophysiology & Pharmacology II, NURS-3102 Professional Nurs Concepts II, NURS-4300 Clinical Specialty Practice, NURS-4302 Clinical Practice IV, NURS-6102 Role of Caring Healthcare Prof, NURS-6105 Lead for Qual, Safety, & Health, NURS-6109 Info, Tech & Healthcare Outcomes, NURS-6111 Nurse Educator Role Prac I, and NURS-6112 Nurse Educator Role Prac II.

- **Jean Snow-Weston**, DNP, MSN, RN-BC, BA, Assistant Professor. Dr. Snow-Weston teaches NURS-3301 Clinical Practice I and NURS-4302 Clinical Practice IV.

Two Experiential Learning Center Nurse Educators joined the staff: Mary Bereznak, MSN, RN, CNL, and Ashleigh Yeager, MSN-Ed, RN.

We also added three new academic advisors: Brittney Barron, Laura Hand, and Robin Presley.

Rounding out our new SON members is Heather Poole, Administrative Support, First Floor Reception.



Stephanie Belim



Kim Crawford



Sophia Robinson-Harris

Faculty and Staff Join SON



Pam Dunagan



Quetina Howell



Judy Ruvalcaba



Jean Snow-Weston



Mary Berezna



Ashleigh Yeager



Brittney Barron



Laura Hand



Heather Poole

Hesser and Pugsley Receive NLN Foundation Scholarships

The National League for Nursing (NLN) Foundation awarded nursing education faculty scholarships at its annual NLN Nursing Summit in September 2022 to two UWG THS School of Nursing EdD students: Lisa Hesser, EdD, MSN, RN, OCN, and Lisa McCarty Pugsley, EdD(c), MSN, RN, CPN, CNE. Hesser is also a THS SON faculty member.

Twenty-two scholarships were awarded for the coming academic year, including 15 winners of the [NLN Foundation for Nursing Education](#) faculty scholarships, five undergraduate and advanced nursing students pursuing geriatric nursing, and the winners of two specialized scholarship bequests.

Of the 15 NLN Foundation for Nursing Education faculty scholarships, Hesser and Pugsley were two of the recipients.

The NLN Foundation said of this award, “(The) Scholarship Awards Program seeks to support diverse nurses committed to careers in academic nursing education. Hence, awards are made to nurses enrolled in accredited master’s or doctoral programs and have completed at least one year of advanced academic study toward their degrees.”

Hesser said in her dissertation research application for the scholarship:

“Literature lacks supportive practices for nursing faculty when educating nursing students with learning disabilities in the clinical learning environment (Marks & McCulloh, 2016). As a result, nursing students with learning disabilities are less successful in the clinical learning environment and have decreased graduation rates (Ikematsu et al., 2014). A descriptive phenomenological approach explores the experience of prelicensure nursing students with learning disabilities in the clinical learning environment. Understanding the student experience can bring insight to nursing programs to increase the overall success of prelicensure nursing students with learning disabilities in the clinical learning environment.”

Pugsley described her dissertation research in her scholarship application:

“My dissertation research aims to determine the predictors of nursing students’ self-confidence with clinical judgment. I believe that learning occurs through kind, honest, caring relationships between faculty, staff, students and clients. These types of relationships celebrate diversity and foster an educational environment that encourages deep learning for students to contribute to humanity’s improved health. Therefore, I have focused my efforts on uncovering learning cultures conducive to clinical judgment development. More specifically, the study seeks to determine if a just educational culture predicts nursing students’ self-confidence with clinical judgment.”

NLN President and CEO Beverly Malone, PhD, RN, FAAN, said (of the scholarship awards), “The success of frontline nurses is fueled by expanding the ranks of nurse faculty, which is why the National League for Nursing remains dedicated to funding scholarship opportunities for deserving candidates who pursue careers in nursing education and specialized patient care for receiving these awards.”

The National League for Nursing contributed to this article.



Dr. Kathleen Morales Nominated for Regents' Teaching Excellence Award



- School Library Media, Regents' Teaching Excellence Award for Department or Program

The University System of Georgia is proud to recognize these individuals and groups.

"The prestigious Regents' Awards represent our highest recognition for teaching and advising and illustrate the USG's commitment to ensuring academic excellence for the citizens of Georgia. Nominees represent the best values and standards of the USG," the University System of Georgia.

The system-wide recipients will be announced in January 2023.

- Clifford Davis, Jr., Regents' Teaching Excellence Award for Online Teaching
- Aimee Genell, Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award
- International Languages and Cultures, Regents' Momentum Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation

Morales & Johnson Get NLN Research Award

The National League for Nursing (NLN) recognized the winners of its competitive scholarly research grants at its 2022 NLN Education Summit.

UWG THS School of Nursing faculty Dr. Kathleen Morales and Dr. Cynthia Johnson together with colleagues Dr. Modupe Adewuyi, Kennesaw State University WellStar School of Nursing and Dr. Rebecca Gee, Middle Georgia State University School of Health and Natural Sciences, received the NLN Foundation & Edmund J.Y. Pajarillo Research Award for their research, "**Digital Approach to Dementia Care Education.**"

"Nurse educators committed to discipline-specific pedagogy are the vital link to a future nursing workforce that will transform patient care, advancing the health of our nation and the global community," NLN President and CEO Beverly Malone, PhD, RN, FAAN, said.

This \$15,708 grant will further this research.

The National League for Nursing contributed to this article.

Kathleen Morales, PhD, RN, CNE, associate professor, UWG THS School of Nursing, has been selected as a UWG nominee for the 2023 Regents' Teaching Awards.

"It is quite an honor and very humbling to be selected as the University of West Georgia's 2023 UWG Regents' Excellence Award nominee," Katie said.

"There is an old saying, 'If you spot a turtle sitting atop a fencepost, you know it didn't get there by itself.' I am inspired daily by my exceptional students, colleagues, and mentors. It is a privilege to work alongside them and share these learning experiences with them. I only hope to make them proud," Katie continued.

The complete list of UWG nominations for 2023 Regents' awards are:

- Kathleen Morales, Regents' Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Award

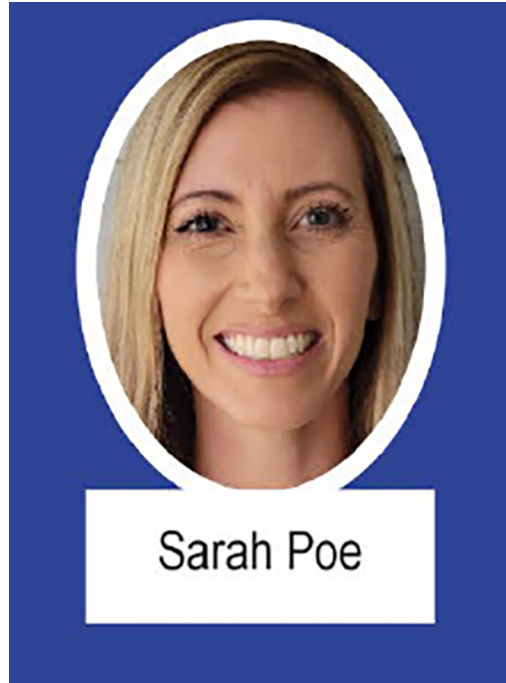
The Rose and the Angel: Sarah's Story

By Sarah Poe

When I get asked to talk about myself, I struggle. I have lived a life of serving others since day one. My family describes me as the rose and the angel of the family which means more than anything. I am the calm voice of reason and the hand holder. I can't imagine my life any other way. From a very young age, I have taken care of children and when I became a mother, I knew that advocating for tiny ones was not only a dream of mine but it's who I am. When I think about my journey and the road I have taken to get here, I feel like God so perfectly guided me for my dreams to fall into place.

I have wanted to be a nurse since I was as young as I can remember. I used to dress up as a nurse and take care of the stuffed animals. I started my nursing career by helping my great aunt take care of my great uncle after he had a stroke. I was visiting the hospital one day with my grandparents and I learned what a candy striper was. I was in awe. I loved their passion for caring. I started telling everyone that I wanted to volunteer as a candy striper when I grew up. From that moment on, I knew I wanted to be a nurse.

I got my CNA in high school by taking HOSA (Health Occupations of America). After high school, I went to school for medical assisting.



I then started working as a medical assistant and fell more in love with nursing. I was fortunate and learned from some amazing physicians, nurses, and surgeons. Twenty-five years went by. As time went by, I prayed, I learned, I planned for the one day that God would open the door for me to return to school to get my BSN. My husband told me one day, "Go back to school and finish your degree. You have always wanted to get your degree so go get it. I could not have been any more excited.

I found the University of West Georgia and started back full time. I found out soon after that, raising a family, going to school, and trying to work was difficult.

My husband made it happen and pulled everything together to allow for me to focus on school. He told me from day one that my job was to make good grades.

My goal is to work in the hospital setting, either with pediatric or geriatric patients.

So, I went to "as needed" at work and making good grades became my mission. I knew I was doing the right thing; my entire life has been serving others, caring for others, and working towards being a nurse. I loved taking care of children; I loved nursing and learning.

I look at my three children and my husband and I know I am loved because they stood by me, pushed me, supported me and were patient. I can finally look back and know that we accomplished that together. I could not have gotten to the place I am today without these amazing people. You know who you are and I love you, I thank you, and I admire you! I thank God for this journey.

Now I can be who I am! A nurse! My dream is to not just be a nurse, but to be an amazing nurse!

The Long & Winding Road to Become a Nurse

Caleb Storms, a BSN student who will graduate in December 2022, took a unique journey to nursing. Although he was always interested in healthcare, it wasn't until he had a rather strange meeting with a Tibetan Monk that the path to nursing started to emerge.

Caleb explains, "I have lived most of my adult life as an artist and photographer, never really having a vocation that could be easily explained. I have worked in radio, IT, and retail; however, none of them felt like a fit, it was just what I was doing at the moment. In 2011, after intensive study of Buddhism, I decided I really needed to hit the reset button on my life. So, I did just that; gave away my possessions and traveled for two years."

In his travels, Caleb went to Hawaii and while there, met an eighty-four-year-old Tibetan Monk named Lama Karma Rinchen, the kindest, most compassionate person Caleb had ever met and exactly the kind of person Caleb wanted to be. He studied with Lama Rinchen for many months.

Upon coming back to Georgia, Caleb found that his reset had worked; he was a much different person and no longer fit in his previous Atlanta life. It was around this time that he met another monk, Gala Rinpoche, who was teaching at a Buddhist center in Atlanta. Caleb

studied with Lama Rinpoche for many months and credits this relationship with ultimately leading him to the nursing profession.

Caleb explains, "While working with Gala Rinpoche, I realized I couldn't see myself doing anything that didn't involve helping people. I just didn't know how to go about it. I talked to Gala Rinpoche about becoming a monk, and was devastated when he did not approve of this path for me."

In further studying Buddhism, Caleb and a group of friends read a book that talked a great deal about the end of life and hospice care. Friends who knew of his desire to help others asked him why he wasn't working in hospice, that it seemed like a perfect fit. Caleb began working for a hospice company, got his CNA certification, and volunteered to work for a hospice until completing his training. He still works for that hospice to this day.

While working as a hospice CNA, Caleb observed two nurses helping a patient pass comfortably. Being completely in awe of their compassion and skill, he decided then and there, "I am going to apply for nursing school; I want to do what they do." Caleb applied that day



and has been working toward becoming a nurse ever since. Caleb states, "I felt like I had found my calling, and instead of monks' robes, I put on scrubs with the same intent of helping however and whenever possible."

In addition to continuing his photography during nursing school, Caleb is a member of two bands, one is a southern rock band Idna Glitch, another a David Bowie tribute band; Caleb is of course, David Bowie. Playing in these bands, along with his photography, have helped during the stressful times that are part of a nursing program. Caleb has found that life, work, and school balance is often easier with such passions.

After graduation, Caleb has accepted a position in the Pediatric ED at Wellstar Douglas. He also plans to continue with Affinis Hospice as a PRN nurse, where he will be in charge of pediatric hospice patients. Caleb believes that is where he can do the most good at this time.

SON Posts Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The UWG THS School of Nursing posted its Diversity and Inclusion Statement on its website.

Thanks to the UWG THS School of Nursing Diversity and Inclusion Committee for getting this done.

Chairs

- Jody Bryan
- Christi Jordan

Committee Members

- Lisa Hesser
- Quetina Howell
- Denise Morris
- Jean Snow-Weston

Student Representatives

- BSN 2023 Carrollton Cohort: Imani Wise
- BSN 2022 Cohort, Newnan: Taylor Boyce, Carly Hill

To read the statement, click [here](#).

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Classes start in the Fall. For more information, visit MSN and EdD in Nursing Education.

