

# PittNurse

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING  
FALL 2025

## Pitt Nursing's Impact on Cancer Research

Faculty and Alumni Are Leading  
the Charge in Oncology Nursing



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### Editors

#### Jennifer Fellows

Director of Operations and Communications  
School of Nursing

#### Katelyn Kocis

#### Eric Zavinski

**Cover story photography** by Rayni Shiring

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

**A**s we navigate the intricate landscape of health care, it's imperative that we recognize the critical role research continues to play in shaping the future of nursing.

At the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, we take immense pride in our reputation as a nursing research powerhouse. Our faculty members, esteemed leaders in their respective fields, are driving groundbreaking research that has both a tangible impact on patient care and also resonates globally. Whether they're exploring innovative therapies, investigating disparities in cancer outcomes, or implementing evidence-based practices, our researchers are dedicated to advancing the frontiers of nursing science. Thanks to their tireless efforts, we have earned a reputation for excellence and continue to be recognized as a global hub for cutting-edge research in nursing.

In 2025, the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research ranked Pitt Nursing 10th in the nation in competitive federal research grants awarded to schools of nursing in 2024. That year, we secured \$1,995,488 more in research grants than we had in 2023.

Cancer affects millions of lives worldwide. Its complexities demand innovative solutions and, at Pitt Nursing, we are proud to be at the forefront of this battle. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and unwavering dedication, our faculty researchers are making significant strides in understanding the mechanisms of cancer, improving early detection methods, and pioneering novel treatments and post-treatments. Each breakthrough brings us closer to a world in which cancer is no longer a life-threatening diagnosis but rather a conquerable obstacle.

In this issue of Pitt Nurse, we'll explore the history of cancer research at Pitt Nursing and the current faculty research that is being recognized nationally.

By actively involving our students in research, we empower them to become catalysts for change in health care. Our Undergraduate Research Mentorship Program gives students hands-on research experience, deepening their understanding of scientific inquiry and cultivating the critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for success in their future careers. In this issue, you'll hear from participating students and alumni of this program and learn how it's shaping the future of their nursing careers.

It's not just our current students and faculty who are making waves in research. Our graduates also are making incredible strides in nursing research and are inspiring us all with their groundbreaking contributions.

Pitt Nursing alumni are advancing nursing science and improving patient care through pioneering new treatments to advocating for policy change. Their tireless efforts embody the spirit of innovation and excellence that defines



**“CANCER AFFECTS MILLIONS OF LIVES WORLDWIDE. ITS COMPLEXITIES DEMAND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND, AT PITT NURSING, WE ARE PROUD TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THIS BATTLE.”**

Christine E. Kasper

our institution, and their successes reflect the quality of education and mentorship they received here.

In this issue, you'll be introduced to Keith Dawson (BSN '88), a senior director in global health equity and population science for Roche and Genentech, Inc., two pharmaceutical companies known for their focus on health care and biotechnology. Dawson plays a key role in shaping the companies' strategies and initiatives in health equity and population science on a global scale.

I am proud of what Pitt Nursing has accomplished and am excited to see what it has in store for our faculty, student and alumni researchers in the future. This research isn't just a pursuit of knowledge; it's a catalyst for positive change. Together, we have the power to make a difference in the lives of countless individuals. Let us continue to inspire, innovate and lead the way toward a healthier, brighter tomorrow. ■

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Christine E. Kasper".

**Christine E. Kasper, PhD, FAAN, FACS**  
Dean and Professor  
University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SUMMER 2025 PITT NURSING GRADUATES!





## Pitt Nursing's Graduate Program Ranked Among the Best in the Nation

The University of Pittsburgh's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program is ranked among the top in the nation, according to the 2025 U.S. News & World Report's Best Graduate Schools rankings.

The nurse anesthesia area of concentration is ranked No. 2 and Pitt's School of Nursing is the highest ranking non-military school in the nation.

"We are honored and humbled to be ranked the No. 2 nurse anesthesia doctoral program by U.S. News & World Report for 2025," says John O'Donnell, DrPH, CRNA, CHSE, FSSH, FAANA, FAAN, director of the Nurse Anesthesia program. "It is gratifying that our peer university deans and program administrators think highly of the University of Pittsburgh Nurse Anesthesia program. Perhaps most important is the consistency of our ranking as we have been in the top 10 rankings by U.S. News since 1998: the first year that nurse anesthesia programs were ranked," he adds.

The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) area of concentration is tied at No. 5, retaining its top five ranking from 2024 to 2025.

"We are thrilled and honored to be recognized among the leading PMHNP programs in the country," says Brayden Kameg, PhD, DNP, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, CNE, FIAAN, coordinator of the PMHNP program. "This recognition is a testament to the hard work and clinical acumen of our faculty, preceptors, students, and alumni. We strive to provide a cutting-edge, innovative, and state-of-the-science curriculum that prepares PMHNP graduates to meet the mental health needs of diverse communities, while also providing students with the highest quality clinical practicum experiences. This recognition by U.S. News & World Report affirms the work that we have been doing and celebrates the success of our rich student and alumni network," says Kameg.

The overall DNP program is ranked and tied at No. 12.

"These rankings continue to show the caliber of our programs and the quality and passion each faculty member brings to Pitt Nursing's graduate academia," says Christine E. Kasper, PhD, RN, FAAN, FACSM and dean of the School of Nursing. ■



# New Additions to School Leadership Pave the Way Forward

Four individuals have stepped into new roles at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing to more effectively support students and faculty.

## Amy Bowser

Assistant Dean for Data Analytics and Evaluation

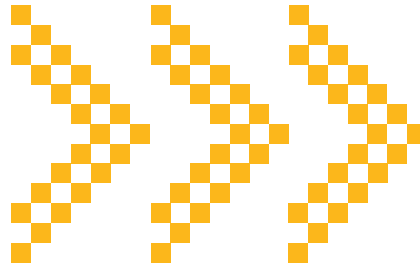


Amy Bowser, PhD, MEd, has been named assistant dean for data analytics and evaluation at Pitt Nursing, effective March 2024. Bowser began her career in higher education as a professor of education and psychology, focusing on learning, assessment and curriculum development. For seven years,

she was director of evaluation at Pitt Nursing, overseeing program evaluation, accreditation processes and software adoption and implementation. Bowser now supports software decisions, implementation and designs of business intelligence tools at the school. She is also an assistant professor in the Department of Health and Community Systems.

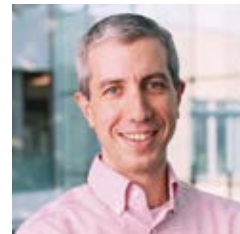
The purpose of the Office of Data Analytics and Evaluation is to provide data analytics that are timely, accurate, complete, reliable and actionable. The office's goals are to support Pitt Nursing with the capacity to provide actionable information proactively, leverage information technology to enhance leadership capabilities, and promote innovation. Using data from this office will allow for greater coordination and alignment of activities to achieve maximum effectiveness with regard to Pitt Nursing's mission, goals and values.

Since March 2023, the school has been in the process of defining all essential questions and required metrics for data collection across students, faculty, program outcomes and funding; adopting software systems to centralize all essential institutional data; structuring data collection processes across the institution; and using Alteryx software and Tableau dashboards to develop data analytics that are automatized, accessible, transparent, accurate and actionable for decision-making and reporting.



## Kevin Dietrick

Associate Dean for Strategy

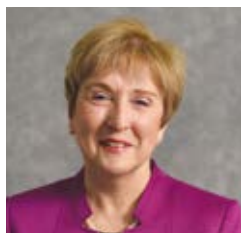


Kevin Dietrick, EdD, is an experienced higher education leader who joined Pitt Nursing as associate dean for strategy in October 2024. Dietrick arrived from Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business, where he served as director of specialized master's programs and was a key member of the school's leadership team. At Carnegie Mellon, he provided strategic oversight for three graduate programs; launched two new degree programs; and led a cross-functional team in managing program operations, from marketing and brand development to admissions and enrollment. Known for his innovative approaches to enrollment management, Dietrick successfully addressed shifting enrollment trends while maintaining the integrity and reputation of the institution.

In his newly created role at Pitt Nursing, Dietrick is charged with setting the strategic direction for recruitment and enrollment, marketing and communications, project management and data analytics—core functions critical to the school's mission. Dietrick is particularly excited to focus on strategies that will support enrollment growth across the school's suite of graduate programs and to work with school leadership on strategies to ensure Pitt Nursing's sustainability into the future. He holds a Doctor of Education with a focus on higher education leadership and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Pitt's School of Education along with a Bachelor of Arts from Allegheny College. Dietrick's career reflects a deep commitment to driving institutional growth, enhancing student outcomes and preparing professionals for success in their respective fields.

## Patricia Watts Kelley, Captain, United States Navy (ret)

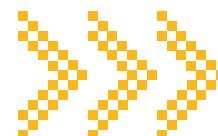
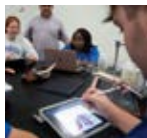
### Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs



Patricia Watts Kelley, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, FAANP has been named associate dean for faculty affairs at Pitt Nursing, effective April 2025. She was recently an associate dean for research and scholarship and professor of nursing at the University of New Mexico and previously served as

a professor and director of the Veterans to Bachelor of Nursing Science Program at Duquesne University School of Nursing. She has held several research and leadership positions within the federal government including health sciences officer in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Research and Development Center in Washington, D.C. Prior to her Navy retirement, she held the position of deputy director of nursing and allied health research at the Navy Medicine Research and Development Center, Navy Medicine Headquarters, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C. She served as the first Navy executive director of the TriService Nursing Research Program and director of nursing research services at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. She holds several military and civilian awards for her contributions to military, veteran and civilian health care and research. Kelley is board certified as a gerontological and family primary care nurse practitioner.

Her research interests are in the areas of clinical knowledge development and continuity of care of wounded service members, military and veteran caregiver burden, health promotion, and self-care management in persons living with complex chronic conditions. She served as the specialty consultant to the U.S. Navy surgeon general for nursing research and maintained a part-time nurse practitioner practice at the National Naval Medical Center specializing in diabetes and military health up until her retirement as a Navy captain. She is a board member of the Navy Safe Harbor Foundation and a volunteer nurse practitioner consultant.



## Susan Wesmiller

### Chair, Department of Health Promotion and Development



Susan Wesmiller (BSN '77, MSN '83, PhD '10) has been named chair of the Department of Health Promotion and Development at Pitt Nursing, effective Oct. 1, 2024. Wesmiller is a tenured associate professor and past department vice chair for research, and she has been a valued member of the Pitt Nursing

faculty since 2013.

Her impact on nursing has spanned 40 years of research, education and service. For the last decade, her research has focused on predicting women with breast cancer who are at risk for severe treatment-induced nausea and vomiting. Her research has been funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research and the Oncology Nursing Foundation. As an educator, she has taught genetics for more than 10 years. She has developed innovative and meaningful genetics courses for undergraduate and graduate students at Pitt and at the University of Basel in Switzerland and Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. She served as faculty advisor for the Nursing Student Association for five years. She is an active member of the Oncology Nursing Society and is a past president of the International Society of Nurses in Genetics. Prior to coming to Pitt, Wesmiller was the director of nursing education and research at UPMC Presbyterian for 15 years. She completed her BSN, MSN, PhD and postdoctoral studies at Pitt Nursing. ■



## Nursing Faculty Win ENRS Awards

Two School of Nursing faculty members were honored with awards at the Eastern Nursing Research Society's annual conference in April.

Lacey Heinsberg, PhD, RN, assistant professor, and Margaret Rosenzweig, PhD, CRNP-C, AOCNP, FAAN, distinguished service professor and Nancy Glunt Hoffman Chair in Oncology Nursing, received the awards in Philadelphia at the Eastern Nursing Research Society (ENRS) 37th Annual Scientific Sessions.

These faculty members represent the School of Nursing in two different categories. Heinsberg earned the Rising Star Research Award, and Rosenzweig earned the Excellence in Social Justice & Health Equity Award, a brand-new accolade introduced by ENRS this year.

Recognized for her public health research, Heinsberg leads NIH-funded work that focuses on maternal and child health among Pacific Islanders from American Samoa. She is working to develop scalable genetic screening tools for use during pregnancy and early childhood. Heinsberg is also leading water quality research in Samoan and American Samoan communities. As a new tenure-stream assistant professor, Heinsberg's long-term goal is to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of obesity and metabolic disease in Samoa and American Samoa.

Rosenzweig has displayed her dedication to addressing health inequities through her many service activities and research initiatives, including the development of her Symptom, Experience, Management, and Outcomes According to Race and SDOH (SEMOARS) Model, a nationally recognized framework that identifies factors driving treatment and supportive care disparities.

Another of Rosenzweig's research initiatives titled "Exploring Allostasis, Cellular Aging, and Cancer Outcomes" developed a platform to allow all researchers the chance to collaborate in basic and behavioral research underlining the effects of neighborhood deprivation, discrimination and lifetime allostasis on cancer outcomes. Her research team has also spearheaded the Support, Education, and Advocacy Program for Women with Metastatic Breast Cancer, resulting in the development of a database of 2,000 women with metastatic breast cancer to inform patient care.

Rosenzweig was also recognized in part for her stellar and long-running history of research, which includes more than 160 peer-reviewed publications and a 20-year history of funding from organizations including the National Cancer Institute, Oncology Nursing Society and the American Cancer Society. ■



Pictured from left to right are faculty members Margaret Rosenzweig and Lacey Heinsberg.

## Students Represent Pitt at ENRS

Three talented student presenters represented Pitt Nursing at the Eastern Nursing Research Society's Scientific Sessions this year.

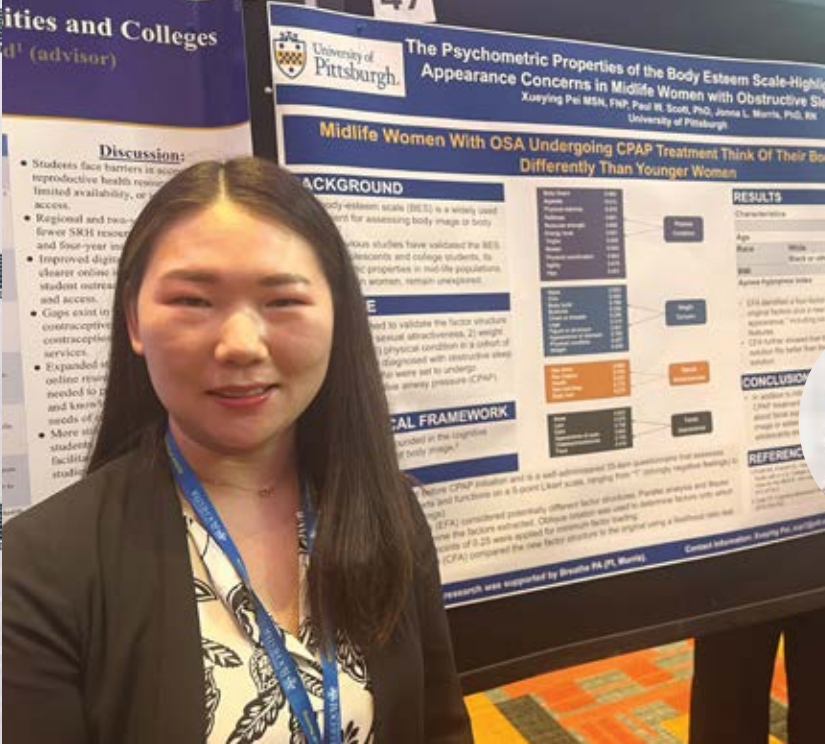
Fourth-year undergraduate student Michelle Chung presented her research titled "The Association Between Measures of Socioeconomic Status and the Risk Factors and Outcomes of Subarachnoid Hemorrhage."

Chung's study found that individuals who came from more deprived neighborhoods, including those with poor housing quality and lower numbers of educated or employed individuals, were more likely to experience worse quality of life outcomes after experiencing strokes.

"Presenting on health care disparities in the subarachnoid hemorrhage population was a meaningful experience as a senior nursing student," Chung said. "It gave me the opportunity to highlight a vulnerable population and further the conversation on health equity. Being a part of a conference filled with like-minded health care professionals inspired me and reinforced the importance of advocacy in nursing."

PhD student Xueying Pei focused on measuring the perspectives of midlife women, specifically those with obstructive sleep apnea and who are about to undergo continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatment, regarding their body image and body esteem. Pei noted that the Body Esteem Scale, previously used and validated to measure body esteem among adolescents and young adults, had not yet been used to study this population of women.





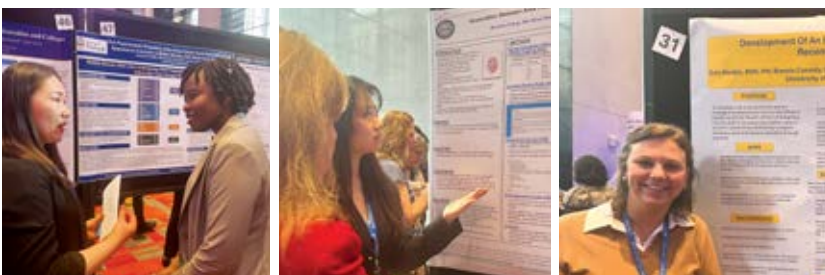
Xueying Pei

"It was such an honor to represent [Pitt Nursing] at the 2025 Eastern Nursing Research Society conference and to present our PhD school-selected poster on the psychometric properties of the Body Esteem Scale," Pei said. "It was a fantastic experience connecting with peers who share similar research interests and learning from the diverse projects presented."

Erin Merkle, a DNP student, also presented at this year's scientific sessions. Her research was titled "Development of an Evidence-Based COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendation Strategy." The goal is for the strategy to be used as a guide for the Office of Family and Child Health of Allegheny County to increase vaccination rates of area children and understand motivations behind caregivers hesitant to have their children vaccinated.

Merkle found that survey respondents who did not want to have their children vaccinated often experienced mistrust of the health care system or vaccine benefits, worried about unseen effects of the vaccine, or hesitated when children were two years of age or younger.

"The survey results do not show a relationship between the recommendation of the health care provider and the decision to vaccinate," Merkle noted. "This is in contrast with existing vaccine literature and warrants further study." ■



Pictured from left to right are Xueying Pei explaining her research, Michelle Chung explaining her research and Erin Merkle with her research.

## Conley Receives Prestigious National Leadership Award

Yvette Conley, PhD, senior associate dean for research and scholarship at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, was recognized with a Faye Glenn Abdellah Leadership Award on Oct. 30, 2024, in Washington, D.C., at the 31st NightinGala of the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research (FNINR).



"I am incredibly honored to be recognized with this award and humbled to be recognized by FNINR," Conley says. "I've been fortunate to work with nurse-scientists and nurse-scientists in training who have contributed a more holistic view to my research, which was instrumental to my receiving this award."

The Faye Glenn Abdellah Leadership Award is presented to an organization or individual who has had a lasting impact on nursing science. Recipients of the award have increased public awareness of the value of nursing science.

Conley's stellar research career has focused on the use of omics to understand symptom development and patient outcomes after traumatic brain injury, stroke, cancer and therapeutic interventions for cancer.

Conley uses her molecular genomics laboratory at Pitt Nursing to bolster her research. She is currently Distinguished Service Professor of Nursing and professor of human genetics, and she was the first geneticist in the nation to hold a primary appointment within a school of nursing.

In 2015, Conley was inducted into the American Academy of Nursing as an honorary fellow. In 2022, she received the Eastern Nursing Research Society's Distinguished Contributions to Nursing Research Award. At Pitt, Conley has received both the Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award (2020, Senior Scholar category) and the Provost's Award for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring (2021).

Conley has worked as an investigator for numerous projects and has published more than 385 manuscripts. Her research has implicated the genomics of an individual's cancer cells on their cognitive function and established the epigenome of cells from cerebrospinal fluid after severe traumatic brain injury and subarachnoid hemorrhage change in the days after insult, contributed to the development of cerebral ischemia and intracranial pressure, and impacted patient recovery.

As director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded Targeted Research and Academic Training for Nurses in Genomics at Pitt Nursing, she educates nurses on how to incorporate omics into their research.

Current funding for her ongoing research includes millions of dollars in NIH grants, including Epigenomics of Neurocognitive Function in Breast Cancer, Epigenetic Aging Cognitive Function and Exercise in Older Adults, and Epigenetic Age and Patient Outcomes after Severe Traumatic Brain Injury. ■



## For Father and Son, Pitt Nursing Is All in the Family

More than 17,000 students have walked the halls of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, spending countless hours studying for exams, honing their nursing skills in the labs and setting themselves up for success outside of the classroom.

Every student's path to Pitt Nursing is unique. Some are the first in their families to attend college while others are, in a sense, passing along the torch, or in this case, stethoscope, from one generation of nurses to the next.

Christopher Hudack and his son, Christoph, have many things in common. One key similarity is that they're both graduates of Pitt Nursing.

After high school, Christoph (BSN '23), asked himself "Who around me is the happiest and most fulfilled?" The answer was easily my parents, two family nurse practitioners who trace their origins to Pitt. Touring Pitt with my father helped confirm my desires when I saw his eyes light up [upon] reentering the Victoria Building after years. I can only imagine his awe [at] being able to retrace and compare his story to mine after some time."

Christopher (BSN '93) attended Pitt Nursing after receiving his diploma from the West Penn Hospital School of Nursing. He chose Pitt for its reputation and emphasis on research. He wanted to become a nurse because he enjoyed working with and helping people.

"My mother was a nurse's aide and introduced me to several registered nurses who shared their positive experiences," he says. "There were very few men in nursing at that time, and all these nurses inspired me to pursue this career because they believed that more men in nursing would be valuable and broaden the field."

## Evolution of Nursing Education

The Hudacks had similar experiences while attending Pitt, but Christopher says that his son had a more intense course load focused on encouraging students to attend graduate school.

"When I attended the School of Nursing, it seemed the emphasis was on mastering various nursing skills through labs," says Christoph. "Even though anatomy and physiology and many of the classes today were also required then, these classes seem more in depth and more aligned with graduate school course work. Pursuing an advanced practice degree continues to be a top priority within the School of Nursing."

"From day one, I, like my father, could see that Pitt has high aspirations for its students," says Christoph. "While hardly understanding the role of advanced practice nurses at the time, [I was introduced] to them in several of my first-year courses at Pitt. [Discussing advanced degrees in first-year courses] might appear too ambitious to many, but over the years and even beyond graduation, I can see that it pays off when Pitt plants seeds in youthful minds to pursue advanced degrees."

Christoph saw friends and peers with the ambition and drive to pursue advanced degrees and take on demanding roles despite the challenges and pressures.

"This lofty and exciting goal was prevalent throughout my time at school, despite the focus on achieving undergraduate-level competencies," he says. "This pressure, while not for all, has made my formative years in nursing especially rewarding and driven me to be ambitious in my pursuits."

Both agree that research, then and now, has been a priority at Pitt Nursing and has helped to distinguish the nursing school from others in the country. Christoph participated in the Undergraduate Research Mentoring Program as a student and became invested in publishing research on student efficacy, career growth and what constitutes a learning environment.

"Becoming more personal with faculty members and working directly under their supervision allowed me to gain a mentor, a friend and someone directly within the faculty to serve as a role model and resource for the aspirations Pitt ignited in me," he says. "Over the four years, I gained an understanding of nursing practice that others do not develop for years, as it was not part of their experience."



## The Growth of Men in Nursing School

Both men have noticed the increase in the number of men in the school over the past three decades. Christopher says that he was one of only two or three men in the program as a student. Since then, that number has increased significantly.

“Now there are enough men in the school for a men’s club in nursing, which I think is of great value for sharing ideas and perspectives and having a wonderful support network,” he says.

The Men in Nursing Club was created in 2023 as a way for male nursing students to network and connect with other students at different levels of their academic journeys.

“Pitt has broadened its scope for men pursuing nursing,” says Christoph. “Never did I feel like I was an outlier.”

This encouragement and acceptance of men at Pitt Nursing has been noticed more broadly: The school was named a top school for men in nursing by the American Association for Men in Nursing since 2022.

Both father and son say that they had incredible experiences at Pitt that molded them into the nurses they are today.

“I am proud of my education in nursing at the University of Pittsburgh,” says Christopher. “The tradition and the reputation remain unmatched. Keeping it in the family has meant a great deal. I have been so impressed with the education Christoph has received. I am excited to see where Pitt’s nursing program continues to excel.”

“Pitt itself was fantastic, and although there are many programs, no one can go wrong with pursuing nursing in general. However, one should deeply consider Pitt, as it prepared me to exceed expectations in the workforce and will maybe one day nurture my professional growth again,” says Christoph. ■



From left to right, Julius Kitutu; Pitt Nursing students Quinn Eckert, Eli Lowenstein, Ethan Little, and Evan Phan; and Jason Mott, AAMN president, pose for a picture while accepting the distinction as a top school for men in nursing.

## Pitt Nursing Recognized as Top School for Men in Nursing

The American Association for Men in Nursing (AAMN) named the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing one of the best schools for men in nursing in 2024.

Julius Kitutu, Pitt Nursing’s associate dean for diversity, equity, inclusion and community engagement, accepted the honor on behalf of the school. Kitutu was joined by a group of nursing students at the AAMN annual conference and awards banquet on Oct. 17, 2024.

Pitt Nursing’s efforts to increase gender diversity among its students have included current students writing letters to incoming undergraduates and hosting career fairs. Pitt’s Men in Nursing Club has worked diligently to increase the male population in the School of Nursing. Members have shared marketing materials and have participated in a mentoring program for incoming students. ■

# Student/Faculty Accolades

## DNP/PhD Student Wins National Scholarship

Youjia Wang (BSN '21), a DNP/PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, received the Virginia K. Saba Nursing Student Scholarship to attend the 2024 International Congress in Nursing Informatics in Manchester, England. Only two scholarships are awarded each year.



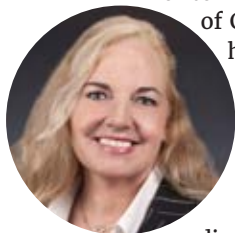
"I started to build my interest in nursing informatics after becoming a mentee of Dr. Young Ji Lee [PhD, MS, RN, vice chair for administration and associate professor of nursing and medicine in health and community systems], a renowned leader in nursing informatics," Wang says. "Her expertise, great passion and strategic guidance helped me to learn more about nursing informatics and develop my research interest in examining the quality information on social media platforms for gynecologic cancer patients and families."

Wang says that she's also been fortunate to be involved in several informatics projects with Lee, Heidi Donovan, PhD, RN, professor of nursing and medicine and PhD program director, and Teresa Thomas, PhD, BA, RN, associate professor and vice chair for research and scholarship, as a graduate student researcher at Pitt Nursing. She says that these experiences have honed her research skills and given her a deep understanding of the intersection between nursing informatics and oncology nursing.

"Being a Pitt nurse means learning from my role models and trying to become a role model myself in the future of nursing," she says. "I'm always so grateful to have had so many great mentors throughout my time at Pitt Nursing, from undergraduate to now." ■

## Adamski Becomes President of AACN

On July 1, 2024, Jennifer Adamski (MSN '02) started her term as president of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN). She served her term through June 30, 2025. She previously served a three-year term on the AACN Certification Corporation board of directors and a three-year term on the AACN board.



Adamski is an associate professor and director of the adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner program at Emory University's Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing and a critical care flight nurse practitioner. Adamski also is an independent consultant for advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) model development and serves as an APRN expert witness for trauma and critical care. ■

## Nurse Anesthesia Students Receive Davis Scholarships

Four University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing nurse anesthesia DNP students—Jessica Guan (BSN '20), Daniel Przybylak, Kylie Rush (BSN '17) and Samantha Tyson—were awarded \$2,500 Davis Scholarships.

The scholarship is awarded to students to recognize their hard work, determination, self-direction and high-level clinical and didactic performance in their second- and third-year classes. It was created by the Davis family in honor of Jessica (Davis) Simonette (BSN '08, MSN '14), a nurse at Jefferson Hospital. ■

## Professor Receives ISPN Education Award

The International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses (ISPN) has honored University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Health and Community Systems, Heeyoung Lee, PhD, with its 2024 Education Award.



"The award validates my efforts and contribution to nursing education but also motivates me to continue committing to advancing mental health nursing education,"

Lee says.

The ISPN Education Award "acknowledges exceptional creativity and effectiveness in curriculum development, teaching strategies, student recruitment and support, educational outreach, or other activities by a psychiatric-mental health nurse educator viewed as a mentor and role model by colleagues and students," according to the organization.

"I want to leverage this recognition to promote the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and [its] psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program and recruit talented nurses who want to pursue their career in mental health care," Lee says. ■

## Undergraduates Accepted into National Honor Society

Seven University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing undergraduate students were recognized for their leadership activities with acceptance into the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Leadership University Honor Society: Ann Barney, Nila Chakravarthy, Sophia Espallat, Zoe Fisher, Ava Meglio, Leah Stone and Astrid Yerardi.

The honor society recognizes NSNA members who participate in leadership activities of the school chapter, state association and NSNA nationally. Its goal is to prepare future nurse leaders by helping them to hone their leadership skills. It is a lifetime membership. Students selected for membership in the honor society receive a Leadership University patch, certificate of recognition and recognition on the NSNA Leadership University Honor Society website. ■





## Alumni Inducted as AAN Fellows

University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing alumni Jill Demirci (BSN '05, MSN '10, PhD '12) and Hongjin Li (PhD '19) were inducted as members of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) Class of 2024. Demirci and Li participated in an induction ceremony held last fall during the academy's annual Health Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.

Demirci is an associate professor and vice chair for administration in Pitt Nursing's Department of Health Promotion and Development. Her research focuses on diverse aspects of human lactation, with an emphasis on clinical and behavioral interventions to address uptake, duration and intensity of chest/breastfeeding.

Li is an assistant professor at the University of Illinois Chicago College of Nursing. Her research focuses on identifying trajectory and predictors of pain, fatigue, sleep disturbance, depression and anxiety experienced by breast cancer survivors. She also researches the use of integrative therapies (i.e., acupuncture) to alleviate cancer-related symptoms among medically underserved breast cancer survivors.

AAN fellows go through a rigorous nomination and review process and are selected for their contributions to improving health locally and globally. With more than 3,000 fellows, AAN represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice and academia. The 2024 class of fellows represents a cross-section of nursing's most dynamic leaders who are making positive changes in their systems and communities to champion health and wellness. ■

## Donovan Recognized with Provost's Award for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring

Heidi Donovan, PhD, professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, has received one of four Provost's Awards for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring for 2025. This award recognizes outstanding mentorship of graduate students seeking a research doctoral degree.



As a mentor and the PhD program director for Pitt Nursing, Donovan has had a tremendous impact on many students striving to complete their educational goals.

Donovan has mentored 19 PhD students and nine postdoctoral students across multiple disciplines throughout her career at Pitt. Through her hands-on approach to mentoring, she has witnessed students excel in their research and achieve their career goals and aspirations. Donovan treats her mentees as apprentices, integrating them into her research team. She helps them to refine their research interests and ensures that students are seeking internal research funding and scholarships, eventually leading to national or foundation research training opportunities, showcasing her dedication to empowering her mentees to reach their full potential.

Donovan also works with her mentees to prepare them for job opportunities and postdoctoral applications. Some of Donovan's mentees have become faculty members at research-intensive universities, while others have taken on clinical or industry positions.

Several Pitt Nursing faculty members, including Teresa Thomas, PhD, and Sarah Belcher, PhD, were mentored by Donovan throughout their PhD programs and are now outstanding mentors in their own rights, carrying on a tradition of student advocacy, apprenticeship, and attentive mentoring modeled by Donovan.

"[Donovan] has actively engaged me throughout her research program, nurtured my scientific discovery, and demonstrated by example how to be an engaged, civically minded scientist and academician fully dedicated to the growth of her mentees," wrote Thomas in her letter recommending that Donovan receive this award.

"My mentoring philosophy is rooted in the belief that every student brings unique strengths, aspirations, and potential," Donovan says. "I strive to create an environment where students feel empowered to explore their interests and articulate their goals." ■



## Tung Innovates in Geriatric, Cardiovascular Care

Heng-Hsin “Shannon” Tung (DNP ’21)—a Distinguished Professor, nursing department chair, and scholar at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University in Taiwan—has dedicated her career to advancing geriatric and cardiovascular care while fostering the development of nurse practitioners (NPs). She earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice in health systems executive leadership at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing after earning her PhD at the University of San Diego in 2007. Her research integrates cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation, exemplified through leadership in numerous impactful projects. A pioneer in applying digital technologies to health care, Tung has conducted groundbreaking studies on digital interventions, including the effects of digital somatosensory dance and resilience-enhancing web programs, showcasing their potential to improve cognitive performance, physical health and well-being among older adults.

Beginning her career as a cardiovascular nurse, Tung expanded her focus to geriatric populations, addressing complex health challenges through cutting-edge research and policy advocacy. She has authored more than 150 publications, including influential works on resilience and health-related quality of life in patients with cardiovascular care in the geriatric population. Her leadership and contributions have been recognized internationally, culminating in her induction into the Sigma International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame in 2024.

Tung’s influence extends to education and professional services, where she spearheaded the

development of Taiwan’s first books on the application of generative artificial intelligence in nursing and virtual reality teaching manuals for nursing education. As president of the Taiwan Association of Nurse Practitioners, she has significantly advanced NP development in Taiwan. Additionally, as chair of the nursing department at her university, she established a family nurse practitioner program and enhanced NP roles in community and rural health care.

Through active participation in government roundtable discussions, Tung has shaped health care policies and NP regulation development. Her mentorship has nurtured the next generation of researchers, solidifying her legacy as a transformative leader in nursing science. ■





## Pitt Nursing Professor Is a Leader in Fighting Youth Suicide



The American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) released a new position paper highlighting the need for psychiatric mental health nurses in screening, assessing risk and planning treatments for youths at risk of suicide. Jamie Zelazny (BSN '86, PhD '16), MPH, a University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing faculty member who studies youth suicide, was chair of the committee that developed the paper.

The prevalence of suicidal ideation, plans and attempts among youths has increased over the last decade, and suicide is among the top causes of death among teenagers. Zelazny, an assistant professor in the Department of Health and Community Systems, is passionate about expanding the delivery of mental health education and suicide prevention to combat this.

"Research is vital to find[ing] the gaps ... and identify[ing] new practices that improve patient treatment and outcomes," she says.

Zelazny earned a 2025 Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award for her efforts addressing youth mental health and suicide prevention.

Zelazny also received the 2024 APNA Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship as testament to her important work in suicide research. The award was presented Oct. 9, 2024, at the APNA 38th Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

Zelazny's interest in pediatric mental health began during her clinical rotation as an undergraduate at Pitt Nursing. Now her full-time suicide prevention work has manifested itself in several investigations, including two National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grants of which she is the principal investigator. She also is the coprincipal investigator for an additional NIMH grant and coinvestigator for three other NIMH grants—all focused on the use of technology to help identify and manage youth suicide risk.

Backed with funding from NIMH, her study, SMART: Social Media as a Predictor of Proximal Risk in Youth Suicide Attempts, compares youths with suicide attempts to a control group with no history of suicide attempts. It includes reports of how much or how often the subject uses social media.

"Kids will always find a way to use social media," Zelazny says, "so we need to help them navigate it. In my work, I'm consistently looking to harness the positive aspects of social media and limit the negative."

Zelazny has gone above and beyond the traditional duties of a faculty member in her research and outreach addressing youth mental health and suicide prevention.

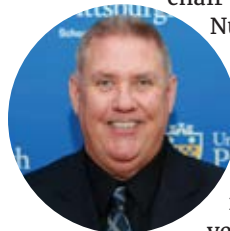
She has given over 150 presentations throughout Western Pennsylvania to educate students, parents, and teachers on youth mental health awareness. To assist school nurses in Pennsylvania, Zelazny, in partnership

with the PA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is developing an online training addressing youth suicide prevention. She has also chaired the committee that developed a position paper on the topic for the American Psychiatric Nurses Association.

On the Pitt campus, Zelazny served as faculty advisor, assisting students in the creation of the annual University of Pittsburgh American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of the Darkness Campus Walk.

Those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide or who are concerned about someone else can contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. ■

## O'Donnell Honored with Service, Research Awards



John M. O'Donnell (MSN '91), DrPH, professor and chair of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Department of Nurse Anesthesia, was recognized by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) with its Service Award during the organization's annual international meeting. O'Donnell has been a member of SSH for more than 20 years. The award recognizes his many years of service, with a special mention of the last four years, during which he served as treasurer and executive board member. As treasurer, O'Donnell helped to guide the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic with stable financial conditions, helping the organization to emerge more robust than ever.

O'Donnell also was honored with the 2024 John F. Garde Researcher of the Year Award from the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology Foundation. The award is presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the practice of nurse anesthesiology through clinical research. O'Donnell's research portfolio is immense, with a large portion related to the use of simulation for nurse anesthesiology education.

O'Donnell has been active in simulation education and scholarship since 1994. Along with his roles at Pitt Nursing, he is the senior associate director of the Winter Institute for Simulation, Education and Research (WISER) and cochair of its research committee. He helped WISER to achieve full accreditation in 2012 and 2017 and then became a fellow of SSH in 2020. O'Donnell has received multiple awards throughout his career and has published many articles and book chapters on simulation. O'Donnell coauthored the Improving Simulation Instructional Methods faculty development course series, offered in more than 20 countries and multiple languages. In addition, he has been the principal investigator or co-investigator on educational, research, training and business grants, receiving more than \$5 million in funding. In 2017, he cofounded Lumis Corp., an augmented reality simulation company that developed the InSight Platform that is currently being used to research opioid overdose training. ■

## Rosenzweig Appointed Nancy Glunt Hoffman Endowed Chair in Oncology Nursing

The University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing has appointed Distinguished Service Professor of Nursing Margaret Rosenzweig, PhD, FAAN, the Nancy Glunt Hoffman Endowed Chair in Oncology Nursing. Serving in an endowed



Pictured from left to right are Christine E. Kasper, Margaret Rosenzweig and J. Roger Glunt.

chair role is one of the highest honors a university can bestow upon a member of its faculty. Pitt Nursing was among the first in the nation to have an endowed chair in oncology nursing. Rosenzweig is the second faculty member to be appointed to this prestigious position, which

was previously held by Catherine Bender, PhD, FAAN.

"I am so grateful to now have this role," Rosenzweig says. "I want to strengthen our collaborative research efforts, reach out to involve the bedside and chairside staff oncology nurses in our work and support them in theirs, and continue to reach out to our beautiful Pittsburgh community to ensure that all patients in all neighborhoods are receiving the amazing cancer therapy and supportive care available in this region."

J. Roger and Lee Glunt created the endowed chair to honor Roger's late sister, Nancy Glunt Hoffman (BSN '62), who passed away from cancer. Leading the fundraising efforts for the chair, Roger Glunt was already a valued member of the Pitt Nursing community. He had supported the School of Nursing since 1997, when the University's Board of Trustees assigned him to help the school achieve its goal for the first capital campaign.

"I am very excited," says Glunt. "I have known Dr. Rosenzweig for quite a while, and when Dr. Cathy Bender announced her retirement, I began thinking that she was someone at the University [who] was most qualified and well respected for the role. She has done incredible research and is a great mentor. Her research will expand the scope of the chair, which is good and positive. We feel the chair will be in good hands."

Rosenzweig has made substantial research contributions, particularly to understanding the social determinants of health in cancer care. Notably, her work highlights disparities in symptom management among low-income Black women with breast cancer, leading to the development of interventions aimed at addressing these disparities. Her current research focuses



on understanding and mitigating racial disparities in symptom management and treatment adherence during breast cancer chemotherapy. Rosenzweig has secured funding from various sources, including the National Cancer Institute; Susan G. Komen Foundation; the American Cancer Society; Genentech, Inc.; and Pitt's Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

Her research has resulted in numerous prestigious accolades including induction into the Sigma International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame, the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research President's Award, and the Oncology Nursing Society Public Cancer Education Award. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

"Dr. Rosenzweig's appointment acknowledges her current work's significant and respected impact. I am confident she will further enrich oncology nursing, leaving a lasting imprint on the University and society at large," says Christine E. Kasper, PhD, FAAN, FACS, dean and professor, Pitt Nursing.

Rosenzweig has authored more than 130 peer-reviewed publications and has been invited to speak at prestigious conferences and events, including the Oncology Nursing Society Congress and the National Institute's workshop on Social Determinants of Health and Cancer Outcomes.

She mentors and guides students, postdoctoral fellows, and medical trainees in research and clinical practice. Her mentorship extends beyond academia to the wider community, where she promotes careers in the health sciences among underrepresented groups.

Rosenzweig actively engages with community cancer programs, serving in leadership roles and advocating for cancer patients and families. She also serves on various committees and boards, including the Pennsylvania Cancer Care Disparity Committee and the American Cancer Society board of directors for Western Pennsylvania advocacy, demonstrating her commitment to advancing cancer care locally and statewide. ■



## Research Project Will Shed Light on the Sleep Health of Nurses Working Night Shifts



In health care, the importance of sleep on overall health and wellness has become increasingly apparent. But one group often overlooked in sleep research is shift workers, particularly nurses navigating night or rotating schedules. Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing are investigating the sleep health of these nurses to tailor interventions to their unique needs.

“Previous research, by me and others, has demonstrated that shift work negatively impacts the health and well-being of nurses,” says Pitt Nursing Assistant Professor Christopher Imes. “As a nurse who has worked night and rotating shifts, I know firsthand the impact that working at night has on my sleep and ability to engage in healthy activities.”

Imes was awarded a 2023-24 Pitt Momentum Funds Priming Grant for his project, Examining Multidimensional Sleep Health and Stakeholder Engagement to Inform a Behavioral Sleep Health Intervention among Nurses Working Night and Rotating Shifts. The project is funded through June 2025.

“Overall, there has been an increased awareness regarding the role of sleep on our overall health and wellness,” says Imes. “The multidimensional sleep health [MDSH] framework, developed by Dan Buysse, Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry, Medicine, and Clinical and Translational Science and UPMC Professor of Sleep Medicine in Pitt School of Medicine, examines multiple dimensions of sleep health, such as regularity, satisfaction, alertness, timing, efficiency and duration. This is a bit of a departure from previous research on sleep that has focused on a single dimension. But the vast majority of research on MDSH has excluded shift workers because we know that certain dimensions of their sleep health are less than ideal.”

Imes’ study specifically targeted shift workers, particularly nurses working night or rotating shifts. The study employed both objective and subjective measures to comprehensively describe the sleep health of these nurses over a two-week period. By analyzing these data, the research team aims to identify patterns or behaviors that are associated with better self-reported health and wellness, potentially leading to tailored interventions.

“Additionally, the study involved interviews with the nurses, which allowed them to describe what the different sleep dimensions meant to them in the context of shift work,” Imes says. “The study also involved stakeholder engagement meetings where core concepts from a behavioral sleep intervention were involved to see

if they met the unique needs of nurses working night and rotating shifts.”

Central to this research is the adaptation of the Transdiagnostic Intervention for Sleep and Circadian Dysfunction (TranS-C), developed by Allison Harvey, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, and Buysse. Imes aims to tailor TranS-C concepts to suit the specific needs of shift-working nurses, leveraging insights gleaned from MDSH evaluations, qualitative interviews and stakeholder discussions.

“Shift work in health care is not going anywhere,” says Imes. “Accordingly, our long-term goal is to develop an efficacious, theoretically grounded behavioral intervention that improves the sleep health of nurses engaged in shift work. If we’re able to do that, then nurses will have a new tool to optimize their health. We hope that organizational policies and practices will embrace the opportunity to support employees, given the implications. Healthy nurses miss fewer shifts, are less likely to commit errors and are less likely to experience burnout. Interventions focusing on the health and wellness of nurses are a win-win for the nurses and their organizations.” ■



## Pitt Nursing Celebrates 25 Years of Nursing Excellence at Cameos of Caring Gala

On Saturday, Nov. 9, 2024, the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing honored 82 nurses at its annual Cameos of Caring Awards Gala.

Created in 1999 by Ellen Rudy, then dean of Pitt Nursing, the Cameos of Caring Awards Program was designed to recognize outstanding nurses practicing at the bedside. Since then, the annual recognition event has grown exponentially, honoring hundreds of health care leaders over the years.

For the past 25 years, nurses, nurse leaders and health care leaders have come together to celebrate nursing excellence. As the landscape of nursing science, nursing practice and health care delivery has undergone profound transformations, the Cameos of Caring Program has evolved beyond bedside nursing to recognize nurses in categories that encompass research and advanced practice roles, in both clinical and managerial spheres, as well as those who specialize in quality and safety. The program also now honors those excelling in care management, champions of organ and tissue donation, and faculty members devoted to educating the next generation of professional nurses.

Alongside changes in the program, the numbers of award recipients and participating facilities have grown each year. In 1999, the event started with 20 Western Pennsylvania hospitals joining Pitt Nursing in recognizing 20 amazing nurses. This past year, 53 facilities joined the program to recognize 82 professional nurses from not only Western Pennsylvania but also Maryland; New York; Harrisburg and Erie, Pennsylvania; and two facilities in Italy, taking the program to the international stage.

Since the inception of the program, more than 1,540 nurses have been recognized with Cameos of Caring Awards. ■

Congratulations to the following Pitt alumni who were honored in 2024:

Carol Abel (BSN '88)  
Erin Capets (BA '07)  
Irether Carter (BSN '87)  
Kristin Clarkson (DNP '21)  
Alison Colbert (PhD '07)  
Alana Jaye Coleman (BSN '98)  
Sara Fauls (BSN '02, MSN '06)  
Anita Fetzick (BSN '04, MSN '12)  
Sherry Gardner (MSN '17)  
Brayden Kameg (BSN '16, DNP '19, PhD '24)  
Margaret Filtz Leicht (BA '73)  
Marjorie Love Leslie (MSN '98)  
Jennifer Lingler (MSN '98, MA '03, PhD '04)  
Michele Pellecchia (BSN '13)  
Kristen N. Ronosky (BSN '05)  
Janice Sarasnick (BSN '01)  
Richelle Tobias (BA '91)  
Bridget L. Urda (BSN '05, MSN '10)  
Joseph M. Zimmerman (MSN '17)



Anita Fetzick

Brayden Kameg

Michele Pellecchia



Irether Carter

Joseph Zimmerman



Erin Capets





# Nursing Students Gain Valuable Insight from Study Abroad Programs

Nursing students who participate in study abroad programs gain a deeper understanding of other cultures, particularly for the clinical setting, which provides new insights into health care delivery—both in the United States and abroad.

Pitt Nursing students can use study abroad credits toward their program requirements, minor requirements and certificates such as the Global Health Certificate and the National Preparedness and Homeland Security Certificate. Here is a snapshot of some of the global experience programs for nursing students.

## Students Study Abroad in Switzerland

Twenty-one Pitt nursing students participated in The Healthcare Delivery in Switzerland program. They visited Zurich, Basel and Geneva to study nursing and health care from a Swiss perspective. Highlights included a visit to the International Council of Nurses, a meeting with the chief nursing officer of the World Health Organization and a tour of the University Children's Hospital Basel.



## Students Study in the United Kingdom

Fourteen first-year Pitt Nursing and Pitt School of Education students participated in the Plus3 program in the United Kingdom. The students studied at Birmingham City University (BCU) and visited Birmingham Children's Hospital and the Florence Nightingale Museum in London. After the program was over, students gave presentations about comparative nursing topics to faculty and students at BCU.

Jocelyn Boyd, a first-year nursing student who investigated the effects of socioeconomic status on children's experiences in nursing and education systems in the United States and United Kingdom, said, "BCU students and faculty members were extremely welcoming and seemed genuinely interested in our presentations at the end. This program opened my eyes to how closely pediatrics is tied to women's health."







## Summer Nursing Program Takes Students to Ireland

Twenty-six rising juniors and seniors embarked on an unforgettable journey to Ireland for the Nursing at Trinity College Dublin program. They immersed themselves in learning and gained invaluable insights into global health care practices. They also had the incredible opportunity to tour UPMC Aut Even Hospital in Kilkenny and engage in clinical observations at Tallaght University Hospital and St. James's Hospital.



## Argentina Plus3 Program Welcomes Students

Sixteen Pitt Nursing students and six Pitt College of Business Administration students recently participated in the Plus3 program in Argentina, where they studied health systems in Buenos Aires. Through a partnership with Austral University, the students met with the deputy minister of health of Buenos Aires and visited various public and private health care facilities.



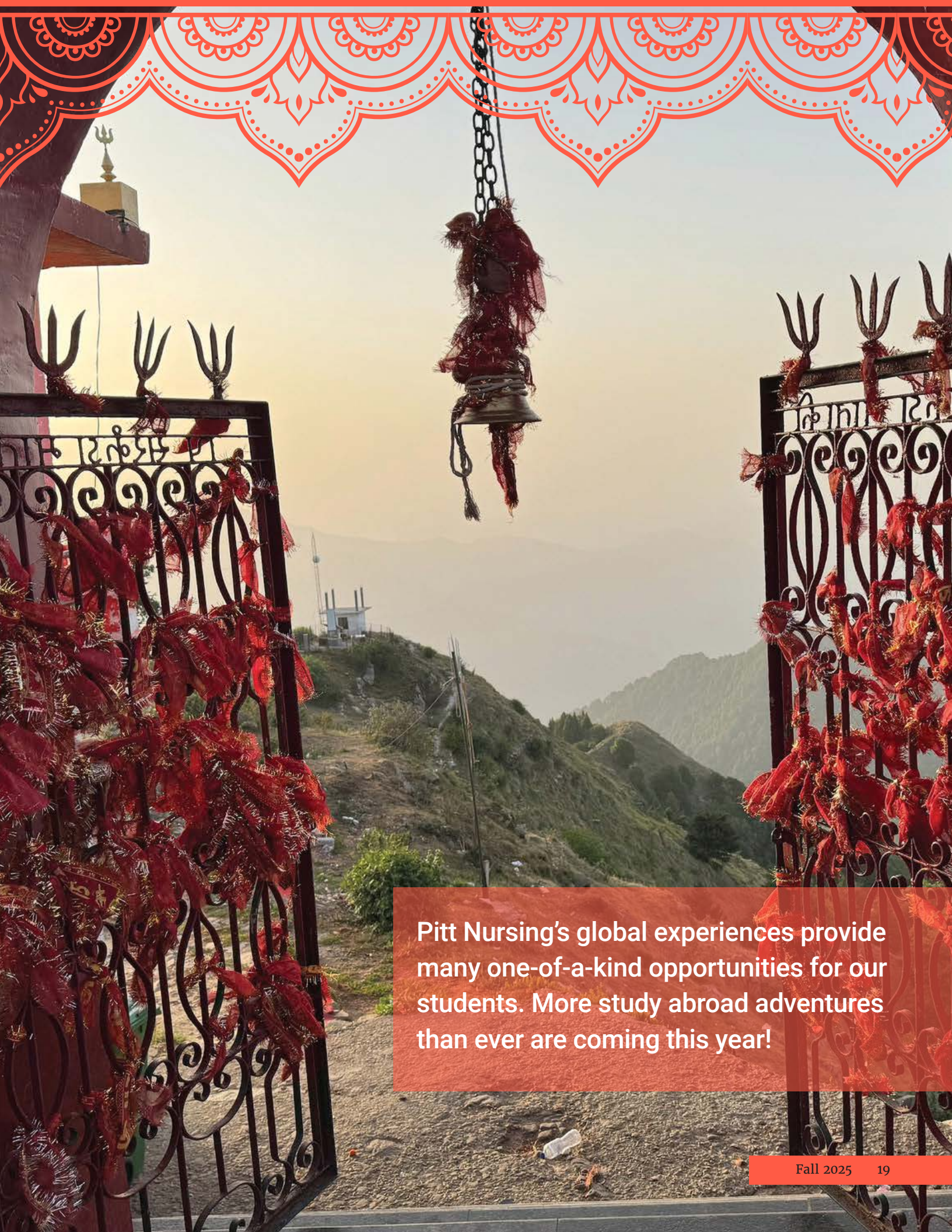
## Students Explore the Himalayas

Six Pitt Nursing students, alongside other Pitt health sciences students, studied at the Hanifl Centre in Mussoorie, India, as part of the Himalayan Health global experience program. The experience included a group trek into the Himalayas.

Jamie Gilligan, a junior in the nursing program, said, "The wilderness first responder class was a huge topic of interest for me. I work in an emergency room at school, and this class taught me how to use my skills in a wilderness setting with limited resources. As someone who loves the outdoors, I plan to carry these skills with me." ■







Pitt Nursing's global experiences provide many one-of-a-kind opportunities for our students. More study abroad adventures than ever are coming this year!







# Revolutionizing Nursing Education: Embracing Technology in Anatomy and Physiology

For decades, cadavers have been invaluable tools in nursing education, providing students with hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of human physiology and anatomy. But the use of cadavers comes with inherent challenges, including limited availability, ethical considerations and logistical complexities.

## A new alternative is giving students a highly immersive and interactive learning experience.

Called the Anatomage Table, it's a computerized table that operates like a large touch screen tablet and displays 3-D renderings of real human cadavers. Students can examine every layer of the human body, from the skin to the skeleton.

"It is really cool," says Jason Dechant, assistant professor and director of science education labs at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing. "One of the big advantages is that it will give more people the opportunity to engage with the material, whereas when you're working with real cadavers, some students are worried."

The Anatomage Table was originally developed to train radiologists and is touted as the most technologically advanced 3-D anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tool. The cadavers are those of real people who donated their bodies to science and have been scanned and digitally reconstructed. Students can visualize anatomy exactly as they would on a fresh cadaver.

"These are real people with surgical scars, cancer, [and] heart disease rather than just a digital representation of something," says Dechant. "When we look at the Anatomage Table, we can cut the liver in a cross section and see [that] this guy had liver cancer. You can see the tumors. It's not just a cartoony picture like you would see in a textbook."

There are multiple cadavers of different ages with which students can interact.

"In class, I showed students the cadaver of the woman in her 20s to show a normal-size heart and then compared it to the man who was in his 70s and had heart disease," says Dechant. "You could see the enlarged heart and the difference in the chambers."

Students can rotate the body in any direction and manipulate it, zooming in to see how organs, tissues, muscles, blood vessels and bones work together. Dechant also is excited about the simulations.

"In the cardiovascular simulation, you can actually speed up and slow down the heart and see how that affects the EKG," he says. "They're taking this stuff and manipulating it so we can see the physiological stuff. There's a simulator for what happens when you give a woman an epidural. Where do the drugs go, and what nerves are affected? You can see where things are going in real time."

The tables are currently being used in anatomy and physiology classes at Pitt Nursing. Dechant says that other faculty members are approaching him to see how they can incorporate the tables into their classes.

"We're trying to figure out new ways or interesting ways to incorporate the tables into the curriculum," he says.

While the Anatomage Tables has several advantages, Dechant says that students will still participate in traditional dissection methods.

"We're trying to complement traditional dissection methods as best as possible," he says. "We still dissect sheep brains, hearts and eyes so that the students still get some of that tactile feedback of dissecting the real thing and seeing it in front of them."

According to Anatomage's website, a growing number of publications show improved test scores, more efficient class and lab sessions, and increased student acceptance when using tables compared to real human cadavers. Dechant says that he will continue to assess how the table program works with his students but that it has been successful so far.

"I think one of the benefits of using this platform is [that] you'll get more engagement because you'll have more people who will be able to get hands-on and be like, 'Okay, look, I rotate it this way, and I can see where this is in relation to that, and I can find it on the real thing,'" he says. "The ability to actually see where vessels are compared to where muscles are or to see where this bone goes, and that's what I stress to students. When you look at a textbook image or a PowerPoint presentation, you're not getting that same three-dimensionality." ■





# Pitt Nursing's **IMPACT** on Cancer Research

■ by Katelyn Kocis

Cancer research is an indispensable force driving progress in modern medicine. It offers a glimpse into a future in which the impact of cancer is minimized and lives are prolonged and improved. Its significance can be felt in laboratories, hospitals and communities worldwide, shaping the landscape of cancer care through groundbreaking discoveries and innovative therapies.

Pitt Nursing researchers have been making a tangible difference in cancer care for decades. Their work involves unraveling the complexities of cancer biology, describing and mitigating cancer distress, supporting families and promoting self-advocacy while emphasizing the importance of equitable access to care.

Pitt Nursing researchers have devoted themselves to cancer research—so much so that a 2023 article in the journal *Cancer Nursing*, “The Evolution of Worldwide Nurse-led Cancer Research in the Last 2 Decades (2004–2022): A Bibliometric Mapping and Visual Analysis,” found Pitt Nursing to be one of the strongest institutions worldwide in terms of publications and collaborations in cancer research.

And it all began four decades ago.



## The History of Cancer Research at Pitt Nursing

Pitt Nursing, with its rich history, has played an instrumental part in the history of oncology nursing in the United States. In 1974, the school was awarded a contract from the National Cancer Institute to expand the oncology component of its medical/surgical master's program and develop continuing education programs in oncology nursing. Thus, it became one of the first institutions in the country to create an oncology certified nurse specialist program. Pearl Moore (BSN '68, MN '74), a graduate of the program, played a vital role in the creation of the Oncology Nursing Society, later to be headquartered in Pittsburgh, and became its first executive director in 1975.

Ten years later, the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute—today known as UPMC Hillman Cancer Center—opened, a testament to the collaborative academic and research endeavors by Pitt, Carnegie Mellon University and regional hospitals. In 1989, it achieved National Cancer Institute–designated Comprehensive Cancer Center status.

“Pitt Nursing Professor Emeritus Joyce Yasko [MNEd '76] saw the power of cancer nursing in impacting patients’ lives,” says Margaret Rosenzweig, Distinguished Service Professor of Nursing. “Joyce had prepared oncology clinical nurse specialists for years and started the nursing leadership at the then Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. Catherine Bender took the helm when Joyce Yasko left Pitt Nursing, and the oncology nursing program grew.”

Rosenzweig began collaborating with Bender, and other junior researchers followed suit. Soon, a small cohort of oncology researchers was born, and they met weekly to provide encouragement, develop proposals and strengthen each other's work.

“Paula Sherwood provided caretaking research; Yvette Conley allowed the introduction of omics; Heidi Donovan added interventional symptom management research; and Young Ji Lee introduced informatics, expanding the oncology potential,” Rosenzweig says. “We all successfully obtained more extensive funding and moved up in the ranks.”



Pictured from left to right are Jacqueline Simon, a research participant, and Peg Rosenzweig.

In a pivotal move toward advancing cancer research, the National Institute of Nursing Research made a significant stride in 2010, awarding Pitt Nursing three T32 grants aimed at training nurse-scientists in the areas of cancer, genomics and technology. These grants not only underscored the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, but they also signaled a concerted effort to equip health care professionals with the necessary tools and expertise to tackle complex medical challenges.

Bender received one of those T32s to train pre- and postdoctoral nursing students in cancer survivorship research, cementing the school's national role as a central connector for oncology nursing research.

“That is how many of the younger generation of oncology faculty joined the school,” Rosenzweig says.

## Cancer Survivorship Hub

The school has sponsored the Cancer Survivorship Hub as a central research network for faculty, trainees, students and collaborators to connect and support each other's programs for research and career development.

“Members represent all levels, from undergraduate students to senior faculty,” says Thomas, associate professor and hub codirector. “By focusing on mentorship and problem solving, we are showing members how to be collegial, impactful scientists.”

The hub includes faculty, postdoctoral fellows and doctoral students from multiple disciplines who conduct research to prevent, minimize or manage the symptoms and adverse effects of cancer and its treatment and to enhance the quality of life in cancer survivors and their caregivers.

“We all benefit from collaborative work, clinical relationships and a commitment to equitable cancer treatment from supportive care professionals for all patients in our community and elsewhere,” says Rosenzweig.



## A Leader in Cancer Research

The article in Cancer Nursing examined the evolution of cancer-related research led by nurses over nearly 20 years and found a five-fold increase in nurse-led cancer research. The authors cited 7,043 articles and found that the United States and the United Kingdom were the most productive countries in terms of the number of published articles. Notably, they found Pitt to be one of the most productive and cooperative institutions in cancer nursing, ranking it fifth in the world.

“What that article did was demonstrate what a powerhouse Pitt is in terms of collaborating with other disciplines, institutions and organizations around oncology nursing research,” Thomas says. “Not only do we have an influential cadre of faculty and trainees, but we have a reputation and track record of collaboration. The number of publications represents strong, reciprocal relationships that we have built to advance the science of oncology and promote nursing’s perspective on improving patient and family cancer care.”

The school’s proximity to cancer research institutions like UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and the Oncology Nursing Society also helps to build strong relationships, leading to vital research opportunities.

“We benefit from the relationship with the Oncology Nursing Society,” says Rosenzweig. “We are also able to enjoy good clinical relationships within the specialties of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in order to have access to patients, which furthers research.”

In Spring 2024, Rosenzweig was appointed Nancy Glunt Hoffman Professor of Oncology Nursing. Pitt Nursing was among the first in the nation to have an endowed chair in oncology nursing. Rosenzweig is the second faculty member to be appointed to this prestigious position, created in 2014 and previously held by Bender.

“I am so grateful to now have this role,” Rosenzweig says. “I want to strengthen our collaborative research efforts, reach out to involve the bedside staff oncology nurses in our work and support them in theirs, and continue to reach out to our beautiful Pittsburgh community to ensure that all patients in all neighborhoods are receiving the amazing cancer therapy and supportive care available in this region.

“All of us who are on the faculty as oncology nurse researchers owe a debt of gratitude to Catherine Bender and to the Glunt family for recognizing the value of cancer nursing. We will work hard to continue to grow this valuable scholarship group. It’s wonderful to work with such a supportive, smart and caring group of people,” says Rosenzweig. ■



**“WE BENEFIT FROM THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY. WE ARE ALSO ABLE TO ENJOY GOOD CLINICAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SPECIALTIES OF UPMC HILLMAN CANCER CENTER IN ORDER TO HAVE ACCESS TO PATIENTS, WHICH FURTHERS RESEARCH.”**

Margaret Rosenzweig

# Undergraduate Research Mentorship Program Leaves Lasting Impact

■ by Katelyn Kocis

Involving undergraduate students in nursing research isn't just advantageous; it's imperative because they can bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm into the research landscape.

In 2008, the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing recognized this and created an opportunity for Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students to be introduced to research methods and get involved in faculty-led projects and scholarship. Under the direction of Dr. Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob, then dean of the School of Nursing, the Undergraduate Research Mentorship Program (URMP) was born and has since enrolled hundreds of BSN students, matching them with faculty mentors and projects. The program gives students an opportunity to work with their mentors to support research activities directly, write research papers, attend conferences and learn leadership skills. Engaging undergraduate students in research endeavors not only cultivates a new generation of critical thinkers and problem solvers but fosters a culture of lifelong learning and inquiry, laying the groundwork for future breakthroughs and advancing the frontiers of nursing knowledge.

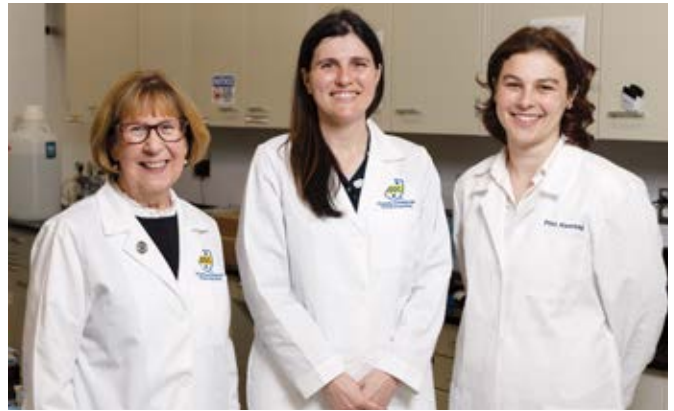
## Growing Students into Stronger Nurses



Hope Karnes was first introduced to URMP through a presentation during her first-year orientation. Karnes remembers hearing about an opportunity to do research and was curious to find out what kind of research nurses would conduct.

"I thought [the upperclassman] might be mixing chemicals or scraping petri dishes," Karnes says. "The presenter spoke highly of her experience and her relationship with her mentor, and I figured there was more to the picture than lab work."

This curiosity led Karnes to embark on a journey that would shape her nursing career and academic path.



Karnes was accepted into the program and soon learned there was much more to research. Under the guidance of her faculty mentor, Susan Wesmiller, PhD, Katrina Carr (BSN '12), and other members of her current research team, Karnes became involved in investigating breast cancer and genetics.

"I am fascinated by genetics, and the more I learn through URMP, the more I want to learn about genetics and how this area of science can affect my future patients," she says. "The program has provided me with many different opportunities to build my professional and personal skills. I have been able to improve my confidence while conducting phone interviews; learn how to perform literature searches using databases, which has helped me immensely in my nursing classes; network and meet new people; attend and travel to conferences; and present my research."

In fact, Karnes and Wesmiller attended the International Society of Nurses in Genetics World Congress in Providence, Rhode Island, in November 2023, where Karnes presented her research abstract, "Genomic Predictors of Pain in Women following Surgery for Breast Cancer," as a poster presentation.

"Nursing research is so incredibly important to me because it inspires me to care and learn every day," Karnes says. "During my time with URMP, I have realized that nursing research is the intersection between science and the human experience. As nurses, we are taught to be educators, advocates, caregivers and scientists. With this unique education comes a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between available medical information and those to whom this information applies. For example, in genetics, research includes investigating ways in which our knowledge/analysis of people's genetics can drive precision medicine."



“Although precision medicine could save lives; manage symptoms better; and trigger a shift in the way people are screened, diagnosed and treated, somebody must protect human rights as they overlap with medical breakthroughs. Those somebodies are nurses. Nurses must ensure practices are evidence-based and represent all people as well as ensure all people are given the resources to be informed and educated on their care. Just like bedside nursing, nursing research is truly centered on protecting and supporting humans.”

In addition to genetics, she says that she hopes to get involved in other areas of research related to age-friendly care, including geriatrics.

Karnes, a May 2025 BSN graduate, said the URMP experience has helped her to know that if she chooses to return to school for another nursing degree, she would likely enjoy it and would know that it could potentially make a positive difference for many people.

“Due to my experience with URMP, I can see myself pursuing further education in nursing research and/or clinical practice. This program has introduced me to mentors who will always be there for me. Knowing I have these supports has helped me through nursing school and no doubt will continue to help me as I move into postgraduate nursing.”

## From the Undergraduate Research Mentorship Program to a PhD

Eleanor Turi's journey into nursing research took a different route.



“I was studying economics and statistics at the University of Pittsburgh with a plan to do public health research but quickly realized that I wanted a more hands-on position,” says Turi (BSN-H '16). “I serendipitously shadowed a nurse for one day, loved it, switched majors and never looked back.”

Once Turi entered the nursing program, URMP became a perfect fit due to her initial interest in research.

“I was interested in public health, specifically biostatistics and research, so I was drawn to research programs,” Turi says. “I was originally with Donna Kaltenbaugh, helping with her DNP capstone project, a systematic review that eventually got published. Then, the next year, I [worked] with Ansley Stanfill (who was a postdoc at the time), and she encouraged me to do my own research and pursue the honors program. She connected me with Yvette Conley (her mentor), and then after Stanfill left the postdoc, I got matched with Lacey Heinsberg (PhD '20), who was a PhD student of Conley's.”

Turi's research interests center around mental and behavioral health, and during her time in URMP, she was able to study how anxiety and depression affect patients' ability to fully recover after having a stroke. She presented

her research at the Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Research Conference in South Africa in 2016, and she published her honors program research as a first author in the Journal of Neuroscience Nursing and Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation.

“I really enjoyed URMP and its flexibility,” Turi says. “I think it is a unique way to get undergraduates involved in research, specifically nursing-related research. I do not know of other nursing schools that have this program. It helped me learn more about research [and] realize I liked it and pushed me to think about it as a future career.”

In fact, after she graduated with her BSN and spent time as a bedside nurse in a pediatric ICU, she witnessed gaps in preventative care and how the work environment influenced the quality of care she was able to deliver. She knew research was where she belonged.

“URMP was a really great opportunity to get hands-on experience and to be involved in research that we couldn't do in class. That program led me to get a PhD.”

Turi started working toward her PhD in 2020 at the Columbia University School of Nursing and graduated in 2023.

“I was very fortunate to mentor Turi while she was an undergraduate student in our URMP and David C. Frederick Honors College programs,” says Yvette Conley, senior associate dean for research and scholarship and Distinguished Service Professor of Health Promotion and Development. “Her passion for research and intellectual curiosity inspired everyone around her, and I just knew she would go on to do remarkable things after graduation.”

“Nurses have a unique opportunity to pursue a lot of different options and careers, and having a doctoral degree puts me on the same playing field as physicians and other professions in medicine,” Turi says. “It garners us some respect in that way and prepares us to bring our nursing perspective to tackle some of the pressing issues in health care today. As nurses, we have that patient-level perspective that sees how complex people's lives are and how the medical system has failed them. Being in such a trusted and prevalent workforce as nursing, I think having the opportunity to pursue higher education and get our voices into more spaces will help meet the need for care.” ■



FEATURE

# Advancing Global Health Equity

■ by Katelyn Kocis







**I**n the dynamic world of health care, Keith Dawson (BSN '88), stands as a beacon of change and progress. From his roots as a nursing student at the University of Pittsburgh to his current role as a senior director in global health equity and population science for Roche and Genentech Inc., Dawson's nursing journey is a testament to the transformative impact one individual can have on health care disparities.

### From Study Coordinator to Global Health Leader

Dawson's health care journey started with his undergraduate nursing education in Pittsburgh in the late 1980s. Back then, he says, he was intimidated by nursing research.

Looking back, "I would tell my younger self, 'Don't be intimidated,'" he says. "Research is a process of discovering and learning. It's an opportunity to ask bold questions and generate evidence to inform nursing practice and improve patient care. Nurses must be at the table in generating this evidence, given our position in the health care ecosystem."

From there, Dawson began his research work as a study coordinator after completing his master's degree at Georgetown University, which focused on increasing access to HIV clinical trials for black patients. This journey led him to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) where he provided operational support for investigators participating in Community Programs for Clinical Research in AIDS clinical trials for underrepresented and understudied patient populations.

While pursuing his doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) at the University of San Francisco, Dawson aimed to emphasize the impact of drug development on nursing practice and stimulate discussions in nursing literature about implementing evidence-based practices to enhance

patient care delivery. His DNP project, “Adoption of Innovation: Impact of Rituximab (Rituxan) Faster Infusion on Oncology Nurses’ Perceptions, Practice and Resource Utilization,” resulted in two published papers, “Rituximab Faster Infusion for Patients with Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma in the United States: Implications for Nursing Practice” and “Managing Infusion-Related Reactions (IRR) for Patients with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia Receiving Obinituzumab,” which were aimed to support oncology nurses and physicians with evidence-based recommendations.

“These experiences contributed to my career in the pharmaceutical industry, where I now have extensive drug development experience, including nearly 20 years at Roche and Genentech, holding positions of increasing responsibility in clinical operations, oncology clinical science, U.S. medical affairs, global health equity and population science and now the Chief Diversity Office,” he says. “As a principal medical science director and U.S. medical lead for the Follicular Lymphoma Disease Area Team, I led the medical team through the successful launches of Rituxan Hycela and Gazyva [in the United States]. I also shaped the publication strategy for the National LymphoCare Study, making it one of Genentech’s most prolific data-generating oncology registries.”

## The Ghana Women’s Health Project

In his current role as a senior director in global health equity and population science, Dawson leads strategy in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to advance inclusive research and address unmet health care needs in Ghana, with a particular focus on women’s health care.

“My goal is to expand access to health care innovation and clinical research participation for historically underserved communities,” says Dawson. “I’m leading a project designed to increase access to quality screening, early detection, diagnostics and treatment for Ghanaian women with breast or cervical cancer with the Ghana Women’s Health Project.”

Dawson’s collaborative approach includes stakeholders from the Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics, Ghana Health Service and Roche. From October to December 2022, researchers conducted a cross-sectional needs assessment from 306 women and 20 facilities, revealing critical gaps in awareness, training and service delivery.

“The data showed that breast cancer was high among women, but there was a low awareness of cervical cancer,” says Dawson. “None of the health workers within the Bekwai Municipality had been trained in early detection, screening, diagnostic and pretreatment of breast and cervical cancer. We also found that all facilities do not routinely offer breast and cervical cancer screenings. These services are not integrated into the service delivery, and no standard register and data flow system for reporting cancer cases exists across all facilities.”

“Research is a process of discovering and learning. It’s an opportunity to ask bold questions and generate evidence to inform nursing practice and improve patient care. Nurses must be at the table in generating this evidence, given our position in the health care ecosystem.”

Keith Dawson (BSN ’88)

Dawson and his team presented their findings at the 14th Annual African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer in 2023 in Dakar, Senegal and at the World Cancer Congress in 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The second phase of the Ghana Women’s Health Project screened approximately 5,000 women for cervical and breast cancer in Ghana in 2024.

“Through policy shaping and program development, the intent is to demonstrate this strategic partnership in one district in Ghana and then expand upon a functioning care pathway in Africa and low/middle-income countries globally,” he says. “We hope to discover that this first initiative in Ghana will foster an integrated, resource-stratified women’s cancer care continuum in support of the Ghana National Care and Control Plan.”

## Pitt Nursing’s Influence on Dawson’s Path

Reflecting on his journey, Dawson believes his education at the University of Pittsburgh was pivotal in shaping his approach to health care. Fairness, a core value for Dawson, has been the driving force behind his roles as a nurse, clinical researcher, educator and leader.

“Pitt Nursing provided me with a strong foundation to understand the unique role that nurses play in the health care system as an advocate for patients and in utilizing clinical research skills to make a difference in patients’ lives,” he says. “I learned early that the best sustainable outcomes happen when you partner with diverse stakeholders to achieve goals. I’m thankful I had the opportunity to learn from doctorally prepared nurse educators and researchers, who enabled me to see what was possible in a nursing career.” ■



# Two BSN Students Participated in NIH Summer Internship Program



Michael Belen



Alexandra Kwiat

**T**wo rising sophomores in the Pitt Nursing BSN program were accepted into the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Summer Internship Program in 2024. Michael Belen and Alexandra Kwiat spent the summer at the NIH headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland.

"I knew the program would allow me to explore various fields of research and give me the chance to connect with people at NIH," Kwiat says. "I was thrilled to be selected."

"I was overjoyed when I received the email indicating that a principal investigator was interested in me for the NIH Summer Internship Program," Belen says. "I knew immediately that this program would be an excellent fit for me."

Kwiat and Belen worked with different principal investigators during their time at NIH.

"I am most passionate about gaining research experience in the operating room. The operating room exposed me to firsthand experiences that will be beneficial to me in my future career," Kwiat says. "My principal investigator is a certified perioperative nurse with experience in post-anesthesia care unit, interventional radiology, and standardized patients. I shadowed her in her daily work as well as other nurses employed at NIH."

"I'm open to exploring various research areas, and I've had the opportunity to work on projects involving traumatic brain injuries, military radiation exposure, subconscious injuries, diabetes and more," Belen says. "I'm excited about transitioning from bench lab work to more clinically based research in a hospital setting, working directly with patients. During this internship, I focused on evidence-based practice research and contributed to serving underserved communities, as I believe in the power of research to bring about positive change in health care."

"I was selected by Rosa Rousseau, a service nurse educator at the NIH Clinical Center, and was her student for the summer. I had the chance to work with various patients involved in research protocols."

"The Summer Internship Program at the National Institutes of Health offers a unique opportunity for our students to further demonstrate the unique lens that a nurse brings to research," says Yvette Conley, PhD, senior associate dean for research and scholarship and Distinguished Service Professor of Nursing. "I think Pitt Nursing students should consider the program because of the hands-on experiences they will receive while working with world-renowned scientists."

"This experience was eye-opening, and [it] guides my future research endeavors," Kwiat says. Before attending, Kwiat expressed: "I hope my work this summer will help me to decide how I will continue my education and allow me to narrow down the fields of research and/or occupations that I would like to pursue upon graduating."

"I believe this opportunity was the perfect transition from benchwork research to more clinically based research," Belen says. "As a rising sophomore about to start clinical research, this experience not only helped me acclimate to the hospital environment, interact with patients and medical staff, and learn more about current medical procedures... [this experience] also solidified my decision to pursue evidence-based research as I continue my nursing degree. I am determined to make the most of this experience and allow it to shape my academic and career aspirations in research and health care." ■

# THIS PITT NURSING PHD HELPS CREATE HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS THAT LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES

■ BY MARK NOOTBAAR

Communications Director, Campaigns, Strategic Initiatives,  
and Stewardship  
University of Pittsburgh



For decades, prior to 1995, most hospitals and health care systems followed the paradigm that “to err is human” and were more likely to blame mistakes on nurses than to investigate the actual root of the error and correct faulty systems for the benefit of patients. That began to change in the 1990s with the seminal writings of James Reason’s “Swiss Cheese” model (1990); the work of Lucian Leape, a leading pediatric surgeon activist (1991); the 1999 National Academy of Medicine’s landmark report “To Err is Human;” the horrific Challenger space shuttle explosion; and the impact that the code of silence has on all human factor systems.

Victoria L. Rich (NURS ’84G, ’91PhD) is one of the leading reasons why the nursing profession became a voice for patient safety and the key role of the registered nurse focused on identifying system failures or near misses.

“In my experience, I was often criticized when I spoke out expressing another rationale or presented a patient or family perspective,” Rich said. “I have shared with many nurses across the globe—of all ages and experience levels—to remember they are caring for people who cannot care for themselves, and they must be mindful each moment of administering medications and possess knowledge of safe practices and protocols. You must speak up or refuse to proceed if anything is suspicious or unclear.”

Rich did not set out to be an advocate for patient safety. She worked on hospital units for a few years and then decided to go back to school. After receiving her master’s degree in nurse administration from Pitt, her career evolved into hospital administration, first in Indiana, Pennsylvania, followed by Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and then in Tampa, Florida, in 1996 where she relocated for her husband’s retirement. The move to Florida came one year after the nationally infamous medical error known as the Willie King case. In 1995, Willie King, a middle-aged male, went into a Florida hospital to have his leg amputated due to complications from an untreated battle with diabetes. He woke up from the anesthesia a few hours later to find the surgeon had amputated the wrong leg.



“I support Pitt because as I reflect on my 40-plus year health care career, I realize I became a patient safety advocate and nurse leader because of the vision and passion for nursing that emanated from the nursing faculty at the University of Pittsburgh.”

Victoria L. Rich (NURS '84G, PhD '91)

## Getting to the Root

As is the case with most errors, it was not just one mistake or oversight that caused the surgeon to remove the wrong leg. It was a sequence of system issues—modeling the holes in Swiss cheese.

Rich, due to her role as a PhD vice president of patient care services at the hospital where King had his surgery, investigated and wrote one of the first root-cause analyses for the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

“I could see it was more of a health care cultural issue,” Rich said. “From there I was asked to consult with hospital boards all over the U.S. and globally about how health care was not always safe and system issues and costs must be discussed.”

Rich said that, at the time, the predominant culture was to never admit mistakes. That meant the fault—and punishment—often fell to the nurse, physician and pharmacist who last had contact with the patient.

“The impact overwhelmed me, and so I began to speak about it to health care systems across the country,” Rich said. “There are many, many steps from the time a doctor writes an order to the time the nurse carries it out. But it is more expedient and less costly for hospital administrators and boards to blame a person than to blame—and fix—the system.”

## Spreading the Word to the Next Generation

Rich found that telling the story of Willie King helped change health care systems. She wrote articles and a book chapter on her experiences and passion for safe health care practices.

Rich was recruited to the University of Pennsylvania in 2002 as nurse executive for the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center in Philadelphia. She retired in 2014 as chief nurse and associate professor of nursing for the University of Pennsylvania.

However, Rich did not feel her journey and passion for patient safety were complete. In 2016, she became an associate professor at the University of South Florida. In 2017, Rich was appointed dean of the College of Nursing at the University of South Florida. She emphasized and embedded the importance of patient safety throughout the undergraduate and graduate programs.

“Nurses are surveillance and reconnaissance officers. They are also advocates for patients and their families,” Rich explained. “I always say, don’t back away from the fire. Find out what the fire is about.”

Rich said that starts with encouraging all clinical nurses and advanced practitioners to truth tell and speak up.

“One of my favorite actions as a nurse leader was to put an empty chair in the room during the review of an adverse patient safety event and say, ‘That chair represents the patient and their family. Let’s all be mindful of that perspective and the second victim—the health care provider,’” Rich said.

Rich credits her success in changing the system in part to her Pitt education. She gives back to the University by volunteering her time and making annual gifts. She served six years on the Pitt Nursing Board of Visitors and was recently named to the Pitt Alumni Association board.

“Victoria has had a remarkable career at the senior levels of leadership and shares her experience and wisdom with the University through her volunteer service,” said Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob, former Pitt Nursing School dean. “She is a very dedicated alumna and a delightful colleague.”

Rich has made annual gifts to Pitt for more than three decades and has been a Chancellor’s Circle member since 2020. Her gifts include support of the student uniform fund, the Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob Research Fund, and the Nursing School’s unrestricted fund.

“I support Pitt because as I reflect on my 40-plus year career, I understand that I became what I am today because of the nursing professors who could anticipate my future and mentored me through my successes and my failures,” Rich said. “Pitt will always be home for me—full of knowledgeable, authentic and trustworthy individuals.” ■

## Alumni Achievements



**Gerene Bauldoff (MSN '93, PhD '01)** was chosen as a member of the Emeritus Academy at Ohio State University.

**JiYeon Choi (PhD '08)** was named associate professor and associate dean of student affairs at Yonsei University in South Korea.



**Taryn Edwards (BSN '04)** was elected president of the National Association of Neonatal Nurses.

**Brett Fadgen (MSN '11)** was a finalist in the advanced practice registered nurse category for the 2024 Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania.

**Wendy S. Henderson (BSN '94, MSN '99, PhD '07)** was appointed the Gail and Ralph Reynolds President's Distinguished Professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and serves as a faculty member in the Department of Biobehavioral Health Sciences.

**Diane Hupp (DNP '14)** was recognized with a 2024 Pittsburgh Business Times Women of Influence award.



**Kathleen Lindell (BSN '82, MSN '87, PhD '07)** received a 2024 Palmetto Gold Award, one of 100 nurses in South Carolina to receive the prestigious honor. The award was created by various nursing organizations across South Carolina as a platform to recognize nursing and support nursing education through scholarships.



**Michele Panetta (MSN '13)** was appointed to the Florida Center for Nursing board of directors.



## Silcox Receives Nightingale Award

**JoAnn Silcox (BSN '84)** was selected as an honoree for the 2024 Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania for her work in nursing administration at the executive level at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The award was presented to Silcox for demonstrating visionary leadership, implementing innovations, and promoting effective financial stewardship of operational human resources.



## Alum Receives International Recognition

**Heng-Hsin (Shannon) Tung, RN, fnp, DNP, PhD**, was inducted into the Sigma International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame last summer at the annual Sigma conference in Singapore.

"It's deeply a great honor for me to be inducted into the International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame, as it represents the highest achievement for a nursing global scholar and marks devoted journey in advancing the science of nursing," Tung said.

She leveraged her leadership roles in both academic and professional societies to actively participate in government roundtable discussions, exerting influence on health care policies and nurse practitioner regulation development initiatives.





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# In Memoriam

## 1940s

Helen Riddles Harrison (BSN '49)  
Patricia Stepanchak (BSN '47)

## 1950s

Frances Bakewell (BSN '54)  
Martha L. DuShaw (BSN '54)  
Margaret Holdcroft (BSN '56)  
Juanita Manley (BSN '56)  
Marie Peters (BSNED '50)  
Betty Ruben (BSN '50)  
Ruby Wilson (BSNED '54)

## 1960s

Betty Campbell (BSNED '61)  
Davina Gosnell (BSN '67)  
Kathleen Hays (BSN '69, MN '77)  
Martha Malinzak (BSNED '63)  
Sandra Markley (BSN '60)  
Shirley Negley Kobert (BSN '60, MNED '66)

## 1970s

Mary Lou Bond (MN '73)  
Nellie Brown (BSN '74)  
Donna O. Garbera (BSN '79)  
Mary Keller (BSN '75, MN '79)  
Marjorie Kerlin (MNED '79)  
Deborah Simak (BSN '75, MNED '81)  
Eileen Faye Stefl (BSN '73)  
Donna C. Wyeth (BAS '76)

## 1980s

Ruth A. Eldridge (MSN '83)  
Susan Kresser Chaney (BSN '81, MSN '88)  
Linda Clemons (BSN '83)  
Kathy H. Rideout (MSN '83)  
Lyn Sullivan (BSN '82)

## 1990s

Barbara Bahl (PhD '93)  
Cynthia Culhane (BSN '97)  
Stella Politano (BSN '97)

## 2000s

Lisa Schoch (MSN '06)  
William Seybert (BSN '08)

## 2010s

Kayla Green (BSN '17)  
Margaret S. Harper ('10)

## Davina J. Gosnell | Obituary

Davina J. Gosnell (BSN '67), PhD, passed away at the age of 81 on March 28, 2024.

After receiving her BSN from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, Gosnell went on to earn her MSN and PhD at Ohio State University.

Gosnell was on the faculty at the Kent State University College of Nursing for 26 years, serving as its dean from 1989 to 2004. Under her leadership, the college expanded its programs to include a master's and a doctoral program. Gosnell believed in paying it forward for the next generation and established the Dean Davina J. Gosnell Endowed Nursing Scholarship for clinical nursing students with high academic achievement and financial need.

Gosnell also established the Doris and Davina Gosnell Endowed Nursing Scholarship at Pitt Nursing.

Throughout her life, Gosnell served in the U.S. Air Force Reserve and cared for patients in her clinical practice. Following her career at Kent State, she served as founding director of the nursing program at Hiram College until 2012.

Gosnell served as a consultant and supervisor of home health services at the Ohio Department of Health and held visiting consultant appointments with the World Health Organization. She also served as chair of the Ohio Nurses Foundation and was a member of the board of directors of University Hospitals Geauga Medical Center in Ohio.

## Edna E. Steele | Obituary

Edna E. Steele, a friend of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and mother of Theresa Steele-Austin (BSN '85), passed away on May 2, 2024, at the age of 93.

Steele became a true Blue and Gold fan when her daughter attended Pitt Nursing, and some of her favorite moments came from the countless road trips they made together to cheer on the Pitt Panthers.

Together with Steele-Austin's husband, Troy, the mother-daughter duo created the Adam I. Steele Jr. Nursing Fund in memory of Edna's husband and Theresa's father.

In a donor profile in the summer 2023 edition of Pitt Nurse, Steele-Austin said, "We want to give a helping hand to someone whose parents might not be able to help."

Created in 2014 and fully funded in 2017, the fund provides full tuition to an out-of-state student each year.





## Ruby Wilson | Obituary

Ruby Wilson (BSNEd '54), EdD, passed away on July 31, 2023, at the age of 92.

Wilson was selected as a University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Distinguished Alumni awardee in 2010 and created the Ruby L. Wilson Endowed Professorship at Pitt Nursing.

Wilson served as a clinical instructor at the Allegheny General Hospital School of Nursing in Pittsburgh, where she first graduated. After completing her degree at Pitt Nursing, she served as an instructor in advanced medical-surgical nursing from 1955 to 1957.

The first-ever master's program in clinical nursing was developed by Wilson and Thelma Ingles, a teaching colleague, and it became a national model for graduate nursing specialization. From 1955-57, she cochaired a project with Duke University's chancellor of health affairs to develop a program of national preparedness against nuclear warfare and to shelter, feed and care for the Durham, North Carolina community (then about 75,000 people) in the underground tunnel between the west and east campuses at Duke; this was the basis for mass casualty drills for hospitals still in use today.

In 1963, Wilson developed and served in the first clinical nurse specialist (CNS) position at Duke University Medical Center, continuing her faculty positions in the Duke Schools of Nursing and Medicine and receiving a special appointment in the Department of Nursing Services of Duke Hospital. She is the only nurse to have this triad appointment at Duke University Medical Center and was the first CNS in Duke's kidney transplant program.

In 1971, she was appointed dean of the Duke School of Nursing. She would serve in that role until 1984, when she became assistant to the chancellor for health affairs at Duke.

An early nursing activist in legislative policy on matters pertaining to health and nursing in particular, Wilson was a role model leading nursing organizations at the state and federal levels.

In 2008, the Duke University School of Nursing presented Wilson with its Lifetime Achievement Award.



## Student Awards and Achievements

DNP student **Myeong-ga Cho** received a 2024 Oncology Nursing Society Congress Scholarship from the Oncology Nursing Foundation. As a PhD student, she and her collaborator, Zixuan Yang, won the \$10,000 top prize for spring 2024 from the University of Pittsburgh's TC<sup>2</sup>: True Co-equal x Transformative Collaboration for their project, A Mixed-Method Study on Menopausal Experience among East Asian Migrants in the United States. Catherine Bender is Cho's mentor.

Recent BSN graduate **Kayla Honeysett** was one of six undergraduates nationwide to be awarded an American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) Board of Directors Student Scholarship. Honeysett was recognized at the APNA 38th Annual Conference in Kentucky.

DNP student **Julianna Jarrett** was awarded the Michael Boytim Scholarship by the Pitt School of Nursing Department of Nurse Anesthesia faculty. The scholarship, named for a program alumnus, provides funds to support students excelling in clinical and classroom settings.

BSN student **Kaylynn Keyrouze** received a 2024 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship for Pitt's Plus3 Nursing program in Argentina.

Doctoral student **Jeong Eun Kim** received a grant from Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing for her proposal, "Participants and Family Members' Experiences and Preferences with Return of Individual ADRD Research Results." Her faculty mentor is Jennifer Lingler.

DNP student **Hollis Laird** received a grant from the Magee-Womens Research Institute for her project, The Impact of Integrated Behavioral Health and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Treatment on Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals with OUD. Her faculty mentor is Brayden Kameg.

DNP student **Elizabeth Moore** was awarded the 2024 Professional Nurses of Southwestern Pennsylvania Scholarship from The Pittsburgh Foundation.

Recent PhD graduate **Lauren Narbey** received a grant from the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses for her project, Pattern of Breastfeeding among Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder and Integration of Lactation Support into Opioid Use Recovery Programs across the United States. She also received a grant from the Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania for this project. Her faculty mentor is Jill Demirci.

PhD student **Kai-Lin You** received an F99 grant from the National Cancer Institute for her proposal, "Return-to-Work Issues in Health Care Workers Diagnosed with Cancer: Investigation and Intervention Development." She also received the Team Shark Tank Award from UPMC Hillman Cancer Center for her project, Redefining Electronic Patient Reporter Outcomes (ePROs) in Cancer Care: Integrating Gamification and User-Centered Design. Her mentor is Teresa Thomas. ■

## Nurse Anesthesia Students Awarded National Scholarships

In 2024, the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA) Foundation received 2,592 competitive scholarship applications and awarded 100—14 of them to University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing nurse anesthesia DNP students. That means that Pitt Nursing students represent 14% of the scholarship winners despite representing less than 1% of all nurse anesthesia students in the United States.

The 2024 AANA Foundation scholarship winners from Pitt Nursing are Adrian Bermudez (BSN '19), Julia Corbin (BSN '20), Vivan Dang, Andrew Roman Gartee, Julianna Jarrett, Meghan Levy, Jasmine Lord, Caleb Martin, Lan Pham (BSN '18), Jeff Rodz, Margaret Schluter, Samantha Tyson, Sarah Walker and Abigail Wu. ■





## Faculty Awards and Achievements



**Sarah Belcher, PhD**, received the 2024 UPMC Hillman Cancer Center Emerging Scholar Award in Population Science Cancer Research.



**Cynthia Chew, DNP, Melissa Harlan, DNP, and Christopher Imes, PhD**, were accepted into the Pitt Health Sciences Office of Academic Career Development's 2024 Leadership Academy for Early Career Faculty.

**Yvette Conley, PhD**, was inducted as a fellow in the New York Academy of Medicine.



**Rose Constantino, PhD, JD, RN**, received the 2025 Outstanding Service Award from the Violence and Trauma Special Interest Group of the Society for Behavioral Medicine.

**Karen Coyne, DNP**, received the School of Nursing's Distinguished Clinical Scholar Award for her proposal, "PAUSE: An Intervention to Improve Emotional Intelligence and Attitudes."



**Jill Demirci, PhD**, was selected for the inaugural Pitt Equitable, Inclusive, Innovation and Incubation Fellowship. Demirci also was a 2024 Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania finalist in the Nursing Research category. She also has been named deputy editor in chief for the Journal of Human Lactation.

**Laura Fennimore, DNP**, was elected vice chair of the American Academy of Nursing Expert Panel on Palliative and End-of-Life Care. Fennimore also was a 2024 Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania finalist in the Nursing Education - Academia category.

**Brayden Kameg, PhD, DNP**, was named a fellow of the International Academy of Addictions Nursing.



**Patricia Watts Kelley, PhD, Captain, United States Navy (ret)**, has been named the new associate dean for faculty affairs.

**Julius Kitutu, PhD**, was accepted as a participant in the 2025 American Association of Colleges of Nursing Diversity Leadership Institute.

**Heeyoung Lee, PhD**, was named associate editor of Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, which is one of the major journals in psychiatric nursing.

**Faith Luyster, PhD**, was named associate editor for the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine, a major journal in sleep medicine.



**John O'Donnell, DrPH**, was reelected as president of the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs for 2024-25.

**Jennifer Seaman, PhD**, was named a fellow in the American Thoracic Society.



**Heather Vitko, PhD**, passed the Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator exam.

**Susan Wesmiller, PhD**, was elected vice chair of the American Academy of Nursing Expert Panel on Genomic Nursing and Health Care.

**Laura Wiggins, DNP**, received the 2024 Pennsylvania State University Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing Alumni Achievement Award.

**Cecelia Yates, PhD**, was elected chair of the Committee for Equal Representation and Opportunity of the American Society for Investigative Pathology.

## Faculty Grants

### Sarah Belcher, PhD

National Cancer Institute

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Identifying Multi-Level Predictors and Outcomes of Oral Anticancer Medication Adherence Initiation and Persistence among Patients with Hematologic Malignancies

### Tracey Bell, DNP

Florida Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners

Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Shift Length Perception: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study

### Yurun Cai, PhD

School of Nursing Research  
Catalyst Award

PRIME (Pain and Activity Rhythms in Multisite-Pain Elders) Pilot Study: Pain Variability and Daily Physical Activity Patterns in Older Adults with Multisite Pain

National Institute on Aging

A Novel Physical Activity Metric Predicts Cognitive and Brain Aging and ADRD Risk

### Yvette Conley, PhD

National Institute on Aging

Epigenetic Age and Patient Outcomes after Severe Traumatic Brain Injury

Epigenetic Aging Cognitive Function and Exercise in Older Adults

### Jason Dechant, PhD, and Julia Matzenbacher dos Santos, PhD

University of Pittsburgh University Center for Teaching and Learning

Improving Simulation in the Anatomy and Physiology Teaching Laboratory Using Personalized Interactive Computer Graphic Programs

### Andrew Dierkes, PhD

University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute

Data-Driven Allocation of Scarce Nursing Resources to Improve Patient Outcomes

Pilot Testing a Computer-Adaptive Nurse Workforce Survey awarded from Hillman Scholars in Nursing

### Lacey Heinsberg, PhD

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

CREBRF Genomics, Gestational Diabetes, and Early Life Body Size in American Samoa

### Christopher Imes, PhD

Pitt Momentum Funds

Examining Multidimensional Sleep Health and Stakeholder Engagement to Inform a Behavioral Sleep Health Intervention among Nurses Working Night and Rotating Shifts

Shadyside Hospital Foundation

A Pilot: Feasibility Study to Improve Night Shift Nurses' Health and Reduce Burnout

### Julia Matzenbacher dos Santos, PhD

Diabetes Action Research and Education Foundation

Targeting Dietary Exposure to Environmental Estrogens as a Therapeutic Approach to Control Hyperglycemia and Insulin Resistance in Type 2 Diabetes

### Jonna Morris, PhD

School of Nursing Research  
Catalyst Award

Night Variability in Cardiopulmonary Coupling Derived Sleep Disordered Breathing: Sex- and Gender-Related Predictors and Impact on Obstructive Sleep Apnea Clinical Heterogeneity

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Night-to-Night Variability in Sleep Disordered Breathing: Sex and Gender-Related Predictors and Impact on Obstructive Sleep Apnea Clinical Heterogeneity" from National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

### Nancy Niemczyk, PhD

Jewish Healthcare Foundation

Addressing Barriers Midwives Face in Caring for Pregnant People with Opioid Use Disorder: An Engaged Scholarship Approach

### Julia O'Brien

National Institute of Nursing Research

Adaptation and Pilot Testing of a Patient-Provider Communication Intervention for Adults with Sickle Cell Disease

### Joshua Porat-Dahlerbruch, PhD

School of Nursing Research  
Catalyst Award

Integration of Nurse Practitioners into Older Adult Primary Care Models



**Mitali Ray, PhD**

National Institute of Nursing Research

Allostatic Load and Race:  
Implications for Cardiovascular  
Health in Pregnancy and Beyond

2025 School of Nursing Research  
Catalyst Award, titled

Epigenetic Insights into Post-  
Pregnancy Cardiovascular Disease

**Kelly Tan, PhD**

National Center for Complementary  
and Integrative Health/University of  
Tennessee Health Science Center

A Cross-Sectional Study of LGBTQ+  
Cancer Caregivers' Experiences of  
Financial Burden and Emotional  
Well-Being

**Teresa Thomas, PhD**

Oak Ridge Associated Universities

Peer Navigation Intervention to  
Support the Behavioral Health Needs  
of Men with Cancer: A Pilot

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center  
Developmental Pilot Program

Addressing the Needs of  
Underserved Patients with Cancer:  
A Self-Advocacy Lay Navigation  
Intervention across the Hillman  
Catchment Area

**Daniel Wilkenfeld, PhD**

Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation

Developmental Disability Navigators

**Jamie Zelazny, PhD, MPH, RN**

2025 School of Nursing Research  
Catalyst Award

Novel Methods for 21st Century  
Psychological Autopsy Study

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Pittsburgh, PA 15261

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