

Duquesne University School of

NURSING

Vol. 11 (2026)

Magazine



Serving
Communities,
Changing
Lives

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“The character of the nurse is as important as the knowledge he or she possesses.” – Carolyn Jarvis



At Duquesne University’s School of Nursing, we often say that nursing is more than a career – it’s a calling. This year, our magazine celebrates that calling through the theme “Serving Communities, Changing Lives.” Across every story, you’ll find nurses who give back – to their patients, their students, their communities and to one another – embodying the very spirit of our mission to “serve God by serving students, so they may, in turn, serve others.”

You’ll meet alumna Kayla Wright, whose journey from the classroom to the skies reminds us that courage and compassion know no limits. You’ll read about faculty members such as Drs. Angela Karakachian and Alison Colbert, who are empowering nurses to recognize and respond to child maltreatment – ensuring that even the smallest, most vulnerable voices are heard. And you’ll see how Dr. Melanie Turk’s research is breaking down barriers to preventive health care for older adults, making wellness more accessible and equitable.

Our profile on Dr. Rick Zoucha highlights how one nurse’s journey through more than 50 countries has shaped a lifelong mission of cultural understanding and respect – reminding us that care transcends borders. Meanwhile, our student volunteers continue that same spirit of service close to home, giving their time and hearts to the Pittsburgh community long before graduation.

And as we reflect on the Carol Carfang Nursing and Healthcare Ethics Conference, we’re reminded that integrity and ethics remain at the heart of Duquesne’s tradition – guiding nurses not just in what they do, but in who they are, and how they serve.

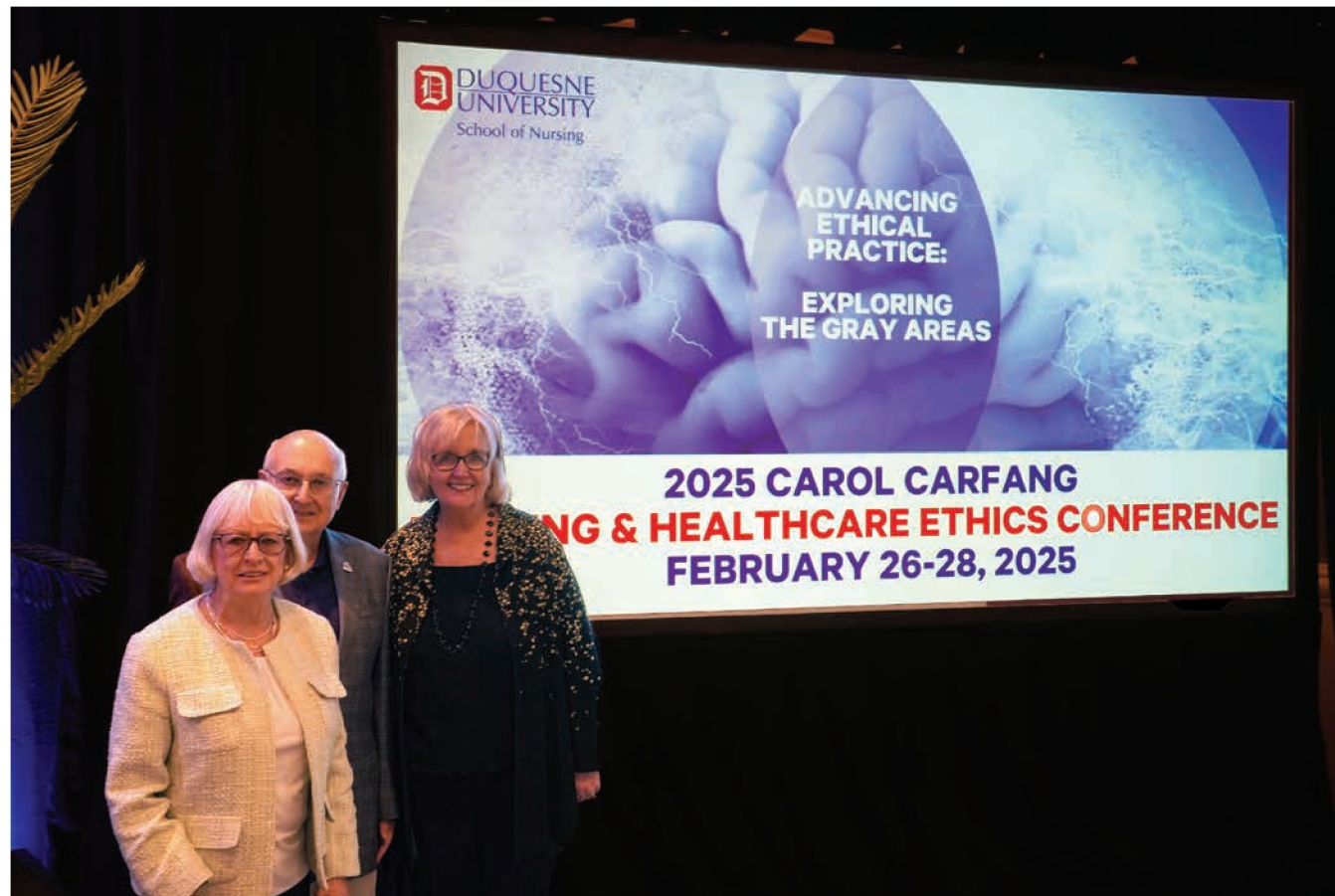
Together, these stories reveal what makes our community extraordinary. Whether in hospitals, classrooms, villages across the globe or the skies above, Duquesne nurses lead with empathy, resilience and purpose. They heal, they teach, they advocate – and in doing so, they illuminate what’s best about the profession and the people who choose it.

To every student, faculty member and alumnus who continues to serve and inspire: thank you for showing the world that the heart of nursing is – and always will be – the heart of humanity itself.

With pride and gratitude,

Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow

Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow, PhD, RN, ANEF, FNAP, FAAN
Dean and Professor, School of Nursing
Duquesne University



NURSES ARE THE NEXUS: WHY ETHICS EDUCATION MATTERS IN NURSING AND BEYOND

THE BIENNIAL CAROL CARFANG NURSING AND HEALTHCARE ETHICS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS DUQUESNE'S SCHOOL OF NURSING COMMITMENT TO ETHICS EDUCATION.

For Duquesne University's School of Nursing, ethics is more than just an abstract academic discipline; it's a foundational value and a lived, everyday practice. During her tenure at Duquesne, Professor and Dean of the School of Nursing Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow, PhD, RN, ANEF, FNAP, FAAN, made the strategic decision to embed an ethics course within all nursing programs, ensuring that each student — whether bound for the bedside or the boardroom — graduated with a strong ethical foundation.

In late 2015, this core value found a powerful expression when Glasgow received a call from Duquesne alums Tony Carfang, (B'73), and Carol Carfang, MSN, RN (N'73). They wanted to recognize Carol's long career as a

pediatric nurse practitioner and advocate for those with disabilities.

"I told them I would love for him to support a conference on nursing and health care ethics so that we can shine a light on some of the issues occurring in the health care field and highlight Duquesne at the same time," Glasgow says.

The suggestion resonated instantly. "It was about everything Carol stood for when she was a practicing nurse," Tony says. "Furthermore, Duquesne University has always been about ethics, whether it's in business or law or nursing. That's part of the University's spirit and tradition."

Carol Carfang, who is now retired but started her career as a pediatric nurse, loved the idea, too. But she had an important suggestion: "I knew Duquesne University did a lot of symposiums and conferences, so I said it needs to take place in another state. I want Duquesne to be nationally recognized, and you don't get the same PR unless you go outside your hometown," she explains.

That conversation was the birth of the biennial Carol Carfang Nursing and Healthcare Ethics Conference, a national event emphasizing applied ethics that draws together philosophers, physicians, lawyers — and, of course, nurses — from all over the country.

A NURSE'S UNIQUE ETHICAL LENS

What if a patient refuses treatment? What if a health care decision goes against a patient's cultural beliefs? What if a member of the health care team makes a life-threatening mistake? Health care professionals of all stripes face ethical dilemmas like these on a daily basis.

"Nurses are at the bedside. They're the ones caring for patients, they're the ones advocating for patients and they are the ones seeing if something is not right."

While ethics has held an honored place in health care since the Hippocratic oath in ancient Greece, both life and health care have changed immeasurably since the time of Hippocrates. But the underlying principle of care remains the same — and nurses are the nexus of that care.

"Nurses are at the bedside," Glasgow says. "They're the ones caring for patients, they're the ones advocating for patients and they are the ones seeing if something is not right. They're not in and out. They are there for eight or 12 hours, so they know the patient better than anybody."

Mary Broderick Donnelly, BSN, JD, DBE, a retired clinical assistant professor from Loyola University of Chicago School of Nursing and retired clinical ethics consultant from the Loyola University Medical Center and

a recent presenter at the Carfang conference, knows this firsthand.

"My ethics consultation frequently took place in intensive care units where nurses often work 12-hour shifts. The nurses would describe how a patient would say to them, 'I am ready to stop treatment, and really ready to die, but my family doesn't want that, and I don't know what to do,'" Donnelly shares. "That type of intimacy, arising from the nurses' opportunity to speak with their patients hour after hour, is an enormous part of why nurses are unique in advocating for ethical care."

Donnelly deeply appreciates that this conference is based in a nursing school, and that it is organized and presented by nurses. "It covers all kinds of topics, of course, but it has a nursing perspective that I really appreciate," says Donnelly.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Reflecting a commitment to applied ethics, the conference model emphasizes case studies that demonstrate real-world dilemmas not found in textbooks.

"Not that I think Aristotle isn't important, but we purposely use the case studies model," Glasgow says. "It forces attendees to move beyond philosophical issues and directly address practical, actionable ethics."

According to Glasgow, attorney and clinical ethicist Aliza Narva, JD, MSN, RN, HEC-C, director of ethics at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, where she also chairs the HUP Ethics Committee, demonstrated this approach perfectly at the 2025 conference.

Narva presented a case involving a young pregnant woman whose fetus is in distress, leading the obstetrics and gynecology (OB) team to decide that she needs an emergency C-section.

"But the patient doesn't agree," Narva says. "She had had two prior home births, and she very much wanted to have this baby at home."

Narva notes that when the OB team calls both the ethics and legal departments, they might get two conflicting answers. Legal might advise that OB can get an emergency order for a C-section from a judge. Ethics, on the other hand, might reason that giving the patient a C-section when she really doesn't want it could be considered assault, even if they have a judicial order.

"So, we talked through our approach to those kinds of cases where the advice between ethics and legal might differ," Narva says. "In our hospital, both teams now use conflict resolution skills to unpack the issue and understand what is going on with this patient — and avoid having to come to that kind of dichotomous situation."



BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL: ORGANIZATIONAL AND SYSTEMIC ETHICS

Glasgow says she hopes attendees walk away with a sense of the breadth of the ethical issues that arise for nurses and other health care practitioners.

“The conference really tries to educate nurses and other health care providers so they are thinking broadly about what the ethical issues are,” Glasgow says, “whether that’s someone addicted to pain medication or, in the case of Angela Amar, the importance of diversity in health care.”

At the 2025 conference, Angela Amar, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN, professor and dean of New York University Rory Meyers College of Nursing, presented “The Ethics of Diversity and Inclusion: Who’s In? Who’s Out? Who Decides?”

Other presentations covered organizational accountability, including Donnelly’s session on ethics hotlines designed to field reports of unethical behavior — which illustrated how ethical practice extends beyond individual patient care to institutional integrity.

“I think nursing and nursing education has been driven by this idea of having a workforce that mirrors the populations we serve,” Amar says. “We always talk about this person-centered care — treating people as they want to be treated, as reflected in all the things that make them unique in who they are.”

For Amar, it’s not just about race and ethnicity, but any aspect that makes a person unique, whether that’s a disability, religion, gender and beyond.

“There’s a lot of moving pieces in making sure that nurses provide the care they’re supposed to be providing, and about how we ensure access to good care for everyone, even when everyone’s care is not the same,” Amar says.

The benefit of having a biennial conference is that the gamut of ethical issues in nursing and health care can eventually get a hearing. The first iteration of the conference discussed the general ethical issues that are occurring in nursing and why ethics in nursing is

important, while the second one centered on the ethical issues that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Last year, we did it on organizational ethics — on what goes wrong in an organization and how you can fix it,” Glasgow says. “And in two years, we’re considering a theme that looks at ethics from a health policy perspective.”

EMBEDDED ETHICS

The first nursing code of ethics was formally adopted by the American Nurses Association in 1950. It established the ethical standard for the profession and provided a guide for nurses to use in ethical practice and decision-making without dictating a specific framework or method to be applied.

Today, the Code of Ethics for Nurses stands as both a normative framework and an aspirational guide, according to the preface of the 2025 edition of the code, and a nonnegotiable moral standard of nursing practice for all settings.

That idea of being nonnegotiable is at the heart of everything Duquesne’s School of Nursing does.


“Nursing is a moral enterprise, and we really need to have nurses who are leaders and not afraid to speak up and do the right thing when it’s called for,” Glasgow says. “That’s why we have ethics woven throughout our undergraduate curriculum.”

The School of Nursing also includes ethics at the graduate level with the PhD in Nursing Ethics, an interdisciplinary program offered in collaboration with the Center for Global Health Ethics in the College of Liberal Arts.

“The nursing code of ethics was always part of our program at Duquesne, but this conference helps students learn even more, because you get different people from all over the country talking about different issues that arise,” Glasgow says.

By bringing national experts together to debate complex real-world dilemmas, the conference solidifies Duquesne’s commitment to developing nurses who are not just skilled clinicians, but moral leaders prepared for the toughest challenges in modern health care.

Be part of the dialogue that prepares nurses to lead with courage and integrity — where ethical challenges are examined, debated and transformed into practice.

Learn more by visiting Carol Carfang Nursing and Healthcare Ethics Conference at duq.edu/nursingethics.



WHEN EVERY MOMENT MATTERS: EMPOWERING NURSES TO RESPOND TO CHILD MALTREATMENT

Children often cannot speak for themselves. At Duquesne University’s School of Nursing, Assistant Professor Angela Karakachian, PhD, RN, is leading an innovative effort to ensure nurses are prepared and confident to speak up for them. With support from Professor Alison Colbert, PhD, PHCNS-BC, FAAN, the project empowers nurses to recognize, respond to and report child maltreatment through trauma-informed, simulation-based education.

WHEN ASSESSMENT GOES BEYOND SYMPTOMS

The emergency department was busy that Tuesday afternoon when the 7-year-old arrived with her grandmother complaining of stomach pain. To most observers, it looked routine. Another child with a common complaint. But imagine a nurse trained to notice what others might miss: the child flinches when adults move too quickly, her story feels rehearsed, her grandmother’s energy is tense.

This scenario captures why Karakachian and Colbert are determined to equip nurses to recognize, respond to and report child maltreatment through trauma-informed, simulation-based education. Their work has already led to real-world success stories — including a student who later emailed to say the training helped her navigate a suspected case of abuse.

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO ACTION

Karakachian has seen firsthand how the warning signs of abuse can be missed — not because of negligence, but due to a lack of preparation.

“Most nurses understand their responsibility as mandated reporters,” Karakachian explains. “But they often feel uncertain about what to say or do in the moment — and that uncertainty can delay or prevent action. This training works to change that.”

Together with Colbert, she developed a trauma-informed curriculum to transform how nursing students are prepared for these situations.

“Throughout our careers, we recognized a gap in how nursing students were trained to identify and respond to child maltreatment,” Colbert says. “Angela’s work has taken that concern and transformed it into a rigorous, evidence-based intervention.”

Their research revealed the same pattern repeatedly: nurses eager to help but unsure how. “That’s what this project is all about,” says Karakachian. “Giving nurses the knowledge, language and lived practice they need to respond when something feels wrong.”

SIMULATION THAT FEELS REAL — BECAUSE IT IS

At the heart of the project is a simulation-based learning experience. Traditional classroom education

wasn't enough. Karakachian recognized that detecting child maltreatment requires more than knowledge — it demands the ability to navigate emotionally charged conversations in real time.

Her solution: live actors in realistic scenarios where students can safely practice these crucial moments.

The simulation process is carefully orchestrated. Students first watch an hour-long educational video developed with forensic nurses and child advocacy physicians. Then, paired in teams, participants have just 10 minutes to navigate challenging conversations with trained actors portraying children and parents, and then must decide how to proceed. The scenarios, drawn from real cases with modified details for confidentiality, mirror what nurses might encounter.

“Using live actors brings emotional realism,” Karakachian explains. “It’s not just about spotting bruises or behaviors — it’s about allowing them to feel the discomfort, uncertainty and urgency that come with real patient encounters.”

This helps to improve students’ empathy and prepare them to respond when they encounter potential cases of child maltreatment. Students not only practice with trained actors but also serve as actors themselves, learning how abuse often presents.

In spring 2024, they launched a pilot program that reached over 120 nurses and students. “We saw increased confidence in identifying maltreatment and communicating with victims and families,” Karakachian says. “That’s exactly what we hoped for.”

RESEARCH TAKES SHAPE

Funding from Sigma Theta Tau International’s Joan K. Stout Research Grant and Duquesne’s Henry Leach Grant supported the project with both nursing students and emergency room nurses at a local hospital. Over a year, the professors collaborated with forensic nurses, child advocacy physicians and trained actors to create authentic scenarios.

Through eight simulations, they trained 64 nursing students and 65 emergency nurses from Jefferson Hospital in Pittsburgh.

“The feedback was overwhelmingly positive,” Karakachian says. “Students said this should be part of their education and reported increased confidence in detecting and reporting maltreatment.”



“We are preparing nurses to care for the most vulnerable. That’s the heart of what we do, and who we are. By preparing nurses to act with skill, empathy and confidence, we’re not just shaping clinical practice. We are giving children a better chance at safety, healing and hope.”

Colbert adds that even experienced emergency nurses saw value in rehearsing these challenging situations.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: FROM CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY

What makes this work especially powerful is its spirit of collaboration across disciplines. The team partnered with Rachel Berger, MD, MPH, of UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh’s Child Protection Team and director of child abuse research at the Safar Center for Resuscitation Research at the University of Pittsburgh; Tammy Bimber, DNP, MSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, CEN, a forensic nurse at The Wellness and Forensic Center and consultant for the International Association of Forensic Nurses; Debbie Nugent, MS, RN, SANE project coordinator at the Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA); and Duquesne University School of Nursing Professor and Associate Dean for Research Melissa Kalarchian, PhD. Together, they ensured the project’s accuracy and authenticity.

“Responding to child maltreatment requires a multidisciplinary team approach,” Karakachian explains. “It’s critical that students understand holistic, patient-centered care — including the emotional, social and cultural dynamics at play.”

CONFRONTING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

The professors do not shy away from complex issues, including addressing concerns about systematic bias and over-reporting in marginalized communities.

“These are complex and difficult issues,” Karakachian acknowledges. “We are seeking funding for our next educational intervention to build an unbiased nursing workforce with the skills and confidence to identify victims accurately.”

Their vision reaches beyond detection alone: a truly equitable response means addressing social, structural and economic disparities to prevent abuse altogether.

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS

Working with emotionally charged material takes a toll, so self-care is built into the program.

“During simulations, both students and actors could say ‘stop’ if anything was triggering,” Karakachian explains. “Immediately afterward, we debriefed. Many visibly expressed relief during those conversations.”

For Colbert, the reward is watching transformation unfold: “Seeing students’ satisfaction and improved confidence after the simulation experience is worth it. Every time I feel overwhelmed, I try to think of those moments when students express gratitude.”

Karakachian adds: “Preparation itself is self-care. Having the skills to handle difficult situations reduces anxiety and emotional strain.”

LOOKING AHEAD: A NATIONAL VISION

While the simulation is not yet part of Duquesne’s formal nursing curriculum, Karakachian is working to change that with strong support from Colbert and others across the University.

“We want every Duquesne nursing graduate — undergraduate and graduate alike — to feel confident and competent in recognizing and reporting suspected maltreatment,” Karakachian says.

And their ambitions extend far beyond Duquesne’s campus. “This is not just for our students,” she continues. “We hope to create a nationally recognized, evidence-based model that schools and hospitals can adopt.”

They’re currently validating their approach and exploring expansion across nursing programs and other health care disciplines within Duquesne’s School of Health Sciences. We want to educate every student nurse, every nurse nationwide!” Karakachian declares.

Colbert notes, “Angela’s vision has the potential to reshape how child maltreatment is taught across health care disciplines. I am proud to support that work.”

A SIMPLE BUT PROFOUND GOAL

For both researchers, this work is deeply personal and firmly rooted in Duquesne’s mission.

“We are preparing nurses to care for the most vulnerable,” Karakachian says. “That’s the heart of what we do, and who we are. By preparing nurses to act with skill, empathy and confidence, we’re not just shaping clinical practice. We are giving children a better chance at safety, healing and hope.”

Their hope is simple but powerful: that every nurse who completes the training leaves with the confidence to recognize and act on signs of child maltreatment.

By adopting a holistic approach to nursing education, Karakachian and Colbert are creating ripple effects that extend far beyond the simulation room — potentially changing the trajectory of vulnerable children’s lives.

As Karakachian reflects: “We are empowering future nurses to make a lasting difference — ultimately giving children a healthier, brighter future.”

In a world where children’s safety often depends on adults’ ability to recognize danger and act decisively, Karakachian and Colbert’s work ensures that the next generation of nurses will be ready when those critical moments arise. 🌐

JOANNE BARKETT CONWAY SIMULATION CENTER

School of Nursing
Duquesne University

FROM SAFE PRACTICE TO BOLD POSSIBILITIES

DUQUESNE'S NURSING PREPARES FOR ITS NEXT CHAPTER

Walk into the Duquesne University School of Nursing Learning and Simulation Center on any given day, and you'll witness the making of a nurse. You may see a Duquesne nursing student practicing their first injection on a mannequin, hands steady but hearts racing. A senior navigating a complex cardiac emergency, or a graduate student learning compassionate communication with a consultant with disabilities.

"The center is where students learn, make mistakes and try again — without fear of harming a patient," says Susan Williams, MSN, RN, CHSE, assistant dean for clinical skills and simulation education.

That safe space is more important than ever. Patients today are more acutely ill, and hospital stays are shorter than ever before. "When I was in nursing school, hospital stays were longer. We had time to really get to know the patients we were caring for," Williams says. "Now, students must be ready to act from day one. The center bridges that gap, turning classroom knowledge into confident, capable action."

MEETING GROWING DEMAND


What began in 2015 as a one-floor lab in Libermann Hall has since grown to span multiple levels. The center has expanded to include specialized pediatric and high-fidelity simulation areas, standardized patient rooms, and extra classrooms.

The numbers tell the story of this success: In the last academic year alone, the center hosted more than 6,400 student encounters and conducted more than 350 simulations across undergraduate and graduate programs.

This growth reflects the center's success, Duquesne's expanding programs and health care's reliance on simulation. As enrollment has grown and clinical sites have become more competitive, the demand for on-campus simulation experiences has intensified.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEETS HUMANITY

Inside the simulation rooms, technology blends with teaching. High- and low-fidelity mannequins respond to interventions, wearable simulators let students feel

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what it's like to undergo suctioning or catheterization, and augmented reality systems now allow for complex emergency medication scenarios.

Students practice CPR with real-time feedback, use stethoscopes that display EKG patterns, and work with hospital equipment like defibrillators, IV pumps and bladder scanners.

"We try to use the same equipment and supplies they'll encounter in the clinical setting so it's not so daunting when they go out there," notes Williams.

Health assessment students use the lab daily; fundamentals students rotate through four separate lab sessions to learn and test skills; and every clinical course incorporates targeted simulations aligned with its objectives. Williams says open lab sessions often spark "light bulb" moments.

"The instant they connect memorized steps to genuine understanding is incredible," she shares. "This approach represents a significant evolution from traditional nursing education, where students often encountered complex procedures for the first time in high-pressure clinical settings."

Simulations focus on case studies that incorporate what students have learned in the classroom and align with course objectives. Debriefings following these simulations help students make connections and consolidate their learning.

"We give them a case study that pulls together what they've learned," explains Williams. "Sometimes they think of something I never even considered."

These moments show how the lab not only reinforces knowledge but also sparks fresh insights, preparing students for real-world challenges.

A STANDOUT INNOVATION: THE CONSULTANT WITH DISABILITY SIMULATION PROGRAM

Among all the changes and advancements that have occurred in the center over the years, one program stands out to Williams as a hallmark of Duquesne's commitment to both skill and empathy: the Consultant with Disability Simulation Program (CDSP). Launched in 2019, it partners with community members who live with disabilities to serve as standardized patient consultants.

These consultants work directly with nursing students, providing an authentic look at navigating health care with a disability. The initiative not only elevates the voices of people with disabilities but also gives future nurses an invaluable, first-hand education on how to provide more effective, empathetic and inclusive patient care.

According to Williams, nearly 1,500 authentic interactions have occurred since the start of the program. "Students have learned the importance of maintaining dignity, person-centered care and how to truly listen," she says. "It's authentic encounters with someone that has a disability. Based on feedback we've received from students and faculty, it's really effective for learning."

The CDSP reflects the very heart of the school's mission — combining clinical expertise with deep humanity — and demonstrates one of the many amazing moments that

can occur there on any given day. Students consistently report that these interactions fundamentally change how they approach patient care, teaching them to see beyond diagnoses to the whole person.

A TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT OPENS NEW POSSIBILITIES

An incredible opportunity to further strengthen hands-on clinical training at the School of Nursing emerged in 2023, when William Conway Jr. stepped forward with a truly transformative \$3.8 million gift in memory of his late wife, Joanne. His generosity made possible the new Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center, an 8,600-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility on the sixth floor of Fisher Hall that opened this spring. The new space, named in memory of Joanne, who sadly passed away in 2024, honors her legacy of compassion.

The Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center will focus on the field of advanced practice nursing such as nurse practitioner and nurse anesthesia clinical education, in addition to advanced skills in specialties such as critical care, primary care, disability health care, and forensic and sexual assault care. This new lab will complement the existing simulation center in Libermann Hall which addresses clinical skills throughout the life span.

The Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center includes a wide range of high-fidelity learning environments — including a simulated operating room, critical care room, recovery room, primary care office suites and spaces for simulated therapy experiences. These areas allow students to hone both routine and complex skills in settings that mirror real-world clinical environments.

“Mrs. Conway’s legacy will live on through generations of advanced practice nurses,” says Clinical Associate Professor and Chair of Advanced Practice Programs Denise Lucas, PhD, FNP-BC, CRNP, FAANP. “They’ll learn

in a high-tech, compassionate environment, mentored by expert faculty, and return to their communities equipped and inspired as Duquesne nurses.”

The new center will serve students from across Duquesne’s nursing programs — including family nurse practitioner, adult-gerontology acute care, psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner, nurse anesthesia, and forensic nursing tracks, as well as other specialty courses. It also opens the door for interdisciplinary learning, with collaborative simulations involving students from Duquesne’s osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physician assistant studies and physical therapy programs.

One such collaboration, led by Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program Deborah Dillon, DNP, RN, CRNP, ACNP-BC, CCRN, CHFNP, FAANP, FAAN, CHSE — a recipient of the Duquesne University Eugene P. Beard Award for innovation and distinction — brings together undergraduate nursing, nurse practitioner, physician assistant and osteopathic medical students for integrated learning scenarios that reflect the interdisciplinary nature of modern health care.

For the expanding nurse anesthesia program, the new center is especially impactful. Students now have the ability to train on campus with flexible scheduling and tailored clinical experiences, reducing the need for off-site placements and allowing more focused, immersive preparation.

The timing of this expansion could not be more critical. As health care systems across the country face severe nursing shortages and the increasing complexity of patient care, the need for highly trained, practice-ready advanced practice nurses continues to grow.

“This gift enables us to meet that demand without compromise,” says Lucas. “Students gain high-tech, real-life experiences that involve critical decision-making



Dr. Michael Neft, Director of Nurse Anesthesia Studies and Scholarly Projects, works with students in the Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center, which features a wide range of high-fidelity learning environments.



in a safe, supportive environment. They graduate ready — confident in their knowledge, their skills and their ability to lead with compassion from day one.”

Williams stresses that students no longer have the luxury of easing into patient care — they need to be ready from the start. Lucas echoes that reality, noting, “Patients are sicker. More care is being delivered in the community. Advanced practice nurses must be equipped to handle these challenges the moment they step into their roles. The Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center ensures Duquesne students are prepared — clinically, emotionally and intellectually — for that transition.”

TWO LABS, ONE MISSION

From Libermann Hall to Fisher Hall, Duquesne’s simulation spaces share a single, powerful purpose: to prepare students not only to perform at the highest level, but to care at the deepest level.

The Joanne Barkett Conway and Libermann Simulations Centers continue the work of building foundational and advanced skills through immersive simulation experiences.

Together, these facilities represent more than just technological advancement — they embody Duquesne’s unwavering commitment to producing nurses who combine clinical excellence with genuine compassion, ready to meet the demands of modern health care with both skill and heart.

“The School of Nursing is fully committed to providing a high-tech, comprehensive education that prepares students to lead from their very first day in practice,” Lucas says. “That commitment allows students to gain the confidence they need to deliver excellent care — with compassion, and with respect for every individual they serve.”

At Duquesne, simulation is more than practice — it’s a promise. A promise to graduate nurses who are not only technically prepared but also deeply attuned to the dignity and humanity of those they serve. From their very first day in practice to the countless lives they will touch, Duquesne nurses carry forward the School of Nursing’s mission: to make a difference in health care, in their communities and in the world. 🌐

HONORING THE CONWAYS’ EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT

In fall of 2025, William “Bill” Conway Jr. and his late wife, Joanne Barkett Conway, were designated as honorary Fellows of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) — the highest honor awarded to non-nurses who have made outstanding contributions to nursing and health care.

Through their vision and generosity, the Conways have provided thousands of nursing students with scholarships and supported many nursing schools, including Duquesne University’s School of Nursing.

We celebrate the Conways’ lasting impact on nursing education and will continue to honor their legacy by shaping the next generation of compassionate, skilled nursing professionals. 🌐



PHILANTHROPIST FUELS DUQUESNE’S NURSING PIPELINE

Amid nationwide nurse shortages and faculty constraints, philanthropist Bill Conway Jr. is helping Duquesne University expand its capacity to educate future nurses. On March 23, the University marked the opening of the Joanne Barkett Conway Simulation Center, an 8,600-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility made possible by a nearly \$4 million gift from the Bedford Falls Foundation, established by Conway and his late wife. Named in her memory, the center enhances hands-on, technology-driven learning for Duquesne nursing students.

University leaders, faculty and students gathered to celebrate the milestone and its role in expanding access to advanced simulation technologies that mirror real-world health care settings. Conway says his continued support is driven by the urgent need for nurses and the fulfillment he gains from seeing their impact.

Designed to reflect modern care environments, the center features advanced simulation bays and a fully equipped operating room suite supporting nurse anesthesia and other specialized programs. 🌐

A WORLD OF CARING: A JOURNEY THROUGH CULTURES AND SERVICE

RICK ZOUCHA, PHD, PMHCNS, CTN-A, FTNS, FETNA, FADLN, FAAN, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF ADVANCED ROLE AND PHD PROGRAMS, DIRECTOR OF NURSING EDUCATION AND FACULTY ROLE, BRINGS HIS PASSION FOR CULTURE TO EVERY ASPECT OF HIS WORK AND LIFE.

In a hospital in Dayton, Ohio, during the late 1970s, a young man doing clinical pastoral work made a discovery that would change his life — and eventually touch the lives of thousands of nursing students. Rick Zoucha, a political science student at the time, encountered something he had never seen before: men working as nurses.

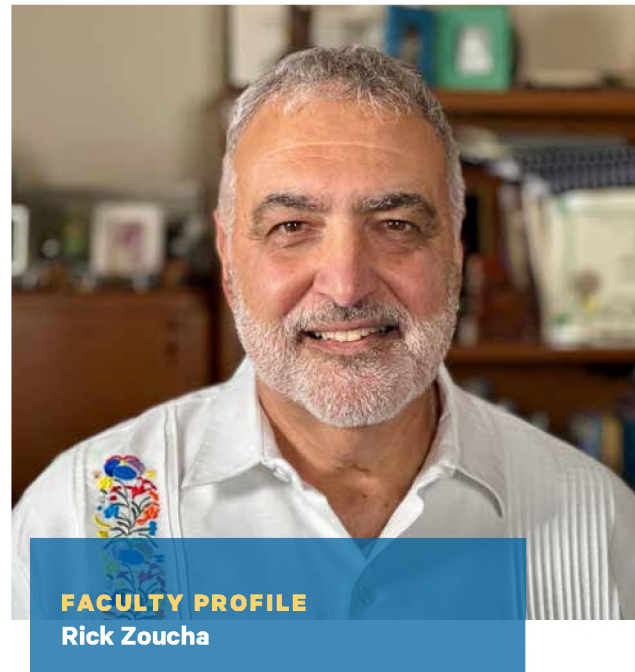
“I didn’t know up until that point that men could actually be nurses,” recalls Zoucha, now a distinguished professor at Duquesne University School of Nursing. “I had never had the opportunity to meet a man who was a nurse. But when I saw the work they were doing, both the men and women, I thought, ‘This is certainly something I could do.’”

That moment of realization launched a remarkable 40-year career that has taken Zoucha from psychiatric units in Ft. Worth, Texas, to the halls of Duquesne University, and to more than 50 countries around the world — all in service of a singular mission: promoting culturally congruent care in nursing.

FROM NEBRASKA TO THE WORLD

Zoucha’s journey began in Nebraska, where he grew up in a multicultural neighborhood that would unknowingly shape his future calling. After joining the Marianist religious order and discovering nursing, he pursued his education with determination, earning his LPN in one year, his RN in 10 months and eventually his PhD from Rush University in Chicago.

His path to Duquesne in 1996 was serendipitous. During his interview, he made a promise that he has kept since day one: “I put my arms out and said, ‘This is what you get before tenure.’ Then I turned completely around and said, ‘This is what you get after. I’m going to be the same person before tenure, during the tenure process and after.’”



FACULTY PROFILE
Rick Zoucha

What sealed his decision to join the Duquesne University School of Nursing was reading in the school newspaper about the campus ministry creating a prayer space for Muslim students. “I thought, ‘This is where I need to be,’” he recalls. “This says it all, doesn’t it?”

And it has turned out to be a place that has allowed not only Zoucha to grow in terms of cultural awareness and competence, but the school as well.

THE SPARK OF A CALLING

Zoucha’s passion for transcultural nursing did not arrive with a grand epiphany. It unfolded quietly over years of lived experience. Raised in a multicultural environment, diversity was an unspoken constant in

his life — from his childhood in Nebraska, to his time in San Antonio after joining the Marianists, to his clinical work in Chicago’s diverse neighborhoods during his PhD studies. It wasn’t something he consciously examined. It was simply the world he knew.

Zoucha recalls when he first met Dr. Madeleine Leininger, the founder of the Transcultural Nursing Society. The encounter was transformative. Within six months of their meeting and while attending a workshop with roughly 400 attendees, Leininger called him out by name from the podium.

“She said something along the lines of, ‘Isn’t that right, Rick?’ and I turned around to see who she was speaking to,” Zoucha says, laughing at the memory. “We connected immediately.”

Zoucha believes that meeting her, understanding her theory and research methodology, discovering the purpose of that organization, and being around like-minded people is what sparked and continues to spark his interest in transcultural nursing today. “Her theory made so much sense,” Zoucha reflects. “For how many years did we not look at culture and how it affects health and well-being?”

BUILDING A LEGACY AT DUQUESNE

Since arriving at Duquesne nearly 30 years ago, Zoucha has systematically woven culturally congruent care into the fabric of nursing education. In the late 1990s, he helped implement a required transcultural nursing course for undergraduate students, a rarity at the time that the school has proudly maintained for over 25 years.

Zoucha recalls a time when transcultural nursing was briefly removed during a curriculum revision. “I looked at the curriculum and said, ‘Wait a minute. What have you done here?’” he says with a smile. Then, with a quick laugh, he adds, “Don’t worry. They put it back in right away.”

He’s quick to point out that Duquesne — and the deans he has worked with over the years — have consistently nurtured an environment that values and supports the integration of culture into nursing education. Together, they’ve recognized the growing need for culturally congruent care and championed its role in preparing ethical, compassionate practitioners.

His influence extends far beyond curriculum. Zoucha has either chaired or served on the committee of roughly 30 doctoral students, the majority focusing on culturally related topics. He developed global immersion programs that take students to Rome and Dublin, experiences that consistently earn the same response: “Thank you so much, this has been a life-changing experience.”

“If I had a dollar for every student who has said that to me, I would be a millionaire,” Zoucha notes. “That tells me they got it, that it is meaningful for them.”

Since arriving at Duquesne nearly 30 years ago, Zoucha has systematically woven culturally congruent care into the fabric of nursing education.

RECOGNITION AND IMPACT

Zoucha’s dedication has earned him numerous prestigious honors, including the Cameos of Caring Nurse Educator Award (2025), induction as a Fellow of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing (2025), the Daisy Award for Extraordinary Nursing Faculty (2023), the *Pittsburgh Magazine* Excellence in Academia Award (2020) and induction as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing (2014), a Fellow in the Transcultural Nursing Society Scholars (2004) and a Fellow in the European Transcultural Nursing Association (2025). And he held the Joseph A. Lauritis, C.S.Sp., Endowed Chair in Teaching and Technology from 2015-2020.

His scholarly contributions include numerous peer-reviewed publications, book chapters and presentations, all focused on transcultural nursing. He has served as president of the Transcultural Nursing Society and currently chairs the scholars’ selection committee while serving as senior editor for the *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*.



From left to right: Dr. Jess Devido (faculty), PhD graduates Drs. Monica Gola (Canada), John Collins (Michigan), Grace Tadzong-Awasum (Cameroon) and Griselle Batista (Texas), and Dr. Rick Zoucha (faculty). The graduates all focused their research on cultural care and continue to advance scholarship in this field.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

What makes Zoucha's approach so compelling is how seamlessly his personal and professional lives align. He has traveled to at least 50 countries across six continents. But this isn't mere tourism — it's research, education and personal enrichment rolled into one.

"When I travel, I do public transportation, I do what the people do," he explains. "I want to understand what they do. That brings both my wife and me so much joy and balance. If I did not do that, I would probably not be as happy."

This authentic curiosity about other cultures translates directly into his teaching. He begins his transcultural nursing classes with a simple question: "Who in here has a culture?" Often, only a few hands go up. "People think culture means cultural other — someone who is different than me — but we do not always see that we all have a culture. Every single person, every single human person has a culture. It is my hope that my students recognize that and take it with them into their practice."

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As he looks ahead, Zoucha dreams of establishing a center for community and global engagement within the School of Nursing. "It would be a way to give some validity to the work we do by naming it, by having a center," he explains. He also jokes about his lottery ticket dream: creating an endowed chair in transcultural nursing.

But perhaps his greatest accomplishment is the culture of caring he has helped foster at Duquesne. "We have a reputation on campus as being a good school," he notes. "It is a place where people wouldn't mind being. People have come to us from other departments. I think we have created a culture of caring in our school."

THE CONTINUING JOURNEY

At almost 30 years and counting at Duquesne, Zoucha shows no signs of slowing down. His calendar includes upcoming conferences and presentations in Dallas, Texas, Portland, Washington, Italy and Montreal. His commitment to transcultural nursing serves as both "a beacon of light and hope" and "a moral compass in difficult political times."

"The lens of transcultural nursing has offered opportunities for mutual benefits for those I interact with and the possibilities to grow and change for all involved," he reflects. "I hope my professional and personal merge so that I am seen as the same person regardless of my environmental context."

For Zoucha, the message is clear: In a world of many cultures, there is one shared humanity — and nursing is the bridge that connects us all. Through his teaching, research and global adventures, he continues to prepare the next generation of nurses to provide culturally congruent care with compassion, understanding and respect.

As he puts it, borrowing from the transcultural nursing emblem: "Many cultures, one world." 🌐

AMERICA NEEDS A LOT MORE NURSES THAN WE'RE EDUCATING

BY DEAN AND PROFESSOR MARY ELLEN SMITH GLASGOW, PHD, RN, ANEF, FNAP, FAAN



Imagine that nearly every seat in Pittsburgh's PPG Paints Arena — over 20,000 seats — is empty. This is how many additional nurses Pennsylvania needs now to maintain medical care at a minimal level.

Hospitals in the state report an average of a 14% vacancy rate for registered nurses. In rural areas, the vacancy rate is even higher. That shortage puts further pressure on an already very strained workforce. This is bad for nurses, and what's bad for nurses is bad for patients.

THE PROBLEM

COVID undoubtedly made worse the nursing shortage that had persisted for years, yet nurse leaders — supported by modest grant funding — had begun to turn things around to avert catastrophe. Now, recent cuts to the federal budget threaten to undo that fragile progress, putting the profession at risk of sliding backward at a time when stability is critical.

The nursing shortage in the U.S. is anticipated to persist until 2030, driven by multiple factors: nurses leaving the workforce, lack of faculty, an aging population and growing health care demand.

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 100,000 registered nurses (RNs) left the workforce due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than 600,000 RNs nationwide are expected to retire by 2027.

Faculty shortages will worsen the crisis, with up to one-third of nursing faculty projected to retire in the next few years — making it impossible to educate aspiring nurses. The majority of nursing faculty already earn less than their colleagues in practice and other academic disciplines, further complicating recruitment and retention.

A LOST SOLUTION

One solution has been Workforce Development Grants under Title VIII. These Nursing Workforce Development Programs — part of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) — support every aspect of nursing demand, from education and practice to recruitment and retention.

Funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act strengthened these programs to ensure strong pathways into nursing and access to quality care for patients nationwide.

Sadly, the HRSA Nursing Workforce and Nurse Faculty Loan Programs have either expired or been eliminated. To make matters worse, proposed Department of Education changes will cap student loans for nursing students, making it even harder — sometimes nearly unattainable — for individuals to pursue advanced degrees and become nurses or faculty members.

The nursing profession has been like a critically ill patient for many years. Just as we were beginning to see some indications of future stabilization, the federal government has chosen to remove the life-sustaining measures that we so greatly needed.

A POSSIBLE FUTURE

What does this mean?

The public's health and welfare will be at risk due to the growing shortage of nurses and nursing faculty. America needs a highly educated nursing workforce, and will need even more highly educated nurses as science and technology advance.

Without the system of federal grants and loans that has sustained nursing education for many years, we will not educate enough nurses and nursing faculty to meet the needs of the population we serve. Without them, a nurse may not be there in your or your family's time of need. 🌐

Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow's letter to the editor was originally published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Dec. 9, 2025.



DUQUESNE NURSING STUDENTS SHOWCASE COMMUNITY SERVICE VALUES

“AT DUQUESNE, SERVICE IS A CORNERSTONE OF OUR NURSING EDUCATION,” SAYS DR. KATE DELUCA, SCHOOL OF NURSING ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENT AND ALUMNI AFFAIRS. “WE HAVE A VERY ACTIVE STUDENT BODY. OUR STUDENTS DON’T WAIT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE UNTIL AFTER GRADUATION; THEY ENGAGE, SERVE AND LEAD IN THE COMMUNITY FROM THE BEGINNING.”



“You can put it on your résumé, and that’s great, but it goes so far beyond that personal aspect. It’s inspiring to be part of the broader community ... You share perspectives, support each other, and learn to care for mental and emotional health, too.”



What sets Duquesne nursing students apart isn’t just their didactic and clinical knowledge — it’s their heart for service, their courage to lead and their drive to make a lasting impact on their community.

For nursing students at Duquesne, this commitment to service is more than words — it’s woven into daily life. Each year, faculty, staff and students give back through countless hours of volunteer work, student leadership and community engagement. These experiences don’t come from a textbook, but they are no less essential to a nurse’s education.

For students, opportunities to serve are everywhere: representing classmates, leading initiatives or volunteering through one of the University’s 300 student organizations. Beyond résumé building, these experiences deepen connections to peers, the University and the wider community.

“You can put it on your résumé, and that’s great, but it goes so far beyond that personal aspect,” says rising senior and class representative Dylan Aviles. “It’s inspiring to be part of the broader community. You share perspectives, support each other, and learn to care for

mental and emotional health, too. And if you’re going into a profession built on helping people, why not start now?”

STUDENT LEADERS IN ACTION

This year, Aviles serves as one of six student representatives, a role that annually serves as a bridge between students and faculty. They organize volunteer opportunities, show new students around campus and plan events like graduation.

“I figured it was a good opportunity to put myself out there,” Aviles says. “I don’t want to just talk to people in my program. I enjoy building that sense of community.”

That commitment extends beyond his role as class representative. Aviles recently volunteered through the Health Professions Society, making wound care packages for people experiencing homelessness — an experience that reflects his broader vision for nursing.

Looking ahead, Aviles plans to move to Philadelphia to pursue a career in pediatric emergency medicine. “I want to continue to support the community in any way I can,” he says.

Rising senior Sophia Maida found that same sense of belonging through Alpha Tau Delta (ATD), the professional nursing fraternity.

“When I first joined freshman year, I didn’t feel like I belonged anywhere,” she says. “But with ATD, you meet people older and younger than you. Even just walking to class or grabbing coffee, you see people you know. It makes campus feel like home.”

Now president of ATD, Maida helps lead a group of more than 200 students. The fraternity balances service – from fundraisers for the American Heart Association to collection drives for at-need mothers – with community-building social events.

“So many freshmen and sophomores don’t have their footing yet,” Maida says. “ATD gives them a place to belong. That can really make or break your educational experience.”

Looking ahead, Maida hopes to work as a labor and delivery nurse and eventually return to school to earn her master’s degree so she can teach. She plans to stay involved with the organizations that have shaped her experience and values at Duquesne.

ATD also partners with the Duquesne University Student Nurses’ Association (DUSNA), which focuses on both local and national service. Each year, members join nursing students from across the country at the National Student Nurses’ Association conference, drafting resolutions to address pressing public health issues.

“We’re always looking for people who want to write resolutions, build leadership experience or just be part of the community,” says rising senior and DUSNA president Brianna Kotek. “This is a safe space for nursing students to come if they want to meet people, get help with studying or even just talk on a rough day.”



Sophia Maida

BALANCING ACT

With the demands of nursing school, time is the biggest obstacle to getting involved. But students say the rewards outweigh the challenges.

“Finding time to balance everything is important,” Aviles says. “If you prioritize giving back, you just make it work.”

Maida agrees. “It is hard to balance school, friendships and involvement. But once you find your people with common goals and values, it actually lowers stress. You feel more comfortable and supported.”

For her, involvement has also built confidence. “I’ve spoken in front of 200 people and organized meetings. It was scary at first, but it opened so many doors. If I hadn’t done this, I would have regretted it.”

BUILT DIFFERENT

That commitment to service is one of the reasons employers consistently remark that Duquesne nurses are “built different” – critical thinkers who also lead with empathy and compassion.

“DUSNA didn’t just bring me friends; it gave me leadership and communication skills,” Kotek says. “These are skills I’ll carry into my professional life – how to form a community from a diverse group of people, and how to learn from others.”

For Kotek, service is also personal. “When I was young, my grandparents were in the hospital, and I saw how the nurses gave back to them. It was beautiful. Now, it’s important for me to do the same. It gives me such joy to make a difference in someone’s life.”

Looking ahead, Kotek has accepted a position as a graduate nurse on the neuro-trauma unit at UPMC Presbyterian. She plans to remain involved as a DUSNA alumna and hopes to return to campus to share her experiences as a new nurse.

As these students prepare to enter the nursing profession, the service experiences that shaped their college years will continue to guide their practice. The leadership skills Maida developed while organizing ATD events, the community-building abilities Kotek honed through DUSNA and Aviles’ commitment to bridging different groups together will make each of them stronger nurses who carry a deep understanding of community, leadership and advocacy. They will be the compassionate leaders that the health care field so desperately needs today. 🌐



Brianna Kotek

BECOMING THE NURSE SHE WAS MEANT TO BE



For Julia Ciotti, RN, BSN, Duquesne University has always felt like home.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2021 and returned to Duquesne to complete her Master of Science in Nursing Education in 2025. What began as a promising academic journey evolved into something deeper – a path defined by purpose, mentorship and meaningful impact.

“I remember walking down Academic Walk on my first visit, and a priest stopped to talk with me and my mom. He offered a blessing over my future nursing career,” Ciotti recalls. “That moment gave me peace – I knew I was meant to be here.”

After completing her BSN, Ciotti built a strong foundation as a registered nurse in women’s health and pediatrics, working in postpartum, nursery and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) settings. She currently practices as a registered nurse at Washington Health System. Her favorite aspects of nursing – educating new parents and mentoring young nurses – flourished through her roles as a unit leader and preceptor.

Inspired by her clinical experience, Ciotti returned to Duquesne to pursue a Master of Science in Nursing Education. Her decision was shaped by her positive undergraduate experience and a desire to pursue larger goals centered on shaping the next generation of nurses.

A graduate of the Faculty Role track, Ciotti now serves as an adjunct clinical faculty member in the Duquesne University School of Nursing, guiding students in the same

clinical environments where she once trained. Her passion for teaching is driven by the deep respect she holds for her Duquesne nursing professors who believed in her potential and helped her grow both personally and professionally.

“Their selflessness and dedication helped me develop my own professional confidence,” she says. “I want to do the same for future students.”

Though the program was fully online, Ciotti emphasizes that it was far from isolating. “My professors fostered a sense of community and connection by holding occasional synchronous meetings,” she says. “While I was not in a physical classroom with my peers and instructors, I never felt alone.”

Throughout her time at Duquesne, Ciotti remained actively engaged in service and leadership. As an undergraduate student, she served as a nursing student ambassador, held leadership roles in multiple honor societies and was president of the Duquesne University Student Nurses’ Association. Later she continued giving back through service on the School of Nursing Alumni Association and the Dean’s Advisory Board.

Her clinical background revealed both the responsibility and privilege of nursing. “My commitment to nursing education has enabled me to succeed as a nurse and make a positive impact on patients and families,” Ciotti says.

As graduation approached in 2025, Ciotti felt prepared to launch a meaningful career that bridges clinical experience with academic influence. “The nursing faculty shortage – which perpetuates the broader nursing shortage – further fueled my desire to pursue an MSN,” she says. “I’m excited to foster a spirit of lifelong learning in my future students.”

For those considering their next step in nursing, Ciotti believes Duquesne offers a transformative experience that shapes both skilled clinicians and compassionate caregivers.

“I would encourage anyone applying to Duquesne to take a leap of faith and commit to the University,” she says. “The opportunities you will encounter are endless. You will be supported wholeheartedly. Your peers, mentors and professors will stand beside you every step of the way as you become the nurse you were meant to be.” 🌐



ALUMNI PROFILE
KAYLA WRIGHT

SOARING BEYOND LIMITS: KAYLA WRIGHT'S LIFESAVING JOURNEY FROM DUQUESNE TO THE SKIES

FOR KAYLA WRIGHT, RN, BSN, CFRN, CCRN-CMC, TCRN, NURSING ISN'T JUST A PROFESSION — IT'S A PROFOUND CALLING. INSPIRED BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES THAT REVEALED THE POWER OF SKILLED, COMPASSIONATE CARE, WRIGHT'S JOURNEY HAS TAKEN HER FROM THE CLASSROOMS OF DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY TO THE TRAUMA FLOORS OF HOSPITALS, AND ULTIMATELY, TO THE SKIES AS A FLIGHT NURSE.

In a world where every second counts, Kayla Wright is the kind of nurse who runs toward crisis — not away from it. Whether she's thousands of feet in the air as a flight nurse with HealthNet Aeromedical Services, at the bedside in Charleston Area Medical Center's Surgical Trauma ICU in West Virginia or supporting a disaster response organization through a nonprofit she helped launch, Wright exemplifies what it means to lead with heart, resilience and purpose.

"I was blessed with incredible opportunities during my education and have loved expanding my nursing roles over the last 10 years," Wright says.

Her current schedule — balancing full-time flight nursing, part-time ICU work, teaching trauma courses and serving as secretary for Appalachian Angels — might sound impossible. But for Wright, it is all part of a mission that started long before her white coat days.

FINDING HER PATH

From a young age, Wright felt a natural inclination toward helping others. But it was not until her teenage years — after witnessing a childhood friend suffer through two separate, unfortunate accidents — that her purpose became clear. Witnessing the impact of the care those



Kayla Wright in action with the Jaws of Life during extrication training.

nurses provided was life-changing. Wright knew then: She would become one of them.

Choosing where to study was the next step. For Wright, Duquesne University offered the perfect blend of rigorous academics and global perspective.

"I chose Duquesne because of its diverse nursing program," she says. "I was able to obtain a minor in African studies, join global health initiatives, participate in medical service trips and volunteer in local communities — all while building lifelong relationships."

Each of her Duquesne experiences shaped her nursing identity with a strong foundation in empathy, cultural awareness and clinical excellence.

A defining moment of her undergraduate journey came through the prestigious Vira I. Heinz (VIH) Program for Women in Global Leadership. Through the program, she traveled to Accra, Ghana, to provide HIV/AIDS education and testing in surrounding rural areas.

"Combining my studies with real-world experience was life-changing," she reflects. Upon returning, she conducted a literature review on nontraditional education methods in underserved communities, research that earned her the Duquesne University School of Nursing Undergraduate Research Award and a presentation slot at the National Student Nurses Association Annual Conference.

She credits her professors' mentorship for these milestones. Wright graduated with a Bachelor of Science in nursing, a minor in African studies and a portfolio of experiences that laid the foundation for the nurse — and leader — she is today.

"If I had to describe my time at Duquesne in one word, it would be 'unique,'" she says. "I studied abroad, conducted research, built friendships — and became the nurse I was meant to be."

FROM TRAUMA FLOORS TO AIR RESCUE

Wright launched her career on a high-acuity trauma floor at UPMC Presbyterian in Pittsburgh. From there, she advanced to trauma step-down care and then the Surgical Trauma ICU in West Virginia — where her passion for critical care truly took root.

After years of sharpening her skills in high-pressure environments, she joined HealthNet Aeromedical Services as a certified flight registered nurse, part of a specialized crew that responds to scene calls and interfacility transports requiring ICU-level care.

"To become a flight nurse, you need at least three to five years of ICU or ED experience," says Wright. "After that, extensive training and certifications are required because we care for any patient of any age with any diagnosis. We are essentially a mobile ICU and ED."

Beyond initial training, flight nurses undergo quarterly competencies, annual survival training and regular quality reviews. "We have significant autonomy and perform interventions that go far beyond bedside care," Wright says. "With skills such as intubating, advanced airway management, ventilator strategies and performing

"If I had to describe my time at Duquesne in one word, it would be 'unique.' I studied abroad, conducted research, built friendships — and became the nurse I was meant to be."



The Surgical Trauma ICU (STICU) team shows their support for Appalachian Angels. Whether working locally or abroad, Appalachian Angels relies on a wide network of supporters. Pictured is Charleston Area Medical Center's STICU team, which played a critical role in the response to Hurricane Helene.

invasive procedures, you have to stay open to continual improvement to thrive in a high-stakes environment.”

According to Wright, a typical shift is 24 hours. “We arrive at base ready to fly by preparing ourselves, the crew, the aircraft, medications, supplies and blood. From there, we can be anywhere for the next 24 hours. Whether it is a local scene call such as a STEMI, CVA, trauma or an interfacility transfer to a higher level of care, we are ready to respond. During downtime, it is important to rest, stay hydrated and eat well. There are some shifts you fly for the whole 24 hours, and some where you have time to study, train and complete mandatory education.”

Wright is proud to be part of a program deeply committed to advancing transport medicine. “Medical leadership has driven tremendous improvements for our patients. For example, we can now perform bilateral finger thoracotomy and pericardiocentesis on patients in traumatic arrest. These time-sensitive interventions can save lives at the scene of a trauma or during transport. In 2025, a HealthNet crew was the first in West Virginia to achieve ROSC following bilateral finger thoracotomy in the field.”

The hardest part, she says, is delivering care in high-stress environments, thousands of feet in the air. “While caring for the patient, you are also handling radio traffic, monitoring the landing zone, maintaining aircraft safety

and reacting in real time with limited information.”

Still, what inspires her is the challenge. “There is always so much to learn,” she says. “Even after a decade in nursing, I still encounter new scenarios and rare cases every day.”

HEALING WITHOUT BORDERS

Service has always been central to Wright’s journey – and her heart for humanitarian work extends far beyond the hospital or helicopter. In 2024, she joined Appalachian Angels, a nonprofit offering medical support to underserved and disaster-stricken communities worldwide.

Her first mission took her to Munnar, India, where the team coordinated with local hospitals and outreach workers to run mobile clinics and distribute food, hygiene kits and medical equipment.

“One moment I will never forget: delivering an electronic wheelchair to a young man with muscular dystrophy,” she recalls. “He was his family’s sole provider, and now he can travel through his community and continue caring for them.”

That experience demonstrated just how powerful health care can be – not just in treatment, but in restoring dignity.

When Hurricane Helene devastated parts of North



“Though my main roles have been in acute care, I have always made it a point to stay engaged, whether it is volunteering with the National Park Service, teaching trauma courses or responding to disasters. Nursing is a skillset that serves in every environment.”

Carolina in 2024, Wright and her husband traveled to Asheville to assess medical needs. Partnering with Helene Rebuild Collaborative, she quickly became a liaison between agencies, helping coordinate supply deliveries and disaster relief. Overwhelmed by the challenges being faced, Wright alerted her team in Charleston to the urgent needs of the local communities, including over 100 displaced veterans in desperate need of basic necessities. Within days, the Appalachian Angels team mobilized.

“The response was incredible,” Wright says. “The Appalachian Angels jumped in, acquiring everything the veterans needed and going above and beyond. They even delivered a glucometer that had been lost in the flooding, along with medical supplies to local agencies.”

She credits the incredible response of Helene Rebuild Collaborative and the unwavering support of HealthNet Aeromedical Services. “As tragic as it was, it was beautiful to witness the unity of everyone coming together,” she says. “It showed me how deeply nurses can impact communities, not just in hospitals, but in humanity.”

The experience opened her eyes to the realities of disaster relief. Despite years of learning, training and reading about disaster management, it wasn’t until she found herself in the heart of the crisis that she fully grasped its intensity. “The exhaustion came so fast, with time blurring together under the amount of work to do,” she says.

What kept her most grounded was seeing the good, looking for the helpers and focusing on the unshakable adaptability of nurses. “No matter the circumstance, we always find a way to help. Nursing has opened my eyes to how drastically our worlds can change in a single moment. I live my life and treat others as if I could lose them any day, leaving no feelings or words left unsaid.”

FROM STRONG ROOTS TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Wright says her time at Duquesne sparked her lifelong passion for community service and immersion.

“Though my main roles have been in acute care, I

have always made it a point to stay engaged, whether it is volunteering with the National Park Service, teaching trauma courses or responding to disasters,” she says. “Nursing is a skillset that serves in every environment.”

While proud of her growth and accomplishments, what she values most is being someone her patients can trust. “There is no greater feeling than watching fear give way to relief and knowing someone feels safe in your care,” Wright says. “I am proud to be part of the most trusted profession – and to use that trust to make a difference.”

That same spirit drives her to mentor the next generation. “I always tell new nurses two things,” she says. “Firstly, it’s OK to have a bit of manageable fear. Having fear means you care about your patients, realize what a significant impact you have, and it shows you are not complacent. Secondly, never be afraid to ask a question and know that no question is a stupid question. Patient safety supersedes ego. The right people are always learning and know that it is impossible to know everything in medicine. They will lift you up and learn with you.”

Wright is now pursuing a Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice at the University of Charleston, having been accepted into the fall 2025 cohort. More than any title or credential, she says she is driven by one thing: “Being the person my patients can trust.”

Whether responding to emergencies by helicopter, mentoring new nurses or coordinating disaster relief, her work is a reminder that nursing is not just a profession – it is a promise.

From Ghana to the U.S., from classroom to crisis zone, Wright lives out Duquesne’s mission to serve diverse communities and uplift humanity at its most vulnerable. Her journey proves that nursing, when rooted in purpose, can rise to meet any challenge – and inspire others to do the same. 🌍



TEARING DOWN BARRIERS TO BETTER HEALTH

WITH A PASSION FOR PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY CARE, PROFESSOR MELANIE TURK, PHD, RN, FTNS, IS WORKING TO MAKE LIFE-CHANGING HEALTH PROGRAMS MORE ACCESSIBLE NATIONWIDE.

For Professor Melanie Turk, nursing has always been about more than bedside care. What has drawn her most deeply to the profession is its power to strengthen communities. That passion for prevention and health promotion has become the cornerstone of her teaching. And now, it has become the driving force behind her latest research.

For the past two years, the Duquesne School of Nursing professor has been conducting a study on how to expand access to preventive health care, focusing specifically on a Medicare-sponsored curriculum designed for older adults at risk for diabetes.

The concept works. The outcomes are promising. Yet the challenge, Turk says, is that too few people even know the program exists.

“Preventing diabetes is huge; there are so many comorbidities and health problems associated with being diabetic,” she explains. “If we can make a difference at a population level with this program, it would be hugely beneficial to older adults everywhere.”

A PROGRAM WORTH KNOWING

Turk’s study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, zeroes in on the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP). Since 2018, the MDPP has offered eligible adults a year-long course on exercise, nutrition and sustainable lifestyle changes.

The program has shown it can make a real difference. In fact, Turk has found that this type of intervention helped participants increase physical activity, lose weight and improve overall health. But despite its promise, it remains largely under the radar.

“People just don’t know about it,” Turk says. “Health care providers do not know where to refer people, and sometimes they do not even know the program exists.”

The numbers are staggering. Nearly 27 million older adults in the United States have prediabetes, yet since the MDPP launched, only about 9,000 people have taken part.

“We’re trying to do a deep dive and figure out if there are things we can target to really get people to participate,

to get more programs going around the country and to get health care providers on board with what is going on,” explains Turk.

BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Why so few? Turk’s research points to the hurdles.

While Medicare covers the program, it is governed by both the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since the CDC provides recognition to the program, it also has a say in how it is run. The layers of regulation make it complicated for organizations to host courses, even when they are eager to participate.

Community groups like YMCAs must also navigate tricky reimbursement processes. And with limited sites offering the program, access becomes a problem of

“THERE’S REALLY SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT DUQUESNE. IT IS NOT JUST RESEARCH-CENTERED OR STUDENT-CENTERED. IT IS COMMUNITY-CENTERED. THAT PERSPECTIVE HAS MADE MY WORK SO MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL.”

geography as much as awareness. “And while the MDPP is free for participants,” explains Turk, “the internal billing process has been difficult and problematic for many hosts.”

These complications have in large part led to a dearth of participating venues, another stone responsible for the ripple effect of low participation.

“I’ve heard people say, ‘I would love to do this. Where is the nearest program?’ And the answer is sometimes two hours away,” Turk says. “No one is going to drive four hours round trip for that.”

UNLOCKING THE DOOR

Still, Turk remains optimistic because she has seen programs like this succeed. Several years ago, she led a similar 12-week initiative through Aetna that helped its more than 120 enrolled older adults improve mobility, eat more fruits and vegetables, and take more daily steps.

In many ways, this previous study helped open the door to Turk’s current work. But this time, she notes, there are higher stakes — and a ticking clock.

“This is the first disease prevention program Medicare has ever covered,” she says. “It is critical to show that it works, and that people are willing and able to participate.

That is what will keep it funded long term.”

As of now, Medicare has embraced the program, but Turk says it continues to be funded on a provisional basis. The government entity supported the MDPP on the strength of the savings it found with participants, who subsequently needed less-frequent medical procedures, medication interventions and trips to the doctor. But the initiative is not yet part of the permanent budget, which raises the stakes for Turk’s work and makes it all the more important to solve the problems surrounding its viability.

“It just seems like such a shame that Medicare is covering this, but there are not enough programs available and we cannot get enough people in the door,” she says. “If we can reach people before they get sick, it really does make such a difference.”

A SHARED COMMITMENT

Turk’s study will continue throughout 2026. By then, she hopes to have gathered enough evidence to create a policy brief for Medicare officials and possibly expand the project to a national scale.

Meanwhile, she is already making an impact closer to home. Since 2021, Turk has helped expand outreach by collaborating with Duquesne’s School of Pharmacy to deliver a virtual diabetes prevention program across the Pittsburgh region, with a special focus on underserved communities. She also collaborates with Duquesne’s School of Pharmacy to expand outreach and education.

“I think it is really important to meet people where they are, and to go to them when administering health care,” she continues. “It is much more rewarding because you’re in their place, and, at the same time, you have to develop the rapport and the trust for them to welcome you into their community.”

That spirit of service, which is meeting people where they are and removing barriers to care, is something Turk says has been shaped profoundly by her 16 years at Duquesne.

“There’s really something special about Duquesne,” she reflects. “It is not just research-centered or student-centered. It is community-centered. That perspective has made my work so much more meaningful.

For Turk, tearing down barriers to better health is not just a research project. It is a calling. And through her work, Duquesne’s mission of serving others continues to ripple outward — one program, one community and one life at a time. 🌐

THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT: ALUMNI DONATE TIME TO HELP INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF NURSING



Duquesne's School of Nursing was founded on the ideal of giving back. From the beginning, the mission has been simple but profound: serve God by serving students, so they may, in turn, serve others — building a healthier, more compassionate world, one patient and one community at a time.

That mission doesn't end at graduation. In many ways, it becomes even more powerful as alumni step into their careers and carry Duquesne's values into hospitals, clinics and communities across the country. And for some, those footsteps eventually circle back home — when giving back takes on a new and deeply personal meaning.

There are a number of ways alumni can — and have — shown up for their alma mater, but one of the most impactful ways alumni give back is through precepting. While mentoring the next generation of nurses may not come with fanfare, it may be one of the most valuable gifts alumni can offer—time, experience and guidance at the very moment students need it most.

Many graduate nursing programs at Duquesne require students to complete clinical hours under the supervision of a preceptor. With enrollment on the rise, the need for more alumni to step into this role has never been greater. And while it can be admittedly hard to find enough preceptors for the job, and the responsibility can sound daunting, those who take it on describe it as not just manageable but deeply rewarding — for both student and preceptor alike.

WHAT IT MEANS TO GIVE

Molly Garver, BSN, RN, CCRN, a master's student in the Family Nurse Practitioner track, currently works in the cardiac ICU at UPMC Children's Hospital of

Pittsburgh. Last summer, she was paired with alumna Dr. Justine Sicari, DNP, FNP-C, MSNed, RN, for her clinical hours at Allegheny Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh.

Garver found the shift from bedside nursing to a new specialty overwhelming at first.

"I had no idea what to expect," Garver recalls. "You're nervous. You're in this new environment, working with patients you do not really know. There are a lot of fine details you have to deal with that just do not show up in your experience as a bedside nurse."

With Sicari's encouragement and guidance, Garver quickly found her footing.

"She definitely helped me feel more comfortable, encouraged me to ask questions and really supported my learning," she says. "Dr. Sicari is so knowledgeable and shared not only clinical skills, but also how to communicate with patients and physicians, and how to find your flow as a nurse practitioner."

That support, Garver says, made the difference between uncertainty and confidence. "I obviously got a great education in undergrad, but so much of what I do, even as a bedside nurse, I learned at work," Garver says. "It's helpful to be able to learn hands-on in this way — it makes a world of difference."

"My goal as I move forward in my career as a nurse practitioner is to provide the highest quality of care while ensuring that every interaction reflects dignity, humility and respect," she says. "I'm still exploring where I'll ultimately focus, but I'm committed to growing into a well-rounded, compassionate clinician. Each new rotation helps me deepen my interests, strengthen patient relationships and continue learning so I can meet the

diverse needs of individuals and communities throughout Pittsburgh."

Learning under the guidance of a preceptor is not just a good way to ascend the nursing ladder. For some students, it's an opportunity to explore a whole new realm of care. For alumna and forensic nurse Jessica Dick, MSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, precepting offers something equally powerful: the chance to expand access to a field she loves.

"I would not be where I am today if I did not have mentorship throughout my career," says Dick, who works as a preceptor in Arlington, Va., and holds the position of associate director of nursing and forensic nurse examiner for DC Forensic Nurse Examiners in Washington, D.C. "In my specialty especially, forensic nursing, it can be so difficult to find preceptors."

Small and specialized as her field is, Dick is abundantly passionate about what she does, which makes the chance to grow the field, and teach others through precepting, even more important.

"For me, teaching is something that fills my cup," she says. "I love sharing what I do, and if I can contribute to the future of nursing while furthering the field, that feels so important."

"IT IS REWARDING FOR US, AS EXPERTS IN OUR FIELDS, TO GIVE BACK AND PREPARE STUDENTS TO DO A GOOD JOB."

WHAT IT TAKES TO GIVE

Time is the most common concern that holds nurses back from precepting. But according to Sicari, who has mentored Duquesne students for five years, it's easier to manage than it seems.

"When I have a student in a clinic, it can feel like a lot," she admits. "But it just comes down to staying organized. I'm going to be at work seeing patients anyway. Mentoring just becomes another part of my day."

She's also learned through her experience how to balance her duties as an outpatient pulmonary nurse practitioner and mentor and keep things moving. Even challenging clinic days, she notes, provide meaningful lessons for students.

"I have been in situations that maybe do not feel like the best learning environment," she says. "If it is a hectic day, I still make sure they're learning something, whether that's clinical knowledge or how to navigate the realities of practice."

Sicari shares that she holds space to connect with students to ensure they are gaining the skills and knowledge that they need. "And," she notes, "I have some things in my back pocket that I can offer them if the day gets kind of congested."

But what really energizes her through preceptorship experiences, Sicari says, is not just the passion for what she does, but passion about the future of nursing as a whole.

"It is rewarding for us, as experts in our fields, to give back and prepare students to do a good job. Who knows? They may be taking care of you or your family someday. We want a health care system that is compassionate, knowledgeable and capable of providing quality care. That starts with how we educate and mentor our future nurses."

FULL CIRCLE

Precepting isn't just about checking boxes or clocking hours. It's about giving a student what every nurse remembers needing most: someone who believes in them, pushes them and shows them what's possible.

For Duquesne alumni, it often feels like coming full circle. The same doors once opened for them — doors that led to confidence, purpose and a calling — can now be opened for the next nurse in line.

"Each of us is here because someone took the time to mentor us," says Dick. "Eventually, it becomes our turn."

That is the heart of Duquesne's mission — preparing nurses who serve, who lead and who give back. Each time an alumna or alumnus steps forward as a preceptor, that mission carries forward in the most personal way: by shaping the future of nursing, one student at a time.

And that may be the most precious gift of all.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

For Duquesne graduate nursing students, working with a preceptor is required. But finding enough preceptors to meet the need is an ongoing challenge.

Preceptors are especially needed in the following graduate programs:

- Family Nurse Practitioner
- Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
- Forensic Nursing
- Nursing Education and Faculty Role

Anyone interested in serving in this meaningful role can contact Leigh Anne Rethage at 412-396-1481 or rethage@duq.edu.

As Dick reminds us: "None of us got our first job without a preceptor. Every step in a nurse's career depends on someone willing to teach, to guide and to believe in us. Would any of us have the career we have today if it was not for the people taking us under their wings?" 🌐

RANKINGS, RECOGNITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Alumna Lois Marie Wygonik Honored with Duquesne's Highest Alumni Distinction



Lois Marie Wygonik, RN, CRNA, NP, ARNP (N'74), was recently inducted into the Century Club of Distinguished Duquesne University Alumni, the highest non-academic honor the University bestows upon its graduates.

With a nursing career spanning more than five decades, Wygonik has devoted her life to advancing patient care, anesthesia education and the nursing profession. Her journey began at Butler County Memorial Hospital, where she earned her degree in 1960. She went on to complete her Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) training at Allegheny Valley Hospital in 1962 and fulfilled her dream of working in the operating room.

"I always wanted to work in the OR, and I did," she recalls. "There was one surgeon no one wanted to work with because he yelled at everyone — but somehow, we always got along fine."

It was during that time that this perceptive surgeon noticed something was wrong. After encouraging her to undergo further testing, doctors discovered a brain tumor. Wygonik spent nearly six months recovering in the hospital after having surgery, facing what many thought would be insurmountable challenges.

"They were surprised I was still living," she says. "I couldn't walk or move my arms."

Wygonik determined that it was safer for her to get more education and read out of a book than to return to direct patient care.

Determined to continue contributing to the field she loved, Wygonik earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Duquesne University in 1974. Turning adversity into inspiration, she went on to spend more than 50 years working in nursing and anesthesia, including years spent as an educator, before retiring in 2017 at the age of 75.

Wygonik began teaching anesthesia to students at Allegheny Valley Hospital in 1983 and later served as Professor Emeritus at Winter Haven Hospital in Florida. A longtime member of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), she also served as co-chairman of *Tidings*, the organization's bimonthly magazine, and later chaired the AANA Public Relations Committee. Her leadership helped elevate awareness of the CRNA profession through national initiatives, including a commemorative postal stamp marking the 50th anniversary of the credential.

Today, Wygonik continues to embody the compassionate and resilient spirit of Duquesne nurses. The Duquesne community proudly celebrates her induction into the Century Club and her lifelong commitment to service, education and excellence in nursing. 🌐

Celebrating Our Distinguished Nursing Alumni



Jayna Mocerì Brooks,
PhD, RN



Maribeth McLaughlin,
RN, BSN, MPM

Duquesne University School of Nursing proudly celebrates **Jayna Mocerì Brooks, PhD, RN (GN'15)**, and **Maribeth McLaughlin, RN, BSN, MPM (N'85)**, who were recently named Fellows of the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN) as part of the academy's 2025 Class of New Fellows.

Induction into the academy—one of the most prestigious honors in nursing—recognizes significant contributions to health, health care and nursing leadership. Brooks and McLaughlin were formally inducted at the academy's annual Health Policy Conference, held in October 2025 in Washington, D.C. 🌐



Dr. Chris Baker, clinical assistant professor, passed the NLN Certified Nurse Educator Certification Exam.



Dr. Grace Campbell, assistant professor, received an NIH SBIR subcontract from the University of Pittsburgh for the development and evaluation of the PPAL Bedside Commode.



Dr. Laura Crimm, clinical assistant professor and director of the Family (Individual Across the Lifespan) Nurse Practitioner Program, passed the National League for Nursing Certified Nurse Educator Certification Exam.



Dr. Kate DeLuca, associate dean for Student and Alumni Affairs, was awarded \$89,866 through the HRSA Nurse Faculty Loan Program.



Dr. Jessica Devido, associate professor, received a 2025 Duquesne University Eugene P. Beard Presidential Prize for Innovation and Distinction Award for Leveraging a Menstrual Cycle App to Develop a Standardized Method for Collecting Menstrual Health Data: A Community-Engaged Pilot Study. She was also selected as a 2026-2027 Duquesne Bridges to Health Faculty Fellow.



Dr. Deborah Dillon, clinical associate professor and director of the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program, joined the Angels of Allegheny Nurses Honor Guard. She also received a 2025 Duquesne University Eugene P. Beard Presidential Prize for Innovation and Distinction Award for The Art of Communication and the Culture of Safety in Healthcare: A University Interdisciplinary Collaborative — A Mock Paging Simulation.



Dr. Ruth Foreman, clinical associate professor, published two articles in *The Nurse Practitioner Journal*: "Understanding the Correlative Relationship Between Obesity and Alzheimer's Disease" and "Understanding Disabilities: Prevalence, Health Disparities and Pathways to Improvement."



Dr. Ergie Inocian, clinical assistant professor, was awarded the Presidential Faculty Summer Writing Award to support research on the palliative care needs of older patients with stroke. He also received a STTI Member Research Award, Epsilon Phi Chapter for his

proposed study, Development and Validation of Sources of Clinical Practice Anxiety Tool for Prelicensure Baccalaureate Nursing Student.



Dr. Ruth Irwin, clinical associate professor, has been selected as the Chair of the TruMerit Registered Nurse Professional Standards Committee (formerly Commission of Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools). She will also serve as a constituent member of the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHHP) for the same term.



Dr. Melissa Kalarchian, professor and associate dean for research, was recognized on the Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientist List; she was co-awarded a \$238,783 NIH/NINDS grant for Materials to Enhance Training in Experimental Rigor; and she co-received a 2025 Duquesne University Eugene P. Beard Presidential Prize for Innovation and Distinction Award for Leveraging a Menstrual Cycle App to Develop a Standardized Method for Collecting Menstrual Health Data: A Community-Engaged Pilot Study.



Dr. Angela Karakachian, assistant professor, received the 2025 Nightingale Award of Pennsylvania in the Nursing Education: Academia category.



Dr. Rebecca Kronk, professor and associate dean for Academic Affairs, received continued funding from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust to support the STAGES II and STAGES+ Theater Programs for youth and young adults with disabilities; she also received a \$794,448 NIH/NHGRI R25 resubmission grant for Genomic Competencies for Nurses from Theory to Application: An Online Long Course.



Dr. Jodi Licata, clinical assistant professor, and colleagues received second prize for their poster presentation, Click, Learn, Clear: Evaluating Virtual Training's Impact on BSN Students' Biomedical Proficiency — A Pilot Study, at the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates Conference.



Dr. Denise Lucas, clinical associate professor and chair of Advanced Practice Programs, passed the National League for Nursing Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) Certification Exam, demonstrating her competency in the nurse faculty role.

RANKINGS, RECOGNITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



Dr. Lauren Narbey, assistant professor, has been selected as a 2026-2027 Bridges to Health (B2H) Faculty Fellow in the Duquesne University Center for Integrative Health.



Dr. Michael Neft, clinical professor/director of Nurse Anesthesia Studies and Scholarly Projects, was appointed to the American Academy of Nursing Fellows Selection Committee.



Dr. James Schreiber, professor, was recognized on the Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientist List.



Dr. L. Kathleen Sekula, professor and Noble J. Dick Endowed Chair in Academic Leadership, received a \$50,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to support training for pediatric sexual assault nurses.



Dr. Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow, professor and dean, was elected to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Board of Directors and was reappointed to the Board of Directors of UPMC Presbyterian Hospital and UPMC Shadyside Hospital.



Dr. Torrie Snyder, assistant professor and undergraduate programs chair, received a \$1,663,134 HRSA NWD grant to support success for second-degree BSN students and was also accepted as a fellow in the Vanderbilt University Academy for Diverse Emerging Nurse Leaders.



Dr. Mai-Ly Steers, assistant professor, co-published a journal article, "Qualitative Analysis of How U.S. College Students Construct Their Alcohol-Related Content Identities via Social Media," in *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*.



Dr. Theresa Stujenske, assistant professor, along with nursing colleagues, received a 2025 Duquesne University Eugene P. Beard Presidential Prize for Innovation and Distinction Award for Leveraging a Menstrual Cycle App to Develop a Standardized Method for Collecting Menstrual Health Data: A Community-Engaged Pilot Study.



Dr. Melanie Turk, professor, was recognized with a University of Pittsburgh 2025 Cameos of Caring Award. In addition, she secured a grant to study multi-stakeholder determinants of Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program, and she also received an NIH R01 subcontract with Denver Health and Hospital Authority to enhance enrollment in the National Diabetes Prevention Program for underserved populations.



Dr. Yvonne Wiedeman, clinical associate professor and director of the BME/BSN Program, and colleagues received second prize for their poster presentation, Click, Learn, Clear: Evaluating Virtual Training's Impact on BSN Students' Biomedical Proficiency — A Pilot Study, at the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates Conference.



Susan Williams, assistant dean for Clinical Skills and Simulation Education, instructor and simulated participant coordinator, and colleagues received second prize for their poster presentation, Click, Learn, Clear: Evaluating Virtual Training's Impact on BSN Students' Biomedical Proficiency — A Pilot Study, at the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates Conference.



Dr. Rick Zoucha, professor, chair of Advanced Role and PhD Program, and director of Nursing Education, was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing. He was also recognized with a University of Pittsburgh 2025 Cameos of Caring Award.

Duquesne University School of Nursing Earns NLN Nursing Center of Excellence Designation

The School of Nursing has been recognized as a National League for Nursing (NLN) Center of Excellence in Nursing Education for 2025 — a national distinction placing Duquesne University among an elite group of 21 nursing programs across the United States. It also marks the nursing school's fifth designation since 2008.

Duquesne University is one of just 12 institutions recognized in the "Enhancing Student Learning and Professional Development" category, affirming the nursing school's dedication to preparing nursing professionals who always think bigger, and whose ingenuity is driven by compassion and empathy.

"This fifth Center of Excellence designation from the National League for Nursing, which coincided with the School of Nursing celebrating its 96.36% first-time NCLEX-RN pass rate for the 2024-2025 academic year,

reflects the continued strengths of our programs and the dedication of our amazing faculty and students," says Duquesne Nursing Dean Dr. Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow.

These accolades support the Duquesne University School of Nursing as a national model and leader for top-ranked interdisciplinary and interprofessional programs that offer rigorous academic work, hands-on training and a strong emphasis on ethical values.

"We have all heard, 'It takes a village,'" says Dr. Beverly Malone, NLN president and chief executive officer. "Nowhere is that truer than in the shared vision and values, mutual support, respect and inclusivity among faculty, leadership and students that must come together for an extraordinary nursing program to be nationally recognized for their innovation and commitment in becoming an NLN Center of Excellence." 🌐

Alumni – Honored With NLN Lilian Wald Humanitarian Award

Irene Crabtree Felsman, DNP, MPH, RN, C-GH (GN'15), received the National League for Nursing Lilian Wald Humanitarian Award. Felsman has dedicated her career to improving health and access to care for women and children worldwide through culturally aligned interventions. Her work spans Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the U.S., with recent initiatives including training Latino community health workers and using storytelling as a psychosocial and advocacy tool for resettled refugees. 🌐

Student Recognitions

Ariana Miller – Forensic Nursing

Under the mentorship of Dr. Kimberly Kasper, co-authored the manuscript "The Evolution of DNA and Its Impact on Sexual Assault Case Prosecution," published in the *Journal of the Academy of Forensic Nursing*.

Maggie Blake – DNP Student

Awarded a DAISY Health Equity Grant for her quality improvement initiative utilizing HELP to reduce delirium, improve patient outcomes and provide age-friendly care for patients 65 years and older with two delirium risk factors. Mentored by Dr. Laura Crimm.

April Morris – PhD Student

Co-authored the article "Qualitative Analysis of How U.S. College Students Construct Their Alcohol-Related Content Identities via Social Media," published in *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*. Collaborators include Dr. Mai-Ly Steers, clinical PhD student Mackenzie Farbo and clinical psychology PhD alumnus Dr. Pavan Brar. 🌐

Noteworthy 2024-2025 School of Nursing Highlights



The School of Nursing received COA accreditation for its new Doctor of Nursing Practice in Nurse Anesthesia program, which welcomed its first class of 32 students in fall 2025.



Between summer 2024 and spring 2025, the Office of Technology proctored more than 20,000 ExamSoft and 2,800 HESI exams.



All three nurse practitioner programs — Family Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatric Mental Health Practitioner and Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner — achieved a 100% pass rate among recent graduates.

DR. MARY ELLEN SMITH GLASGOW RE-APPOINTED DEAN OF NURSING

“Dean (Mary Ellen Smith) Glasgow has elevated Duquesne and firmly positioned it as a leader in nursing education,” says Duquesne University President Ken Gormley.

Glasgow, who has served as dean of the School of Nursing since July 2012, has grown the school’s overall enrollment steadily over the last several years despite a decline in student interest post-pandemic that is only now recovering.

Under Glasgow’s leadership, Duquesne nursing students have achieved the highest NCLEX-RN scores in school history, and research and scholarship have significantly increased. In 2025 the school’s Masters in

Nursing Education program was ranked the No.1 program in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*, with many of its other graduate programs ranked in the top 40 nationally. Glasgow led the development of the nation’s first dual undergraduate Biomedical Engineering and Nursing Program, started Duquesne’s PhD program in Nursing Ethics and was instrumental in securing significant recent philanthropic support for enhanced facilities for the school.

“I am thankful and honored to have been reappointed dean,” Glasgow says. “Our faculty do an incredible job educating nurses to the highest professional standards and commit themselves to the needs of our field and our community.”



“I am thankful and honored to have been reappointed dean of the School of Nursing and to be able to continue advocating for nursing education and student success.”

In Memoriam:

Ruth Spindell Rubenstein, N’47 A life of compassion, curiosity and service

A proud Duquesne graduate and member of the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps, Ruth Spindell Rubenstein, RN, BSN (N’47), dedicated her life to advancing care for others.

Born in the Bronx in 1927, she came to Pittsburgh in 1944 to begin her nursing training at Duquesne University. She began her nursing career at Welfare Island Hospital in New York City, caring for soldiers returning from the South Pacific following World War II.

Her commitment to service extended well beyond the bedside. She later traveled to Africa to study health care through an NYU graduate program and consulted with Carnegie Mellon University on its pioneering robotics program designed to support older adults.

Her career and life embodied the compassionate, giving spirit that defines the nursing profession – one rooted in a desire to heal, serve and make a difference wherever care is needed.

Rubenstein passed away peacefully on May 26, 2025, at the age of 98. Her legacy of compassion and lifelong dedication to others continues to inspire the next generation of Duquesne nurses.



96.36%

2024-2025 first-time NCLEX pass rate

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKINGS

#4

MSN Nursing Education Program Online

#5

MSN Nursing Administration and Leadership Program Online

#8

MSN Family Nurse Practitioner Program Online

#14

Graduate Programs for Veterans

#36

Nursing Master’s Degree

#44

Online Graduate Program

#74

BSN Program

#78

DNP Program

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#5

Online MSN Program in the United States

NURSING SCHOOLS ALMANAC 2024

#8

Overall in the Mid-Atlantic Region

#22

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