Finding Joy
Seeking meaning, purpose and inspiration

The Many Paths of Nursing:
How to find your niche and advance your education
COVER STORY

4 Reimagining Rural Healthcare: KCON students gain hands-on rural healthcare experience with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Medicine Lodge. About the Cover: Ali Saheb, DNP, NP-C ('17), finds joy in serving members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians at a health and fitness expo held at the Strongheart Center in Peshawbestown, MI.

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To view the digital publication visit gvsu.edu/kcon
The Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation is an endowed center in the Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON). Each year, the center hosts the Distinguished Wesorick Lectureship. On March 21, 2018, Dr. Vic Strecher was the distinguished lecturer. He is a public health researcher, entrepreneur and a professor at the University of Michigan. In 2010, his life spiraled down when his daughter Julia died at the age of 19. Having had her heart destroyed by a chicken pox virus at age 6 months, followed by a heart transplant, Julia had lived a life of health challenges. However, despite physical limitations, she had lived a full life and was enrolled in the University of Michigan School of Nursing. Unexpectedly during a family vacation in the Caribbean, she died of a heart attack in her sleep. Since Julia’s first diagnosis, Vic’s purpose in life had been to give Julia a big life, for however long it might last. With her passing, Vic lost his own purpose.

The impact of Vic’s story is profound. More profound is his ultimate story of transformation. Before he could pull himself out of a pit of complete despair, he had to rediscover meaning in his life. This led him to what has become his life’s work — research into both philosophy and science to embrace the transformative power of “purpose.” With confidence, he shares that living life with purpose is the key to improving energy, willpower, health and long-term happiness.

As the dean, this message came at a time in my leadership journey when I had increasing awareness of the need to address a pervasive problem in healthcare — one that impacts our students, faculty and staff.

Colleagues in practice were reporting similar concerns. With increasing demands on time, resources and energy; a frantic pace of daily work; and fear from workplace violence, many are experiencing burnout at high rates. Burnout manifests as a loss of joy, disengagement, decreased personal satisfaction and depression. Further, patient safety and quality
of care are affected by a lack of meaning and joy in work. The problem is significant enough to warrant attention by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). Long driven by the Triple Aim (enhancing patient experience, improving population health and reducing costs), the IHI has added a fourth aim to improve the work life of health care providers, including clinicians and staff. A white paper, *IHI Framework for Improving Joy in Work*, has been released and widely distributed.

As the saying goes, sometimes “the stars align.” And indeed, as I heard the message of meaning and purpose from Vic and applied it to the challenge of burnout and lack of joy, my mission became clear. As we contemplated the development of the KCON 2019 publication of *ASPIRE*, it was a natural choice to find stories from alumni and friends who have found and sustained their joy within the many career paths of nursing. Stories consistently have impact, and it is the impact that teaches all of us. In this edition of *ASPIRE*, we hope you find inspiration and are reminded that true meaning and purpose can come from doing work that matters — making for a joy-filled life.

A common thread across the stories is the “intention of choosing” joy. In my personal journey to sustain meaning, purpose and joy in my life and work, I have been greatly influenced by the writings of Viktor Frankl, a prisoner at Auschwitz and a Holocaust survivor. In his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, he wrote, “everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstance, to choose one’s own way.” As we in healthcare collectively work on the “fourth aim” — to improve the work life of health care providers — we will do well to remember we each have individual responsibility for our actions, we are self-determining, and we can choose JOY in pursuit of a purposeful life.

*Cynthia McCurren, PhD, RN, FNAP*  
Dean and Professor  
Kirkhof College of Nursing
Imagine managing day-to-day health issues, acute injuries and chronic diseases when the nearest health care provider is 50 miles away and reliable transportation is scarce.

While this is the case in thousands of rural communities across the United States, the Grand Traverse Band of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Medicine Lodge is working to ensure rural residents in Michigan’s northwestern region have consistent and reliable access to high-quality care in their own community.

As national leaders in nursing education, Grand Valley State University’s (GVSU) Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) prepares students for many paths within nursing, including rural health. In 2015, they began partnering with the Medicine Lodge to help educate the next generation of nursing leaders on ways to better serve rural communities and address some of their greatest challenges.

“The growing affiliation between the Medicine Lodge and the Kirkhof College of Nursing has created a thriving learning experience for both the students and our health care providers,” said Ruth Bussey, health and wellness director at the Medicine Lodge.

Serving the tribal community

The Medicine Lodge, which today services a six-county region in the northwestern part of Michigan’s lower peninsula, first opened its doors in 1980. The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians had just been re-recognized by the federal government after over a century of broken treaties. Through a contract with the Indian Health Service (IHS), the tribe established a small clinic and began providing primary medical care to tribe members.

But in 1996, the tribe decided they needed to expand these health care resources. They developed a planning and development team to design a new health care facility that could meet the diverse health needs of the community — a one-stop health care destination that would address primary and preventative health care, alongside behavioral health, substance abuse services, human services and more.

In total, the Medicine Lodge sees around 2,000 regional members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. Without facilities like these, tribe members would have to travel significant distances to seek primary or specialized care, wait for traveling clinics to come into town or pay expensive copays at offices that don’t accept the IHS, a health insurance program offered to Native Americans by the federal government.

“We cover a big service area and sometimes people live many hours away,” said Ali Saheb, DNP, NP-C, a KCON Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) alumnus and a current supervisor for the Community Health Representative Program (CHR) at the Medicine Lodge. “Having this resource is very helpful for the patients and great for the community.”

But for Saheb and his colleagues, it’s about much more than simply being present in the region — it’s also about engaging with the community to ensure everyone can access preventive care and lead a healthy life. Health care professionals from the Medicine Lodge make house calls to check in on high-risk patients, travel to area clinics to provide condition-specific services, visit patients in the hospital and assist with hospice service.

They also provide programs promoting healthy lifestyles. Four days a week, the Medicine Lodge provides heart-healthy, diabetic-friendly lunches to tribe elders. They partner with area organizations to offer cooking and gardening classes for families and are part of the Leelanau County Opioid Task Force, a region-wide effort to end the nationwide trend of opioid addictions and deaths.

Reimagining Rural Healthcare

KCON students gain hands-on rural healthcare experience with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Medicine Lodge.
These community engagement efforts not only promote positive health care outcomes for community members but cultivate trust between health care providers and their patients. “The Native American population is very cultural, very spiritual, very family based,” Saheb said. “So, it’s very important to have health care providers who understand the culture.”

Providing culturally-sensitive care

The Medicine Lodge’s dedication to the tribal community doesn’t stop with their patients — nearly 90 percent of the Medicine Lodge staff are tribe members themselves. This community integration and trust is especially important when it comes to the integration of modern health care and traditional healing practices.

The Medicine Lodge invites a traditional healer to see patients once a month. Providers work with the healer to ensure patients can practice time-honored traditions alongside current health care regimens safely—an extraordinary experience for visiting KCON students.

“Learning at the Medicine Lodge is an incredible opportunity for our students,” said Cynthia McCurren, dean and professor at KCON. “They experience the blending of culture with quality care, learn about the challenges patients face in rural areas, and see firsthand how health care can and should expand beyond the obvious to become a part of the community. It is a transformative experience our students bring back to KCON to share with fellow students. We are grateful for this growing affiliation.”

Facing unparalleled challenges in rural healthcare

“The hardest part about rural care is accessing it,” Saheb said.

Distance, lack of reliable transportation and a growing shortage of health care professionals in rural areas put these patients at a higher risk for health care complications.

“When you don’t have access to preventative care, you end up seeking tertiary care,” Saheb said. Waiting until minor symptoms become major medical emergencies not only costs more healthcare dollars but results in poorer health outcomes for patients.

Leelanau County, where the Medicine Lodge is located, has one of the highest populations of senior citizens in the state of Michigan. Thirty-eight percent of residents are
over the age of 65. Oftentimes, these senior citizens are managing more than one chronic illness like diabetes, hypertension and arthritis — all of which require consistent, specialized, preventative care.

“If we can catch something prior to it becoming a big problem, then that is always the best bet, as opposed to having to treat it after it has already erupted,” Saheb said.

An eye-opening experience

For KCON students of all levels, working at the Medicine Lodge provides a unique experience in a sometimes overlooked area of healthcare. Oftentimes, when students think about fast-paced, life-saving careers, they think only of hospitals and acute care settings.

On the contrary, Bussey hopes students walk away from their time at the Medicine Lodge with a greater understanding of the richness these experiences provide to both health care professionals and the tribal community.

“I think it’s beneficial for the students to work with our providers to see what kind of care we can give people to make them better, maintain their health and save lives in some cases,” she said.

Educating tomorrow’s leaders

The partnership between the Medicine Lodge and KCON transforms the lives and careers of the students who serve there. But students also leave their lasting mark on the clinicians, staff and patients.

“I think it’s been beneficial for our staff because they’ve been able to teach,” Bussey said. “They’re very open to having the students come here on site to learn. It’s been a really positive experience.”

Many of KCON’s DNP students choose to come to the Medicine Lodge to complete their clinical rotations and capstone projects.

Health care providers at the clinic work with DNP students to address some of the most pressing issues facing healthcare administration today — how to continue providing community health services in a world of budget cuts and dwindling resources.

These experiences not only launch DNP students into their careers as leaders in healthcare but also help providers like the Medicine Lodge expand health care services and optimize resources to better meet the needs of the community.

“We honor our patients as individuals with respect, kindness and state-of-the-art care. The most important thing to me is that we serve Grand Traverse Band members and other federally recognized tribal members in the best capacity we can. The Medicine Lodge has made a difference in their lives and they’re able to live a healthier lifestyle because of all of the services that have been put in place.”


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Because while the Medicine Lodge and KCON work each day to transform rural healthcare in the region, they never lose sight of the grateful tribe members they serve and the generations they’re impacting.

“We look forward to continuing this relationship with KCON and to discovering new ways to serve our patients with the very best in health care,” Bussey said.

\section*{Unlocking the Potential of a DNP}

Ali Saheb, DNP, NP-C, a 2017 Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) alumnus and a current supervisor for the Community Health Representative Program (CHR) at the Medicine Lodge, understands the need for rural healthcare access all too well. He grew up in Grand Marais, Michigan, a small town in Michigan’s upper peninsula.

“The closest stoplight was 30 miles away,” he recalled.

In his hometown, the options for addressing a health care concern were limited: deal with your symptoms, drive more than an hour away to a health clinic during business hours or drive more than two hours away to the emergency room.

“Growing up in that area, I understand what the challenges are,” he said. “I chose this field because I wanted to be able to do something about it.”

Today, Saheb and his colleagues at the Medicine Lodge work with DNP students to address the growing pressures facing healthcare today and provide the students with a once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity. As a former DNP student himself, Saheb understands the unique skill set these students develop in local, state and national healthcare leadership. Currently, he’s working with a KCON DNP student to build a sustainable business model for community health resources facing drastic budget cuts. Saheb sees great promise in this student and their work.

“I’m very excited to really dig in to this project and show what DNPs can do,” he said.

Through the Medicine Lodge’s affiliation with KCON, Saheb is not only able to help educate the next generation of rural healthcare leaders, but share his passion for providing accessible, high-quality, culturally-competent care to the clinic’s patients.

“Where I find joy truly is keeping people healthy,” Saheb said. “Keeping them not only physically healthy but helping them understand how to stay holistically healthy. These are things that keep me coming back every day.”

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For Deborah Bambini, PhD, WHNP-BC, CNE, CHSE, ANEF, it’s all about the “Aha!” moments. As professor and simulation coordinator for Grand Valley’s Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON), Bambini has the joy of helping nursing students get their first taste of hands-on patient care. But, she also revels in “Aha!” moments of her own. Bambini has devoted the last 13 years of her life to studying simulation technology and researching how these vital tools can turn curious students into bold nurses.

Simulation allows students to be the nurse making the decisions

KCON students working toward their baccalaureate degrees are required to complete several clinical courses in real health care settings. They shadow preceptors, care for patients and get a chance to interface with the day-to-day clinical world. However, for patient safety reasons, students are not allowed to be completely independent.

“It’s like learning to ride a bike with training wheels,” Bambini said. “You always have that preceptor over your shoulder who you know is going to stop you from doing anything terrible.”

But, in Grand Valley State University’s (GVSU) state-of-the-art simulation lab, these students put their textbook knowledge to the test all on their own. They interact with a combination of high-tech mannequins — whose vital signs can be customized to fit a specific simulation scenario — and standardized patients, who are community members trained to showcase a certain set of symptoms. Bambini and other KCON professors observe and take note of the students’ patient care skills and critical thinking approach.

“Simulation is their one time to really be the nurse,” Bambini said.

In an evolving healthcare landscape, where patients are much sicker and care frequently occurs outside of hospital settings, today’s nurses need to be ready to jump into the role of expert caretaker and critical thinker right away.

In the simulation lab, they have that chance.

“Everything hangs on whatever decisions they make,” Bambini said. Students practice realistic scenarios, make decisions about patient care, observe the outcomes of those decisions and learn from their mistakes — all in a safe educational environment.

Anna Banister, a recent graduate from KCON’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, said simulation was one of the most valuable parts of her education at KCON.

“Although it often put me in difficult situations, I always walked away having learned something important that I can use in my nursing career,” she said.

That’s music to Bambini’s ears.

“If I can get them to discover it for themselves, it’s a much stronger learning experience,” Bambini said.

Researching best practices

“The research on simulation and best ways to do things has just exploded in the past 10 years,” Bambini said.

Prior to the mid-2000s, simulation was used to coach students through high-stakes situations, such as cardiac arrest. Bambini was
curious about how this new technology could help her students develop “soft skills,” like communication and teamwork. When she was invited to conferences on simulation technology around 2005, she jumped at the opportunity.

There, she met simulation experts from around the country and partnered with them to write, develop and direct simulation scenarios at GVSU in a range of specialties.

In addition to publishing best practices for educators, her published research suggests simulation technology is a key factor to building good communication skills, confidence and clinical judgment in nursing students. Through collaboration with regional medical programs, Bambini has also shown that simulation can teach students how to work collaboratively on interprofessional teams. These invaluable, formative experiences are key indicators of how a student will perform in their first-time job.

Today, Bambini is known as a leader in the national field of simulation technology. Her next research aim is to study how simulation can be used to create standardized competency assessments for nursing programs.

“Empowering nurses

As nursing colleges across the nation have been called to transform their curricula to meet the evolving demands of today’s healthcare field, advancements in simulation practices are key to educating the next generation of nurses.

“In my first semester, I could never have handled the patient acuity that I took on in my final semester,” Bannister said. “Although I still have much to learn and room to grow, I can see definite milestones in my nursing care skills and critical thinking.”

As KCON looks to expand the application of simulation across its degree programs, the need for dedicated leaders like Bambini became evident. In response, Bambini was named KCON’s coordinator of simulation for academic excellence. Alongside the administrative team, she has identified specific strategies to advance simulation, innovation and excellence in education for KCON students.

But her work is spreading beyond GVSU and even beyond the world of academia. In 2017, Mercy Health Muskegon reached out to KCON for help in expanding their own simulation practices with evidence-based approaches. Bambini developed a four-hour simulation workshop focused on the importance of debriefing, evidence and patient needs.

“Understanding their goals was instrumental to developing meaningful and formative simulated experiences for learners,” said Bambini. “Nurses focus on patient care and health outcomes, and the evidence must always be our guide.”

She has continued consulting with the Western Michigan health care system to provide opportunities for nurses at any level to continue benefiting from simulation education.

While Bambini loves to discover the unfolding potential of new technologies and pedagogies like simulation, her greatest joy is empowering future nurses.

“I love when they really get it,” she said. “When they discover something about themselves, or they figure out a patient puzzle. When they can say ‘That was really cool’ or ‘Yeah, that makes sense.’ I love that.”
Balanced Consideration
KCON launches holistic admissions

In the Fall 2018 semester, the Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) implemented a brand new admissions process designed to transform the long-held perception of a successful nursing student.

**More than a GPA**
Holistic review, a nationwide strategy in nursing admissions, aims to strengthen and diversify the nursing workforce by assessing potential students through a more flexible and individualized lens — their academic record, attributes and experiences.

One goal of a holistic process is the assembly of a diverse student body — diverse not only in race, ethnicity and gender, but also in experience, socioeconomic status and perspective. A key tenet of holistic review is the recognition that a diverse learning environment benefits all students and provides teaching and learning opportunities that more homogenous environments do not.

“There is a lot more to nursing education and a successful nursing career than grades,” said Kristin Norton, MA, director of KCON’s Office of Student Services and chair of the holistic admissions task force at KCON. “A student’s life experiences and what has gotten them to where they are today are equally important.”

While KCON’s previous admissions process focused mostly on academic performance, holistic admissions will give balanced consideration to four different areas: academic record, a personal statement, an in-person interview and a student profile about the applicant’s work and volunteer experiences, languages spoken and other attributes they think would make them a successful nurse. The new process is designed to allow each student ample opportunity to share their achievements with the admissions team.

**Holistic admissions at KCON**
The holistic admissions task force put the measure before KCON’s Faculty Organization Committee (FOC) in April 2018, and it passed with wide support. But for more than two years before that point, the task force researched the admissions strategy, investigated current literature and learned from the experts like Julie Zerwic, PhD, RN, FAHA, FAAN, a national leader and consultant on holistic admissions.

The task force also spent months forging new partnerships with organizations and individuals in the community.

**Community partnerships**
“For far too long our colleges and universities have relied heavily on empirical benchmarks to identify students capable of entry into nursing programs,” said Shannon Wilson, executive director of the Grand Rapids African American Health Institute. “By implementing a holistic admissions process, students will now be evaluated based upon their complete body of work — giving opportunity to students who have gifts, talents and experiences in addition to their academics that will help them become outstanding practitioners. We are proud to support the implementation of holistic admissions at KCON.”

As the process unfolds, community leaders like Wilson play an important role in interviewing potential students and determining if the full range of their experiences will contribute to a successful career as a nurse and open doors to greater diversity in the nursing workforce — achieving better health outcomes for the diverse populations the nurses will one day serve.

“One of the most profound things that we learned in this process is the importance of involving members of the community who appreciate the need for inclusion and equity in nursing education,” Norton said.

**Looking forward**
This January, as KCON welcomes their very first class of students admitted through the holistic review process, the task force will remain hard at work evaluating and perfecting the new systems.

“Everyone on this task force — really, within the entire college — recognizes we will need to assess, reassess and adjust the process as we go,” Norton said. “We feel very good about what’s in place and how it’s going to roll out, but we also know that we will continually look at ways to improve it.”
KCON faculty and students navigate wayfinding research

For many, navigating a new city, a multi-level shopping mall or an expansive hospital is all about following existing signs and establishing memorable landmarks. But, for older populations who struggle with memory disorders, wayfinding — how we navigate from one place to another — can be an insurmountable challenge.

“It’s something most people take for granted,” said Rebecca Davis, PhD, RN, a professor at the Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) who specializes in gerontology and wayfinding research. “But in people that are older, and especially those that have Alzheimer’s disease or other memory problems, they can have problems with wayfinding. And what happens when they can’t find their way? They can get lost.”

Expanding life spaces

With the tidal wave of aging baby boomers who now frequent hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care communities — places where even young people and staff can get lost — it’s more crucial than ever to find effective ways to help people easily navigate through spaces.

“You can imagine being 85 years old with a walker and trying to find your way somewhere,” Davis said. “If you weren’t sure of where to go, you might not even take that chance.”

Ensuring a high quality of life for this population relies on enabling independence. One of Davis’ key research aims is to study individuals’ life spaces, or how far from their room they travel on a given day. When individuals in a long-term care facility feel empowered to travel by themselves, will they engage with their communities and find a greater quality of life?

“What we hope is that our work will give some scientific evidence so that environments are designed better so people can be more independent,” she said.

Research in action

To help find practical wayfinding solutions, Davis enlisted the help of virtual reality, a team of ambitious KCON student research assistants and a project coordinator.

In 2012, the National Institute of Health (NIH) awarded Davis and her team a grant to fund wayfinding research. They developed a virtual reality simulation that tested an individual’s ability to travel around a continuing care facility and whether or not colorful and familiar cues helped improve navigation.

Participants wore eye-tracking glasses and maneuvered a joystick to guide their virtual self through long, winding hallways to their destination. The glasses tracked where the participants looked while trying to find their way. Davis’ team then collected the eye-tracking and wayfinding data to see which cues participants looked to the most to find their way.

The results showed a promising association between colorful and familiar cues and improved navigation.

In May 2018, Davis was awarded a $2.2 million NIH grant to fund a large randomized controlled trial to test the efficacy of visual cues, signage and spaced-retrieval education in real long-term care communities.

Teaching the next generation

In addition to their robust biomedical studies in the KCON program, the students who work with Davis benefit from hands-on research experience and a unique repertoire of critical thinking skills.

“In nursing, you’re always looking for how to help people with their various health problems,” Davis said. “Getting lost, this symptom in Alzheimer’s disease, is another thing that we can help people with. And so the students learn how, from the very beginning, to build and test interventions to help patients.”

In August 2018, Davis was named interim associate dean for research and scholarship, a role that will enable her to strengthen the ties between research opportunities and academics for KCON students and faculty.

Research is and always will be thrilling for Davis. But her true joy throughout her nursing journey is teaching the next generation.

“One of the things I like about research is working with the students, especially more on a one-on-one relationship,” she said. “The students on my projects are with me for years, so we get to form a lasting relationship.”

Through those relationships, her students have an opportunity to witness the intersection of scientific research and compassionate care.

“Dr. Davis has been an outstanding mentor for me over the past three years I have worked with her,” said Sarah Moll, a KCON graduate and former research assistant to Dr. Davis. “The one thing that stands out to me is that she always puts people first. She taught me so much about what it means to care for other people with compassion and to always seek understanding. Working with her was nothing short of extraordinary because the work she is doing is going to change lives.”

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“In nursing, you’re always looking for how to help people with their various health problems... Getting lost, this symptom in Alzheimer’s disease, is another thing that we can help people with. And so the students learn how, from the very beginning, to build and test interventions to help patients.”
How to find your niche and advance your education

Today, there are between 3 million and 4 million nurses working in the United States — and counting. As the largest segment of the American health care workforce, nurses are on the front lines of health care delivery across every specialty.

“I don’t think many people realize the breadth of the nursing profession and the many ways nurses contribute,” said Cynthia McCurren, PhD, RN, FNAP, dean and professor at Grand Valley’s Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON). “The nurse is at the point of care, not only for the patient but for their families. Nurses pull the members of the health care team together.”

In response to the changing needs of our nation, health care delivery is migrating from acute care facilities into community-based settings, such as patients’ homes, extended care facilities, hospice and palliative care facilities and through community health resources. This new model of care requires a shift in the traditional thinking about health care team roles and modes of care delivery as well as innovative problem-solving for today’s toughest healthcare challenges — areas where nurses are already at the forefront.

For McCurren, continuing this innovation will require a steady stream of nurses with a “fire in the belly,” a true passion and drive to make an impact on the world of healthcare. As a nurse who has filled varying roles throughout her career, McCurren has some advice for those looking to find their niche in nursing and suggests steps they can take to get there.
Know your options

There are hundreds of unique positions available for nurses across all avenues of healthcare — from the traditional acute care delivered in hospitals, to primary care in community-based settings, to teaching and administration and beyond.

But despite the seemingly endless career opportunities, society tends to see nurses as fitting into one mold — working primarily in hospital settings, in the background of the health care team.

Sometimes, nurses themselves can even fall into this thinking. “Sometimes nurses have a very narrow view of where they can take their careers,” McCurren said. Their perspective may be limited to positions they shadowed during nursing school, or the nursing path a friend or family member followed.

“It’s really making yourself aware of the possibilities and then exposing yourself to them,” she continued.

And these possibilities are growing. The National Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the demand for nurses will increase by 15 percent by 2026. In response, new roles for nurses are growing and evolving each day. The best way for nurses to find out which role will work best for them is to take a much broader view of the profession.

“You don’t know what you don’t know,” McCurren said. “And that’s why it’s really important to explore the possibilities.”
Discover your passion

But even after exploring all of the opportunities available for nurses, finding your path may feel like searching for a needle in a haystack.

For McCurren, it all starts with looking inward.

“I encourage individuals to reflect and contemplate on what brings them joy as they go through initial experiences after graduation,” McCurren said. “What kinds of experiences resonate with them the most?”

Exploring opportunities gives new graduates a fresh perspective and helps them decide which path will best position them to achieve personal and professional goals.

“We’ve been much more conscientious about encouraging nurses to finish their baccalaureate degree and start getting some experience,” she said.

Then it’s time to jump in.

Be intentional

Discovering your passion does not end at simply looking within yourself and being open to new opportunities. Introspection must turn into action.

McCurren encourages young nurses to actively seek out mentors who explored the many paths of nursing. Talk to them, and discover why they became a nurse practitioner, an informatics specialist or a hospice and palliative care nurse, for example.

“Learn from them,” McCurren said. “Take opportunities to shadow. Ask yourself ‘What is the experience like?’ ‘What does a day in the life look like?’ ‘What is the relationship like with the patient?’ ‘Is that something that resonates with who I am?’”

This intentionality does not stop with students or new nurses. McCurren and her colleagues at KCON continuously seek new ways to adapt the curricula and equip students to become the best possible health care professionals.

“Nursing education is changing to include all of the areas where nursing needs to be more effective in caring for individuals,” she said. “And not just looking at acute care settings, but also our roles in school-based care, senior communities, community sites, public health, home care, etc. We need to be much more intentional about helping students understand nurses’ unique roles, even as generalists.”

Advance your education

As generalists, nurses are uniquely equipped to jump into diverse careers across the healthcare field. But oftentimes, in order to hone in on special skills and make a greater impact on individual specialties, nurses find themselves in need of additional certifications or education.

“We encourage our students and alumni to continue their education so they can enhance their skills and knowledge and contribute throughout their careers,” McCurren said.

KCON faculty and administrators work to ensure that each program at the undergraduate, graduate and doctorate levels will prepare any student to tackle the healthcare challenges of today and tomorrow. For example, KCON programs like the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) have curricula specifically designed to advance a nurses’ clinical skills, prepare them for advanced leadership roles and empower them to confidently navigate the healthcare system.

“I think what makes KCON unique is that we’ve been very aware of the skills advanced practice nurses need in order to be impactful and bring about the change needed to transform healthcare,” McCurren said.

McCurren and her colleagues at KCON encourage nurses of any age to pursue higher education opportunities, but they also recognize a traditional graduate degree program may not always work for an individual’s lifestyle or professional goals.

“There are ways to augment what you do as a nurse without getting another degree,” she said.

Nurses can expand their knowledge and grow into their profession through certificate programs and specialized courses. For example, KCON offers a post-baccalaureate interprofessional certificate program for professionals who want to learn more about palliative and hospice care.

“It’s the boost you need to advance your knowledge and enhance the practice where you currently are,” McCurren said. “It’s what your institution needs. It’s what your patients need.”

“I don’t want nurses to get up every day and feel it’s just a job...Because if they don’t go in there with a fire in the belly, a desire to make a difference every day, the drive to work on the problems that keep us from doing the best we can, then they’re not bringing all they can.”

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Find joy

For McCurren, the most crucial step in finding your nursing niche and being an effective healthcare leader is finding out what truly brings you joy.

“I don’t want nurses to get up every day and feel it’s just a job,” McCurren said. “Because if they don’t go in there with a fire in the belly, a desire to make a difference every day, the drive to work on the problems that keep us from doing the best we can, then they’re not bringing all they can.”

While that joy sustains nurse leaders as they transform healthcare, some may find that it changes with each passing phase of their careers.

“My joy has evolved over time,” McCurren said. As a young nurse, she reveled in seeking an intense foundational understanding of healthcare so she could better serve her patients. Today, as an educator and administrator, her joy is transformed.

“I think the joy comes in knowing you can be so connected to another person and make a real difference for them,” she said. “Now I find joy in sharing this with rising professionals, helping them understand the magnitude of what they’re taking on as a nurse and embracing the importance of it.”

Licia Clowtis, PhD, RN
Nurse Scientist, Cleveland Clinic
KCON Alumna - BSN ’98

I mentor clinical nurses through the process of turning an idea into a researchable question, reviewing the literature, designing a study/writing a research proposal, completing the research and disseminating findings. I also complete my own research, speak at conferences and collaborate with other institutions. My work is challenging, interesting and full of unexpected ideas others entrust to my care for development. It is an amazing experience to answer a question and know you have helped uncover something that may actually change patient care!

“Follow your passion! But you have to find it first. Talk to others…and do not ever say never!”

THE MANY PATHS OF NURSING

KCON Alumni Across the Profession

Diane Dahl, PhD, RN
Dean of Nursing and CAPS/GS Health, Medical, and Social Sciences – Bethel University
KCON Alumna - BSN ’82, MSN ’95

I love teaching and impacting students in their formative nursing years. I am involved in curriculum development and revision, program development, assessment and accreditation. My education has prepared me to be able to influence in these areas and my strengths allow me to be effective. Reflecting back through my career, I believe that being willing to serve where and when needed led me to my present role.

“Starting in one area of nursing doesn’t define your entire career. I advise students to be open to wherever they feel they are called to work or serve.”
Julian Dormitzer, MSN, AG-PCNP
Project Director and Interim Biomedical Research Team Manager, The Fenway Institute
KCON Alumna – BSN ’11

Being embedded in a Federally Qualified Community Health Center for the last seven years has shown me the importance of accessible, high-quality primary care. Because of our mission-driven work around LGBT health and HIV care, Fenway has a well-established government relations team working on healthcare policy issues on both the state and federal levels. After gaining more experience in clinical care, I would love to use my leadership and speaking skills to help advance the organization’s policy goals.

“Choose to work in an area you are passionate about…it will make going to work each day much more fulfilling.”

Curt Haaksma, BSN, RN, CFRN, EMT-P I/C Flight Nurse and Nurse Educator
Aero Med Spectrum Health
KCON Alumnus – BSN ’17

I’ve always enjoyed the emergency aspect of healthcare, and this job allows me to work in a role as an emergency responder with the added knowledge and skill set of a registered nurse. In my educator role, I work as a state credentialed instructor coordinator for paramedics. Not all organizations require the paramedic certification to be a flight nurse, but our organization does.

“Be patient. Experience different jobs in our profession and find out what your passion is. Once you find it, put in the education and the time necessary to obtain it.”

Katherine Hoffhines, MSN, RN, CNL
Clinical Nurse Leader, Mercy Health Saint Mary’s
KCON Alumna - MSN ’16

I wanted to make an impact on patients and those who provide care. As a clinical nurse leader, I am standardizing processes, mentoring frontline staff, engaging staff to develop solutions to day-to-day problems, helping break down barriers that prevent staff from providing high-quality patient care, and synthesizing and evaluating patient outcome data and nursing quality indicators to improve optimal patient outcomes.

“Always take time to reflect on how far you have come. How you choose to reflect on your professional journey may look different at various points, but always take the time to do this practice.”

Barbara Hooper, DNP, RN, CHSE, NE-BC
Assistant Professor, KCON
KCON Alumna – MSN ’92, DNP ’12

Personally, it has always been about making a difference. Nursing is not stagnant and can change quite rapidly in the clinical setting. I have the opportunity to teach in simulation, which is an increasingly popular and accepted teaching/learning strategy in nursing education. The ability to practice psychomotor skills and clinical judgment in a safe environment has many advantages. The possibilities are endless, and I find it so exciting.

“First, follow your heart. If you love what you do, you will always be happy. Second, be open to new experiences and do not be afraid to challenge yourself.”
Jennifer Standfest, MSN, RN, NE-BC  
Director of Nursing Practice and Professional Development, Munson Medical Center  
KCON Alumna – MSN ’06

My role involves patient care processes, policies and procedures, as well as a part of nursing education and competency development. I am also the organization’s Magnet Program director and helped to achieve our third Magnet redesignation. I am eager to continue developing leadership in nurses at all levels.

“This includes continuing to add to our residency programs and other frontline leadership programs within the hospital. Being part of an amazing team that is making a difference for patients is exciting.

“Follow your passion, know your goal, but be sure to gather experiences that round out your clinical and leadership skills.”

Andrea Leslie, MSN, RN, NE-BC  
President, Spectrum Health United and Kelsey Hospitals  
KCON Alumna – MSN ’09

My job is to look at healthcare from a large perspective, from a community health perspective, as well as assess the needs of the community and what we should be offering to serve our patients. What’s exciting is to be able to make change and be on the forefront of things, to be innovative and think about how to do things differently.

“My advice for new grads is don’t necessarily have something set in stone. Be open, talk to a lot of people, really get your arms around something and have a love and passion for why you do it.”

Tom Sanchez, DNP, RN, FNP-BC  
Family Nurse Practitioner and Educator, Kabwe General Hospital and Nursing School, Zambia  
KCON Alumnus – MSN ’06, DNP ’14

As a provider in the hospital’s outpatient receiving department and teacher in the attached nursing school, I practice at the top level of our profession and pass knowledge on to students and colleagues who, in turn, pass on that knowledge. Teaching colleagues to develop and enhance their care requires a willingness to see the future good they will do with the tools provided.

“Push yourself outside your comfort zone with as much knowledge and skill as you can carry. You will make a difference in that new place when you have the humility to keep learning.”

Maju Wilhelm, BSN, RN  
Clinical Resource Manager  
Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital  
KCON Alumna – BSN ’15

For the last few years, I was responsible for assessing participants of the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver program to ensure they met requirements and were receiving medication management and health assessments to remain at home or in a community setting instead of a skilled nursing facility. In my new role, I will ensure patients of a rehabilitation hospital are receiving the care they need while adhering to Minimum Data Sheet (MDS) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements.

“It is important to identify gaps in the healthcare system where you can make the greatest impact through sustainable services that are quality, affordable and accessible.”
Christopher Bergmooser, a 2018 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduate, overcame numerous challenges to achieve his dream of becoming a nurse. Through the support of his advisor and his unshakeable determination, Christopher earned his degree and is pursuing his dream of working as an intensive care unit nurse.

ASPIRE talked with Christopher about his life as a nursing student and his vision for his future in nursing.

Q: **WHY DID YOU CHOOSE NURSING?**

A: Originally, I never thought I was going to be a nurse. I was originally dreaming of becoming a physical therapist or a physician assistant. To get experience, I became an EMT and I saw how nurses work in the emergency room. They were kind of running the show. It opened my eyes to the world of what nursing was.

Q: **WHY DID YOU CHOOSE GRAND VALLEY?**

A: I’ve loved Grand Valley since the day I stepped foot on the Allendale campus for my tour. It’s 20 minutes from Grand Rapids and it’s 30 minutes from Lake Michigan, so there are always places to go and things to do.

I love it. If I had to make the decision again, I would still choose Grand Valley.

Q: **WHAT HAS WORKING WITH KCON SENIOR ADVISOR, CASSONYA CARTER, MEANT FOR YOU?**

A: Mama CC, as I call her, has been there through everything. I applied for the program twice. After that first time when I didn’t get in, I went into her office and she had drawn up all of the options for me, including what I could do better next time. She had my back during all of that. She just wanted the best for me and to see that my dreams and my goals were going to be accomplished.

Q: **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDERING NURSING AS A CAREER?**

A: Life is tough. School is tough. The job later on is going to be tough. You’ve got to go through hard times, and if you can’t do it yourself, definitely go talk to someone like your advisor because it’s not going to get easier until you do. You have to have resilience if you want to be as successful as you plan to be.

Q: **IF YOU COULD SHARE ONE IDEA WITH THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

A: My parents always taught me, particularly when I was little, to try to help everyone you can, whenever you can. That’s big, especially in nursing. Just be nice and listen to everyone because everyone’s got a story they have to tell. You can learn a lot from people by just talking to them, but you can also learn a lot by simply listening.

“I am so proud of him... He always checks in. Funny thing, I used to check in on him and now he checks on me.”

— Cassonya Carter
Nestled in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids sits the GVSU Family Health Center, an academic nurse-managed center operated by the Kirkhof College of Nursing. The center provides primary and preventative care for faculty and students at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) as well as members of the community, including vulnerable populations who live in the area.

**Caring for underserved populations**

The center is aligned with the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation recommendations around “education for the care of underserved populations” and serves as an important clinical site for GVSU students in nursing and other health-related disciplines. A large number of people enter the health professions each year, but an insufficient number of health professionals choose to serve in rural and inner-city areas and some of the most vulnerable people in society — racial and ethnic minorities, elderly people, low-income patients and others — are not receiving the care they need. The GVSU Family Health Center aims to provide education and incentives that support and promote care that meets the needs of these underserved populations.

“We are actively working toward a clinical site model that fosters a more robust and hands-on interdisciplinary experience for students,” said Mark Contreras, DNP, RN, NP-C, affiliate clinical faculty at the health center. “Students not only learn about the delivery of quality health care, but also how to address the social determinants of health, like transportation and income barriers, that undeniably contribute to the overall well-being of a patient.”

**Growing partnerships**

The health center staff works primarily with patient populations that may otherwise fall through the cracks of traditional healthcare. Over the next year, a focus on partnerships to establish aging in place services for seniors and with a center for runaway and at-risk youth in Grand Rapids aims to bring primary care services directly to the populations that need them most.

For the center’s practice manager, Tamara Van Kampen, DNP, RN, a new year of growing partnerships provides even greater opportunity to build on the center’s steadfast legacy of quality community care.

“Our ongoing interdisciplinary efforts and progress toward patient-centered medical home status allow us to provide improved outcomes for our patients. This work is incredibly important and rewarding,” Van Kampen said.

The GVSU Family Health Center offers on-campus flu shot clinics each fall. BSN students in their last semester of the program participate in the clinics as part of their immersion clinical hours. By working with nursing faculty and health center staff to administer vaccines and provide education, students help to promote a healthy campus.
Reciprocal Relationships and Shaping Tomorrow’s Healthcare Leaders

Preceptors empower DNP students

There is no question KCON’s focus on co-designing learning experiences with healthcare leaders across the state positions Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students to lead the transformation of healthcare. In combination with foundational coursework, these lived experiences with preceptors can be life-changing for students.

But the students aren’t the only ones who benefit.

“I feel like it’s just a real win-win for our organization,” said Kathy Chapman, DNP, RN, chief clinical officer at Allegan General Hospital. As a preceptor for KCON DNP students, she sees firsthand how the symbiotic relationship between student and preceptor empowers nurses as leaders and enables institutions to provide an even higher level of comprehensive care to their patients.

Beyond the classroom

“There can be a wide chasm between what’s taught in academia and how that actually plays out in the clinical setting,” said Ryan Mallo, FNP, DNP, a family nurse practitioner at Spectrum Health Reed City Hospital and Evart Family Practice.

Though many KCON DNP students already have years of experience working as nurses, the program positions students to look at healthcare through a broader lens. Students think critically about interprofessional collaboration, healthcare policy advocacy, patient-centered care, quality and safety initiatives and the use of informatics. Students select from three tracks: advanced nursing practice as a child/adolescent or adult/older adult nurse practitioner, or health systems leadership.

“It’s kind of a paradigm shift,” Mallo said. “The student is used to being the one that carries out orders. It is now their job as a nurse practitioner to assess that patient at a provider level, diagnose them and develop a plan of care that’s clinically appropriate and evidence-based within guidelines. There’s a little bit of fear and trepidation in these students, but I see them rise to the challenge.”

Working with preceptors not only provides students with mentors, it offers opportunities to take on leadership roles for initiatives that will have lasting benefits within the organizations.

Chapman recently precepted a health systems leadership DNP student who helped a staff member develop training materials for a hospital-wide crisis intervention program — a project that not only benefited the hospital but provided the student with her first taste of healthcare leadership.

“I know this DNP student really helped us get some things done that would have taken us longer to accomplish without her,” Chapman said. “When I see KCON students like her, I see a motivation to succeed and a desire for lifelong learning.”

The teacher becomes the student

“I find that teaching fills up my gas tank and inspires me to do more in my clinic,” said Iris Zink, MSN, RN, ANP-BC, RN-BC, owner and practitioner at Lansing Rheumatology.

“When you have to stop and explain your thinking processes — how you got there — it makes you rethink things,” she said. “It’s great for the patients too because when I’m teaching my students in the room, I’m also teaching the patients.”

Oftentimes, the preceptors even learn something new.

“I feel like interacting with students gives me a cutting edge as a provider,” Mallo said. DNP coursework covers the latest patient-care guidelines — new approaches that preceptors may not have considered before. Students and preceptors have an opportunity to discuss different patient-care methods and find the most clinically appropriate solution.

“I think it provides an opportunity for the institution to take an even more holistic point of view because we’re bringing in fresh ideas and new faces,” Mallo continued.

As DNP students grow throughout their clinical experiences, they can also take a more hands-on role, allowing preceptors more time to concentrate on patient outcomes and initiatives. It is reciprocity at its best.

“Patients need a lot of individual attention and when you’re managing your own practice, that is not always an option,” Zink said. “But the students provide that one-on-one care, which is amazing.”

Zink is confident her KCON students can take on one-on-one patient care because she has seen firsthand their passion for learning, professionalism and sensitivity for all patients.

“The KCON students I have worked with have been far and away the most bright, well-rounded students that I have seen,” she said.

Cultivating compassionate care

KCON’s DNP students find innovative solutions to challenging healthcare problems. They develop clinical, organizational, economic and leadership skills, all in preparation to contribute to lasting healthcare reform.

But there’s one essential attribute of a healthcare leader that can’t be coached — compassion. For Chapman, Zink and Mallo, serving their patients with compassionate, personalized care is their greatest joy in nursing and an attribute they’re proud to help cultivate in the KCON students who walk through their doors.

“The Kirkhof College of Nursing students have not only a desire to improve themselves as professionals, they have a desire to improve the quality of life of those they serve,” Mallo said.

“That excites me as an educator.”

Photo right: Iris Zink and KCON DNP student, Brittany Taylor
“The KCON students I have worked with have been far and away the most bright, well-rounded students that I have seen.”
Long before palliative and hospice care were a part of the national healthcare conversation, Ruthann Brintnall, PhD, AOCN, APRN-BC felt drawn to caring for chronically ill and dying patients. Her more than 35 years as an oncology nurse taught her an important lesson about dying.

“We all die,” she said. “It’s not a question of death, but it’s how we die that makes the difference.”

An alumna and now retired associate professor emerita from Grand Valley’s Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON), Brintnall’s nursing journey sparked a passion in her to equip the next generation of palliative and hospice caregivers to meet the evolving demands of this challenging field.

A special kind of nurse

Palliative and hospice care are two distinct but closely interwoven disciplines.

Palliative care supports patients at any stage of chronic, life-limiting diseases, such as cancer, memory disorders or the lasting effects of a stroke. The goal of palliative care is to keep patients comfortable and improve their quality of life. An interdisciplinary team works to relieve the side effects of the patient’s disease or condition, as well as address the emotional, social, practical and spiritual problems associated with it.

Hospice care includes palliative care, but exclusively supports patients who have fewer than six months to live. Patients on hospice do not receive aggressive treatment but rather are kept comfortable while the natural dying process progresses.

“The idea is to have them die like the queens of England,” Brintnall said.

Like in most specialties, nurses are the most prevalent health care professionals in palliative and hospice care. They require confident clinical judgment, rock-solid emotional stamina and a passion for helping grieving patients and families through some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

“It’s exhausting sometimes and it’s the challenge of telling yourself ‘okay, tomorrow is a new day,’” Brintnall said.

But, Brintnall says, the most tragic circumstances can lead to the most meaningful bonds.

“The most rewarding thing is knowing that you’re making a difference,” she said. “The first time that ever happened to me was when one of my patients said, ‘You know Ruthann, when I hear your shoes coming down the hall, I know I’m going to be okay for another day.’”

The new kids on the block

While health care professionals have been supporting chronically ill and dying patients for centuries, palliative and hospice care were not introduced in the United States until the last century.

“Palliative and hospice care are the new kids on the block in healthcare,” Brintnall said.
Developed in Britain and Canada, they were first introduced to the United States in the 1960s but didn’t become a nationally recognized part of the continuum of care until the 1990s.

Today, the demand for palliative and hospice care nurses has grown exponentially as aging baby boomers with complex health needs fill hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities. As the national nursing community searches for new ways to meet the healthcare industry’s evolving demands, Brintnall and her colleagues are leading the way in palliative and hospice care.

**Equipping the next generation**

When end-of-life care and education research accelerated around 2000, Brintnall, then an associate professor at KCON and a part-time nurse, was invited to be a part of the first End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC), a national program that explored the challenges and dilemmas of end-of-life and palliative care. She brought her knowledge back to Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and developed an undergraduate general education course on death and dying.

But she wanted to do more. Before retiring from GVSU in 2015, Brintnall developed an interprofessional certificate program in palliative and hospice care. The program was designed to help the full interdisciplinary team — nurses, clergy, social workers, grief counselors, etc. — dive deep into the unique skills needed for the field.

The program is offered in a hybrid format — a combination of online and in-seat classes — in Grand Rapids and Traverse City. It walks students through skills such as communicating with families, complex symptom management, grief and ethical challenges surrounding end-of-life care.

The vast majority of hospice care occurs in the patient’s home, a benefit to rural residents who live far away from large health care centers. In response to this trend, Brintnall and her colleagues began offering the interprofessional program in Traverse City starting in 2018, allowing rural palliative and hospice care professionals to access this specialized, high-quality education.

“We want to put healthcare into the places that support people,” she said.

**A lasting legacy**

Brintnall and her husband, Bruce, a retired physician, established an endowed scholarship to support students pursuing the certificate course.

“We feel to whom much is given, much is expected,” Brintnall said. “It’s the way we’ve demonstrated our commitment to what we believe in. This will hopefully help someone who really is passionate about what to do next in this field, and that’s exciting to us.”

While Brintnall spends her retirement teaching and conducting oncology research, her passion for supporting palliative and hospice care patients is carried forward today through the certificate program.

“I find joy through the eyes of my students,” she said. “When you know you’ve made a profound difference in somebody’s career or somebody’s life, that’s magic to me.”

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**Interprofessional Certificate in Palliative and Hospice Care**

This post-baccalaureate interprofessional certificate at GVSU is designed to prepare individuals interested in palliative and hospice care with a deep understanding of the personal, professional, economic and legal perspectives of delivering care to patients facing life-limiting disease, terminal illness and death.

**Hybrid delivery**

Combination of online and in-seat classes in Grand Rapids or Traverse City, MI

**For more information**

Contact Dr. Linda Buck, senior academic advisor, 616.331.7160 or buckli@gvsu.edu

Visit [www.gvsu.edu/phc](http://www.gvsu.edu/phc)

“**The Interprofessional Certificate in Palliative and Hospice Care at Grand Valley made me more marketable and knowledgeable. The curriculum provides information, skills and techniques that can empower practitioners to manage complex symptoms effectively and conduct difficult conversations. This program provided me a tremendous head start in palliative care.**”

— Daniel Johnson, DNP ’17, RN, NP-C
Avoiding Burnout In Nursing

Few people have such a significant impact on the lives of patients, families and communities as nurses. Kirkhof College of Nursing Dean, Cynthia McCurren, describes the passion of a new nurse as a “fire in the belly” — a deep desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Nurses, on the average, spend up to 45 hours per week at work. That’s about 80,000 hours over a lifetime. Today, they encounter more workplace stress, microaggression, and emotional and physical exhaustion than ever before. One report indicated that more than one third (37 percent) of newly licensed RNs consider leaving the profession.

It strikes me that there is an austere contrast between that first fire in the belly and the resulting burnout. Is it possible to reignite or retain our fire? How do we continue to find joy in our nursing journeys?

The Wesorick Center’s Interprofessional Institute of Polarity Thinking™ in Healthcare can help. We host several events that help participants become a master at leveraging competing values and workplace dilemmas, such as caring for self versus caring for others. If you want to learn how to balance these challenges in your career and supplement your problem-solving skills with polarity thinking, please attend one of our Polarity Thinking events. They are posted online at https://www.gvsu.edu/wesorick/.

More than 15 years ago, Bonnie Wesorick reflected: “Even in the face of one of the most chaotic times in healthcare, the opportunities for nursing in the 21st century are unquestionable.”

It’s not too late to become joy-filled. When we as nurses can find ways to successfully manage our needs and the needs of others, I believe we can all find meaning and discover joy in our work.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Clingerman,
PhD, RN, FNAP, CNE
Executive Director
The Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation

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An interactive evening of lecture and discussion

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CONTINUING EDUCATION EVENTS

The Kirkhof College of Nursing remains committed to providing opportunities that foster excellence in education, interprofessional and community collaboration, and reciprocal academic practice partnerships.

Visit www.gvsu.edu/kcon/edevents for information on upcoming events.

**To Err Is Human:**
A Patient Safety Documentary
3759 Films/Tall Tale Productions

Medical mistakes lead to as many as 440,000 preventable deaths every year, making it the No. 3 leading cause of death in the United States. *To Err Is Human* is an in-depth documentary about this silent epidemic and those working behind the scenes to create a new age of patient safety.

On September 25, 2018, the Kirkhof College of Nursing brought the 2018 documentary to West Michigan for the first time. Tandem events with customized reflection panels offered opportunities to explore the current state of patient safety and what is being done to address it.

**Resilience: The Biology of Stress & The Science of Hope**
KPJR Films LLC

*Resilience: The Biology of Stress & The Science of Hope* chronicles the birth of a new movement among pediatricians, therapists, educators and communities who are using cutting-edge brain science to disrupt cycles of violence, addiction and disease.

On May 8, 2018, the Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation and the Kirkhof College of Nursing presented the 2016 documentary as part of National Nurses Week activities. A reflection panel of experts from higher education and practice shared insights into the realities of toxic stress and what must be done to improve the health of future generations.
Recent Awards

2018 Social Media Award  
National Student Nurses’ Association

2018 Campus Engagement Award  
Office of Student Life at GVSU

The GVSU SNA is well known at the national level thanks to their engaged presence at every convention. Our students stand out because of their professionalism, engagement during sessions, and successfully presenting, defending and passing six resolutions since 2011. At the National Convention in April 2019, our students will present a resolution on the prevalence of food insecurity among college students and how student nurses can address it on their campuses. Our students care about big issues and go above and beyond to DO something about it.

— Angela Veltkamp,  
GVSU SNA Advisor

The Student Nurses’ Association at GVSU is truly remarkable. Through forming connections, volunteering in the community, gaining leadership experience and the countless educational opportunities this organization offers, my time at Grand Valley State University has genuinely been enriched and I am very grateful.

— Jayme Larson,  
SNA Communications Director

Connect with us!

GVSU Student Nurses’ Association  
@gvsusna  
@gvsusna  
gvsusna.org

Top row from left:  
Carolyn Floyd,  
Secretary; Brynn Rohloff, Community Health Director;  
Katie Hoppa, Image & Breakthrough to Nursing Director

Middle row from left:  
Jayme Larson,  
Communications Director; Alison Hige, Treasurer;  
Claire Schomaker,  
Curriculum Director; Milaina Palazzolo,  
Vice President

Bottom row from left:  
Chloe Dansereau,  
President; Elaine Jarzeboski,  
Membership Director

Missing from photo:  
Elizabeth Pitcher,  
Volunteer Director

GVSU STUDENT NURSES’ ASSOCIATION

300+ student members

200+ service activities each year

7,500+ volunteering hours each year

Volunteer  Community  Leadership  Education
President’s Message

LEGACY. IMPACT. CONTRIBUTION.

Big words, right? Although I do not immediately associate these words with things I can achieve on my own, my involvement with the KCON alumni chapter has allowed me to be part of a community that is creating a legacy, making an impact on our profession and contributing to the future of Grand Valley and KCON.

KCON alumni are invited to precept a student, attend alumni and college events, and support our development initiatives. Benefits include networking with peers, inspiring the nurses of tomorrow, supporting our communities and obtaining free continuing education credit.

Please join us in spreading the Laker Effect!

Jennifer Langholz
Jennifer Langholz, ('09)
KCON Alumni Association Board President

Our alumni chapter thrives because of very special people. We extend our sincerest gratitude to immediate past board president, Tracy Hosford, and immediate past KCON faculty liaison, Linda Bond, for all of their time, energy and passion.

Update your contact information with the KCON Alumni Association @ www.gvsu.edu/alumni.

Continuing education events @ www.gvsu.edu/kcon/edevents

“I believe that finding joy in nursing is directly connected to pursuing the passion that brought you down the path of nursing to begin with. Connect to your passion and it will live out through your nursing care by impacting your patient’s lives in a positive way.”

— Tracy Hosford ('02)
It is more crucial than ever for education and practice to partner with shared vision, ongoing commitment and mutual respect. Given this, the KCON Advisory Board has been hard at work supporting the college’s goals of establishing academic-practice partnerships and creating opportunities for co-design, reciprocity and relevance. We have discovered that by rethinking the ways we partner, we not only improve public health outcomes and strengthen our communities, we ensure a bright future for Laker nurses and the patients and organizations they serve.

None of this would be possible without the many nurses and organizations that welcome KCON students into their settings for clinical experiences and projects. We extend our sincerest gratitude to our preceptors and academic practice partners for collaborating for shared success.

We strive to honor these relationships by preparing our students with the clinical and soft skills needed to learn while contributing in health care settings of all kinds. New ideas and approaches designed to create mutually beneficial pathways with our partners will remain a steadfast goal for us.

We also are incredibly grateful for those who support our students through scholarships and funds at KCON. Because of this generosity, students can focus on completing their education and finding their unique path in nursing.

It is my great honor to serve as the board chair of the KCON Advisory Board. On behalf of the entire board, thank you for your continued support of KCON’s mission to provide quality nursing education to a diverse population of students. There is so much joy in watching these students succeed and give back to our communities.

Sincerely,

Hattie Tinney
Board Chair
KCON Advisory Board
Deputy Executive Director
Grand Rapids Housing Commission
New Leadership
Appointments

Rebecca Davis, PhD, RN
Interim Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship

Kathy Moran, DNP, RN, CDE, FADE
Associate Dean for Graduate Nursing Programs

New Faculty
Appointments

Mark Contreras, DNP, RN, NP-C
Clinical Affiliate Faculty

Anne McKay, DNP, ANP-BC
Assistant Professor, Tenure Track Faculty

Rita Rodriguez, MSN, RN
Affiliate Faculty

New Staff
Appointments

Emily Bourassa, LLMSW
Program Manager, NIH R1 Funded Grant

Brianne Burke, BS
Patient Services Manager, GVSU Family Health Center

Susan Ouellette, MSN, MM, RN
Academic Community Liaison

Faculty Transitions

Robert Johnson, MD, MEd
Transitioned from visiting faculty to affiliate faculty

Donna Rinker, MSN, RN, FNP-BC
Transitioned from visiting faculty to affiliate faculty

Staff Transitions

Tamara Van Kampen, DNP, RN
Transitioned from academic community liaison to practice manager at the GVSU Family Health Center

Retirements

Jean Barry, PhD, RN

Cynthia Covikak, PhD, RN, CNE

For more information on KCON faculty and staff, visit www.gvsu.edu/kcon/facultystaff
In 2018, Karyn was granted tenure. She earned a BSN from Wayne State University, an MS from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, a PhD from Wayne State University and a family psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner post-master’s certification from the University of Kansas.

Her program of scholarship is focused on mood disorders in women, and she teaches psychiatric nursing and nursing research. Karyn currently serves on GVSU’s Faculty Undergraduate Academic Advising Committee and KCON’s Scholarship & Evaluation Committee. She also works as a certified psychiatric nurse practitioner in Okemos, Michigan.

“I completed my studies in psychiatric nursing in part, because the community need for practitioners is great. I believe that client care must include compassion, understanding and respect. Nursing has unique opportunities to work with clients utilizing these qualities. This is what I strive for in my practice. This is what I try to instill in my students.”

In 2018, Susan was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN from the College of St. Teresa, an MS from Oakland University and a PhD from Wayne State University.

Her research is focused on the scholarship of teaching, learning and assessment, and she teaches community and public health as well as end-of-life and palliative care. She has crafted many community health experiences for undergraduate students and worked collaboratively to write community-based student learning outcomes for GVSU.

Susan currently serves on GVSU’s University Assessment Committee, KCON’s Curriculum Committee and Holistic Admissions Task Force, and as a peer reviewer for the Higher Learning Commission.

“As a profession, nursing has taken me to many different areas of the country as well as many different environments. From my array of experiences, I find the most pleasure and greatest dedication and passion in now helping others learn these joys and pleasures. Understanding metacognitive principles, employing effective assessment techniques and expanding the inquisitive and autonomous nature of our students is my ‘happy place.’”

In 2018, Lori was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned BSN and MSN degrees from Grand Valley State University and a PhD from Michigan State University. Her scholarship is focused on design thinking and mentoring students through their projects, and her research is focused on symptoms, genetics and health-related quality of life in persons with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease; and obesity-related diseases and/or interventions to prevent obesity/nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. She teaches NCLEX review, med/surg nursing and community health.

Lori currently serves on the Faculty Salary & Budget Committee for GVSU, the Faculty Affairs Committee for KCON and as KCON’s representative to the GVSU Laker Effect Challenge committee. In addition, she serves as vice president for the Sigma Theta Tau Kappa Epsilon Chapter-At-Large and encourages fundraising for student scholarships and giving through estate planning.

“I enjoy working with students in mentored projects such as research or other scholarly activities. It’s fun to help them learn and develop into outstanding nursing professionals.”

### External Grants

**Della Hughes Carter**
- A Partnership to Support Aging in Place by the Delivery of On-Site Interdisciplinary Primary Care to Seniors
- Michigan Health Endowment Fund
- $493,687

**Rebecca Davis**
- A Randomized Controlled Trial of Visual Cues, Signage, and Spaced-Retrieval Education within Long Term Care Communities to Assist with Wayfinding
- NIH - National Institute on Aging
- $2,237,802

**Amy Manderscheid**
- A Simulation-Based Module to Address the Quality and Safety of Emergency Department Management of Neonates with Potential Sepsis, Phase 1: An Interdisciplinary Needs Assessment Survey
- Spectrum Health Pediatric Research Fund
- $673

**Susan Mlynarczyk**
- Validating a New Assessment Tool to Detect Need for Early Intervention Services in Preterm Infants
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation
- $60,000

**Sandra Spoelstra**
- Statewide Implementation of CAPABLE-Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders in the Michigan Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver Program
- NIH - National Institute on Aging
- $311,351

**Sandra Spoelstra**
- MI-Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders – 2019
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- $260,894

**Susan Harrington, PhD, RN**
- Associate Professor, Tenured
- In 2018, Susan was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN from the College of St. Teresa, an MS from Oakland University and a PhD from Wayne State University.

### Awarded between September 2017 and November 2018

Totals Include Lifetime Award Amount
Geraldine Terry, MD, MSN, BSN, RN
Associate Professor, Tenured
In 2018, Geraldine was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, an MSN from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, an MD from Michigan State University and completed her pediatric residency at the Children’s Hospital of Michigan.
Her scholarship and research are focused on teaching and learning for interprofessional education, and she teaches interprofessional education, healthcare for children, health literacy and design thinking.
Geraldine currently serves on GVSU’s Affiliate Faculty Advisory Committee, KCON’s Curriculum Committee, the Design Thinking Initiative for GVSU, the MISTEM Initiative for the State of Michigan and the Midwest Interprofessional Education and Research Center.
“I am endlessly on a journey of discovery to teach health care-related knowledge in a manner that is relevant and engaging to the next generation of health care providers.”

Melodee Vanden Bosch, PhD, RN
Associate Professor, Tenured
In 2018, Melodee was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned BSN and MSN degrees from Grand Valley State University and a PhD from Michigan State University.
Her scholarship and research are focused on diabetes, physical activity, middle-aged women and active learning. She teaches clinical reasoning, care planning, pain/comfort, metabolic regulations, diabetes, professional identity, gas exchange, skin integrity and burns.
Melodee currently serves on GVSU’s Undergraduate Research Council, the Dean’s Advisory Board for KCON, KCON-Connect, the KCON Strategic Planning Committee and chairs the KCON Practice Committee.
“While a staff nurse, I enjoyed precepting new nurses and found joy in teaching patients about self-management of their disease processes. As an educator, I find numerous ways to mentor. The joy is found in watching these students grow, learn and become as excited as I am about nursing and the evidence that is the basis for our practice.”

Janet E. Winter, DNP, MPA, BSN, RN
Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Programs in Nursing, Associate Professor, Tenured
In 2018, Janet was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN degree from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, an MPA degree and Graduate Certificate in Sustainability in Public and Non-profit Organizations from Grand Valley State University, and a DNP degree from Rush University’s College of Nursing.
Her scholarship is focused on leading sustainable system change through leadership development; interprofessional education and collaborative practices; and strategic thinking and planning. She oversees KCON’s undergraduate programs and teaches on a wide range of subject matter.
Janet is an active member on several college committees. In addition, she is a GVSU Inclusion Advocate, an AACN LANP fellow, a member of the GVSU Honors Curriculum Development Committee and a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International – Kappa Epsilon at-Large Chapter Board of Directors.
“I find joy through my interactions with students, faculty, staff, community partners and members of the nursing profession. To be influenced by their unique perspectives, to learn from each person and to have the opportunity to encourage their sense of purpose brings great fulfillment and gratitude.”

Beatrice “Bea” A. Idema Nursing Endowed Scholarship
This scholarship provides support to junior or senior level nursing students in the Kirkhof College of Nursing.

Brintnall Interprofessional Palliative and Hospice Care Endowed Scholarship
This scholarship assists post-baccalaureate level students with the costs of completing the Interprofessional Palliative and Hospice Care Certificate program at GVSU.

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

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Carl Erickson and Mary O’Neill Pathway Endowed Scholarship
This scholarship provides assistance to an engineering or nursing student.

32 scholarships and funds
In addition to graduate assistantships, 32 scholarships and assistance funds are available specifically for KCON students.

Visit gvsu.edu/kcon/giving for more information.
Educating students to shape their lives, their professions and their societies.

Connect with us: gvsu.edu/kcon