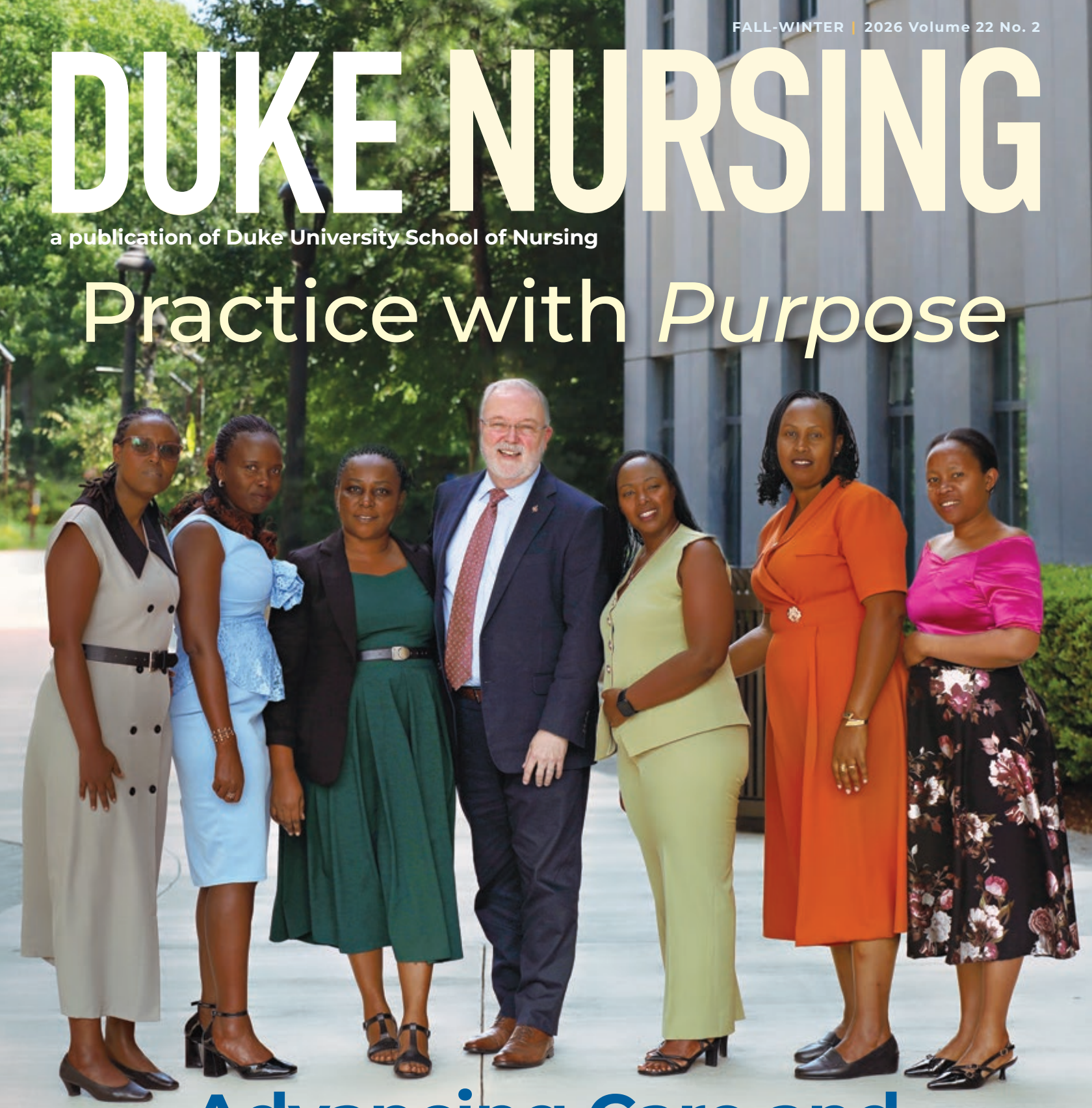
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DUKE NURSING

a publication of Duke University School of Nursing

Practice with *Purpose*



Advancing Care and Improving Lives Worldwide

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Alumni Leaders Across Healthcare

Ruby L. Wilson Center Dedication

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ON THE COVER: Rwanda DNP graduates with Dean Relf. From left to right: Claudine Muteteli, Alphonsine Umutoni Uwese, Delphine Mukandayisaba, Dean Relf, Ruth Dusabe, Miriam Batamuriza, Francine Nyirangorore



Dear Duke University School of Nursing Community,

Welcome to the Fall-Winter 2026 issue of *Duke Nursing* magazine. The past six months have tested higher education, healthcare, and research institutions across the country. Financial pressures, evolving policy landscapes, and uncertainty in the broader environment have challenged all of us to think differently about how we advance our mission.

In moments like these, nursing's values matter more than ever. We are meeting challenges with focus and purpose, stewarding our resources responsibly, and pursuing innovative solutions that strengthen our impact while staying true to Duke University School of Nursing's core values: respect; integrity; collaboration; diversity, inclusion, and belonging; innovation; and excellence. Across our School, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners continue to demonstrate resilience, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to improving health for all people and advancing the nursing profession.

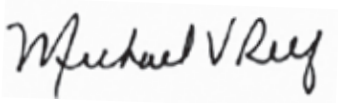
The stories in this issue reflect that spirit. You will read about Duke nurses leading in clinical, educational, and entrepreneurial settings, and about the historic achievement of six nurses from Rwanda graduating from Duke's Doctor of Nursing Practice program, a milestone made possible through years of partnership and shared vision. Together, these stories illustrate how nursing transforms lives through education, innovation, leadership, and global collaboration.

You will also read on page 16 about a remarkable recognition of our community by the American Academy of Nursing. This year, eleven members of the Duke Nursing community were named Fellows and two were honored as Living Legends. These distinctions recognize extraordinary contributions to health care and acknowledge individuals whose influence will continue to shape the future of health for generations to come. We are proud of these faculty members, leaders, and alumni and grateful for the example they set through their service, scholarship, and leadership.

As we continue to evolve the ways we share Duke Nursing's story, this magazine will move to an annual publication schedule. Following a spring impact report, the next issue of Duke Nursing magazine will arrive in Fall 2027, allowing us to continue highlighting the achievements of our community, strengthening connections across the globe, and showcasing advances in nursing education, science, and practice.

Even amid uncertainty, our path forward is clear. Together, we are embracing new ideas, creating new opportunities, and helping shape a healthier future through nursing.

Sincerely,



Michael V. Relf, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN

Mary T. Champagne Distinguished Professor of Nursing

Dean, Duke University School of Nursing

Associate Chief Nurse Executive
for Academic Partnerships and Innovation,
Duke University Health System



Duke University President Vincent Price visits with School of Nursing students in the Pearson Atrium.

Duke University School of Nursing

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Clockwise from top right: Pre-licensure students pose in the courtyard.

Joey Schwind, DNP'26, demonstrates an ultrasound machine during an On-Campus Intensive.

Faculty member Dr. Kathy Trotter and Dean Relf at the annual School of Nursing Duke Football Tailgate.

A group posing at the School of Nursing's faculty and staff summer party, held at a Durham Bulls baseball game.









Spring Grad **Recap**

In May, the School of Nursing once again celebrated a new class of Duke-educated nurses as students crossed the stage in historic Cameron Indoor Stadium. Surrounded by faculty, staff, friends, and family, they marked the milestone with thunderous applause, big smiles, and a shared commitment to advancing healthcare through compassionate leadership.















228 Degrees & Certificates Conferred

61
BSN

99
MSN

16
POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATES

8
SPECIALTY CERTIFICATES

33
DNP

11
PHD

The Rooms We Have Yet to Enter

By Carmen Shaw, DNP'16, RN, NEA-BC, CPC



Carmen Shaw

I graduated from Duke University School of Nursing's Doctor of Nursing Practice program in May 2016. At the time, I thought I was preparing for my next job, but in reality, Duke was preparing me for the next decade.

What I could not fully appreciate then was that the greatest challenge facing nursing would not be whether we had enough leaders, but whether we were willing to imagine leadership practice differently.

For generations, nursing leadership followed a familiar path: expert front-line clinician, manager, director, executive. It was a worthy path and one that built our profession. But healthcare is now being reshaped by so many things: artificial intelligence, mergers and acquisitions, workforce disruption, demographic changes, political polarization, and growing complexity across every aspect of care delivery. What's more, decisions affecting health are increasingly being made in places where nurses have historically had little representation: regulatory boards, tech companies, legislative bodies, community organizations, venture-backed startups, and public policy forums. The question is no longer whether nurses can lead. The question is whether we are willing to lead where we have not traditionally led.

Today, I serve as a national executive nursing leader for one of the top five largest healthcare systems, helping influence professional practice, strategy, innovation, and engagement efforts that touch thousands of nurses and millions of patients and communities across multiple states. I also serve as an elected member of the North Carolina State Board of Nursing, participating in decisions that protect the public by regulating the practice of nursing. As Chair of the Duke Charlotte Regional Alumni Board, I have the privilege of helping strengthen one of the world's most influential alumni communities while investing in future leaders and our local community.

Some days those roles feel worlds apart. An executive meeting in the morning. A policy discussion in the afternoon. A community engagement event in the evening. But I have come to realize they are all expressions of the same calling. That realization has shaped my philosophy of what I call a next-generation leadership practice mindset.

Next-generation leaders do not ask, "What position do I want to hold?" They ask, "What problems am I uniquely positioned to solve?" They understand that influence matters just as much as authority. They know how to move between disciplines, translate complexity, and build trust across competing priorities. They are comfortable leading before consensus forms and learning before expertise is fully developed. Perhaps most importantly, they are willing to enter rooms where nurses have historically been absent.

Because if nurses are not shaping healthcare policy, not helping design artificial intelligence platforms, and not influencing boardroom decisions, community health priorities, and public dialogue, someone else will.

When I chose Duke, I was looking for academic excellence. What I found was something larger. My Duke education challenged me to think in systems instead of silos. To move beyond identifying problems toward implementing solutions. To understand not only evidence generation, but evidence translation. To see leadership not simply as organizational responsibility, but as societal responsibility.

The truth is that healthcare does not have a knowledge problem, but an implementation problem. We know more than we have ever known about improving outcomes, reducing disparities, and transforming care. Yet translating that knowledge into action remains one of our greatest challenges. This is where nurse leaders thrive. We are translators: we connect strategy to operations, evidence to execution, innovation to implementation, policy to practice. The healthcare profession does not simply need more experts, but more architects. Bridge builders. System designers. Policy influencers. Technology translators. Community advocates. And yes, it needs executives and chief nursing officers too. But it needs more than that.

For current students and future leaders, my hope is simple:

Do not allow anyone to define the boundaries of your leadership before you have the opportunity to discover them yourself. Serve on boards. Run for office. Build companies. Shape policy. Lead community movements. Advocate for patients you may never meet.

My challenge to our alumni nursing leaders: Use your nursing perspective in rooms that have never had the benefit of hearing it. The future of nursing will not be determined only by who leads our hospitals, but by whether nurses choose to lead everywhere else.

That may be the most important lesson Duke taught me. Not that nurses belong at the table, but that we should be helping build it.

Carmen Shaw is an executive nurse leader at Advocate Health, an elected member to the NC Board of Nursing serving in the Nurse Administrator seat, chair of the Duke Charlotte Regional Alumni Board, and founder of Carmen L Shaw LLC, a professional leadership coaching and consulting firm.

NURSE LEADERS ADVANCING CARE **WORLDWIDE**

Compiled by Matt Lardie

In clinics and classrooms, boardrooms and health systems, Duke nurses are helping define what leadership looks like in a rapidly changing healthcare world. Their paths are varied, but their purpose is shared: to advance care, expand opportunity, and bring Duke University School of Nursing's legacy of excellence and innovation to the communities, institutions, and industries they serve. In the pages that follow, alumni leaders reflect on the experiences that shaped them, the work that continues to drive them, and the ways they are using their Duke education to lead with vision, purpose, and impact.

A First for Rwanda: Duke Trains the Nation's First DNP-Prepared Nurses



The six DNP students gathered for a group photo during graduation weekend: Claudine Muteteli, Alphonsine Umutoni Uwese, Delphine Mukandayisaba, Ruth Dusabe, Miriam Batamuriza, Francine Nyirangorore

Duke University School of Nursing is celebrating a historic milestone for nursing leadership globally. Six nurse experts from Rwanda have graduated with their Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees.

The Rwandan graduates completed the program through a partnership between Duke University School of Nursing and the University of Rwanda School of Nursing and Midwifery. In the weeks leading up to Commencement, they successfully completed and presented their DNP scholarly projects in Kigali.

"This milestone reflects what is possible when rigorous DNP education is paired with deep local partnership and highly motivated students," said Anne Derouin, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs at Duke University School of Nursing. "These nurse leaders each demonstrated an ability to build and lead teams, improve health outcomes of infants and children in a variety of clinical settings, and shape the future of healthcare delivery across Rwanda during their academic journey."

"For Rwanda, this milestone is about building lasting capacity within our health system," said Oliva Bazirete, Associate Professor of Midwifery and Dean of the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Rwanda. "These graduates are applying doctoral-level nursing expertise to address Rwanda's most pressing clinical and system challenges—improving care delivery, strengthening hospital practices, and shaping a future workforce prepared to lead sustainable health improvements across the country."

Scholars Advancing Care Across Rwanda

From March 30 to April 1, 2026, the students delivered oral presentations to large audiences of healthcare providers, administrators, and policymakers at Rwanda's three tertiary hospitals: King Faisal Hospital, University Teaching Hospital of Kigali (CHUK), and the Rwanda Military Referral and Teaching Hospital. Their projects demonstrated extraordinary interprofessional collaboration and highlighted the vital role of DNP-prepared nurse leaders working in concert with multidisciplinary teams to advance healthcare quality and outcomes across Rwanda:

- **Miriam Batamuriza,** a neonatal nurse expert and midwife, implemented a family centered care protocol in the neonatal intensive care unit at King Faisal Hospital, standardizing practices such as kangaroo care, diapering, and father engagement to strengthen early bonding and support preterm infant growth and development.



Priscille Musabirema, Postgraduate Program Coordinator of the University of Rwanda's School of Nursing and Midwifery, with Michael Relf, Dean of Duke University School of Nursing. Dr. Musabirema, a visiting scholar at Duke in 2025, returned to participate in graduation activities for the six Rwandan DNP graduates.

- **Ruth Dusabe,** a neonatal nursing expert, introduced a NICU "quiet time" protocol at Rwanda Military Hospital, resulting in more than a 10% reduction in ambient noise and decreased newborn heart rates—signaling reduced physiologic stress and improved healing conditions for preterm infants.
- **Delphine Mukandayisaba,** a pediatric critical care nurse, led the implementation of a standardized Pediatric Early Warning Score (PEWS) assessment tool at Rwanda Military Hospital, enabling earlier intervention for at risk children; the initiative was so successful it was permanently adopted and integrated into the hospital's electronic health record system ahead of schedule.
- **Claudine Muteteli** implemented the World Health Organization's multimodal hand hygiene framework in the NICU and neurosurgery units at CHUK, increasing hand hygiene compliance from less than 30% to nearly 90% and significantly reducing infection risk, saving lives and healthcare costs.
- **Francine Nyirangorore,** a pediatric nurse expert, established a standardized play based intervention in the Pediatric Oncology Ward at CHUK, reducing pain medication use and nursing workload while improving patient and family well being; the program has been sustained and is planned for expansion to other pediatric units.
- **Alphonsine Umutoni Uwese,** a pediatric nursing expert, implemented a newborn bilirubin screening protocol at King Faisal Hospital, now standard practice prior to discharge, providing an early, noninvasive method to prevent bilirubin related complications and improve long term infant health outcomes.

Finding Balance: From Nurse Leader to Entrepreneur

Janine Panker, DNP'25, APRN, PMHNP-BC'21, CNE, described her path to nursing as "anything but linear." Drawn to questions of human behavior and mental health, Panker began her academic career studying psychology. But it was a deeply personal experience—watching her grandmother receive hospice care—that helped clarify her calling. During that time, Panker saw how nurses brought not only clinical skill, but also compassion, steadiness, and presence to patients and families in moments of profound vulnerability. "Their compassion, presence, and skill showed me that nursing is more than a profession. It is a calling," she said.

That sense of purpose has guided a career spanning more than two decades and multiple areas of practice, including inpatient cardiothoracic nursing, home health, case management, leadership, community-based care, and psychiatric mental health nursing. Across those settings, Panker developed a philosophy rooted in seeing patients as whole people, rather than diagnoses. That perspective eventually led her to Duke University School of Nursing, where she earned her Psychiatric Mental Health MSN and later returned for her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree.

Today, Panker brings together clinical practice, teaching, and entrepreneurship as owner and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at Statera Behavioral Health, while also serving as consulting associate faculty and clinical preceptor at Duke. She founded Statera after recognizing a gap between what patients needed and what traditional mental health care often provided. Too often, she said, patients felt rushed, misunderstood, or frustrated by a trial-and-error approach to treatment.

Her nursing background shaped the vision for Statera from the beginning. "Nursing taught me to view health through a holistic lens—to consider biology, chemistry, psychology, environment, lifestyle, and relationships rather than a single diagnosis," she said. At Statera, that philosophy is reflected in a personalized model of psychiatric care that incorporates evidence-based medicine alongside pharmacogenomic testing, nutrition, sleep, stress management, and other factors that can influence mental health. The practice's name, drawn from the concept of balance, reflects its mission to help patients identify stressors and build individualized supports for lasting wellbeing.



Janine Panker

For Panker, entrepreneurship is a natural extension of nursing leadership. Nurses, she said, are "natural problem-solvers" who assess complex situations, communicate across differences, and adapt quickly when circumstances change. Those same skills are essential to building organizations that are clinically strong, sustainable, and deeply compassionate.

"The same principle that guides great nursing also guides sustainable entrepreneurship: putting people first," she said. "Patient-centered care and good business are not competing priorities—they reinforce each other."

Duke also helped shape how Panker thinks about leadership. The school reinforced for her that leadership is less about authority than about influence, service, and creating opportunities for others to succeed. In her practice and in her work with students, she strives to model that approach by valuing "curiosity over perfection, collaboration over hierarchy, and continuous improvement over complacency."

That leadership philosophy is especially meaningful in behavioral health, where trust, compassion, and innovation are inseparable. Whether caring for patients, mentoring future psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners, or leading a growing organization, Panker remains focused on helping others feel seen, supported, and empowered. "Being a nurse leader means creating environments where people can heal, grow, and thrive," she said.

In every role, Panker's career trajectory has reflected the balance at the heart of her work: clinical excellence and human connection, innovation and compassion, leadership and service. Her goal, she said, is simple and enduring: "to leave people feeling more empowered, hopeful, and capable than they did before."

A Global Journey in Nursing Leadership

With a Duke Nursing degree, **Lester Manalo, BSN'09** embarked on a unique career trajectory, moving from work with babies recovering from cardiac surgery, to a nurse practitioner degree, to a community health organization, to a role in a US embassy, to his current leadership role in university health. He shares insights from his journey, highlighting the versatility of nursing.

"My career path has been all over the place since I graduated from Duke. First, I was a nurse on the Heart and Kidney unit at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. A key patient population on this floor was infants and toddlers who were recovering from cardiac surgery. That was an amazing place to work, and I learned so much about nursing assessment and collaboration with all the different parts of the care team. My wife at the time entered diplomatic work with the Foreign Service through the US Department of State, so I was very fortunate to have a profession that could travel abroad. I worked as a nurse at an international school in Taiwan, and through networking with [former dean] Dr. Mary Champagne, I was able to navigate a work agreement with a research foundation there as well.


Lester Manalo

"Eventually, I went to graduate school and became a Family Nurse Practitioner. I ended up in the same cohort at Yale University as another Duke alum. As I traveled and moved around, it became very evident how far-reaching Duke's influence was. After graduating, I worked in community health in Washington, DC, at an excellent organization called Mary's Center. But it wasn't long before we had to relocate again, and I somehow landed on my feet once more—this time as a nurse practitioner at the US Embassy in Prague, Czechia. Although I continued to hone my clinical practice, this job was exciting both for its international qualities and insight into the federal government.

"After moving back to the US, I took my first job in higher education as a nurse practitioner at the University of New Hampshire. I immediately fell in love! For those of you not familiar with college health, I encourage you to look into it. It's not for everyone, but it should at least be a consideration. I have since moved on from UNH and was recently appointed Director of Health Services at the University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth, where I am in my first year.

"I've been able to leverage what I learned in nursing school in so many ways, but here is one example that sticks out to me. I will always remember a class discussion [now dean] Dr. Michael Relf led on the topic of errors: were they on the part of the system or the individual? Looking through that lens has guided my actions both personally and professionally, and I think it has resulted in positive outcomes overall. Nobody thinks it's fair to be punished for operating within faulty systems that they had nothing to do with, especially if that system will inherently drive them to an error eventually. Looking at processes with that analytical mindset and having grace with people when they are victim to bad policies has ingratiated me with people over the years. That's not to say that we never have hard conversations or that individual errors don't exist, but it does help me as a manager to think, 'Where can I, as a leader, help create an environment that fosters success?' This has served me better than relying on punitive measures to change outcomes."

Meeting Patients Where They Are

For **Ashley Batts, DNP, MSN'18, BSN, BS, WHNP-BC,** nursing began as a search for more meaningful work. Before entering healthcare, she earned a bachelor's degree in business marketing and worked in New York City's fashion industry as a handbag buyer. But the pace and priorities of that world quickly wore on her. When a friend mentioned she was a nurse (and worked three days a week), Batts saw a new path forward.

"Nursing was never on my radar," she said. "I finally decided I wanted a more meaningful career and liked the idea that nursing was a shorter program, had more flexibility in job options and specialties, and provided opportunities to travel and only work three days a week. So I said, sign me up!"

That decision led Batts to an accelerated nursing program—and soon after, to women's health. During nursing school, she worked as a CNA on a mother/baby unit, where her longstanding fascination with pregnancy became a professional calling. "I knew right away that OBGYN was where I wanted to focus my nursing career," she said.



Ashley Batts

Today, Batts' work at the Pender County, NC Health Department centers on rural women's health, where clinical care often intersects with daily barriers that can make access difficult. Many of the patients she serves face food, housing, and transportation insecurity, challenges that can make it hard to prioritize preventive care, appointments, or treatment plans.

"Patients find it difficult to prioritize their health when they are struggling to buy groceries or cannot secure a ride to their appointment," Batts said. "As a provider, these resource limitations sometimes make it difficult to provide care."

In rural communities, she adds, care requires creativity, humility, and an understanding that textbook solutions do not always fit real-life circumstances. "Working in rural health is about meeting the patients where they are and finding a way to help meet their needs in a way that is reasonable considering the resources they have available," she said. "Sometimes in rural health you cannot do the 'best thing' and sometimes must settle for doing some good where you can."

That is where nurse practitioners are especially vital. Rural communities across the country continue to face provider shortages, long travel distances, and limited specialty care. Nurse practitioners who are well positioned to fill critical gaps in communities where physicians or specialists may be scarce.

Batts has seen that impact firsthand. "Studies have shown that nurse practitioners provide high-quality care, and there are so many rural communities that are healthcare deserts with very few or no providers," she noted. "Nurse practitioners are uniquely positioned to help mitigate some of these disparities."

Her commitment to expanding access extends into education. As a clinical instructor for Duke School of Nursing students, Batts hopes learners gain a deeper understanding of how social and structural challenges shape care delivery. Rural health settings, she said, push students "to step out of the textbook answer and think outside of the box," strengthening the critical thinking skills they will need as future providers.

For Batts, that mentorship is also a way of giving back. She took on the role, she said, "to help educate the next generation of nurse practitioners"—clinicians who may one day help close the same gaps she encounters in rural women's health.

And leadership, in that context, is not about title or authority. It is about presence, advocacy, and trust. "Nurse leadership means using my knowledge, experience, and compassion to make a difference every day," Batts said. "It's about being someone others can depend on, advocating for my patients, supporting my colleagues, and helping create the best possible outcomes for those in my care."

Leading Beyond the Bedside

For **Austin L. Crouthers, MSN'25, RN,** and current Duke DNP candidate in the Executive Leadership track, leadership in healthcare begins with people. Across a career spanning radiology, critical care, trauma-focused operations, and now multi-site emergency services, Crouthers learned that the clinical setting may change, but the needs of high-performing teams remain constant. "People need the same things from their leaders: trust, support, and clarity," he insisted.

Now serving as a divisional director overseeing emergency services across multiple hospitals, Crouthers brings both frontline understanding and executive perspective to his work. In fast-paced environments where decisions carry immediate consequences, he emphasizes visibility, consistency, and calm. His leadership philosophy, he said, is centered on "serving the team first," creating the conditions that allow nurses and

"Healthcare needs leaders with diverse perspectives, experiences, and voices, and your presence may become the visibility someone else needs to pursue their own leadership journey."

—AUSTIN CROUTHERS



Austin Crouthers

clinicians to provide exceptional patient care.

That approach reflects a broader understanding of nurse leadership as a bridge between strategy and practice. At the bedside, Crouthers said, leaders must be present, listen to staff, remove barriers, and ensure teams have the resources they need. At the executive level, they must create vision, align people around shared goals, and make decisions that support both patient outcomes and organizational success. "The most effective leaders can move seamlessly between those two spaces," he said.

Emotional intelligence is central to that work. In emergency services, where staff often encounter patients and families during some of their most difficult moments, Crouthers believes leaders must foster cultures of trust and psychological safety. "Emotional intelligence begins with listening," he said. "I believe people want to know that they are seen, heard, and valued."

For Crouthers, operational excellence and inclusive culture are not competing priorities. Metrics provide direction and accountability, he said, but "every data point represents a patient experience, a staff member, or a family depending on us to get it right." When people feel respected and empowered, engagement grows, innovation follows, and performance improves.

As a Black male nurse executive, Crouthers also understands the power of representation. "My presence in executive leadership is about more than personal achievement," he said. "It is about expanding what others believe is possible." Crouthers credits Duke with helping him develop a systems lens and the confidence to lead transformational change while remaining authentic.

His advice to emerging nurse leaders is clear: keep learning, seek mentors, take calculated risks, and step into opportunities that challenge you. "Your presence," he said, "may become the visibility someone else needs."

Championing Change for Mothers and Babies

Assistant Professor **Gina Wilson, MSN'14, DNP'16** has never been content to simply witness a need. Throughout her nursing career, she has responded by stepping forward—first as a clinical leader, then as a global health advocate, and ultimately as the founder of a nonprofit helping strengthen maternal and newborn care in East Africa. Now a pediatric nurse practitioner and recipient of the 2025 Beyond Duke Award, Wilson has built a career around a leadership style that is practical, collaborative, and deeply rooted in the belief that nurses can transform systems as well as lives.

Her path into nursing began in high school, when she saw firsthand the impact nurses had on a friend undergoing cancer treatment and on her father's care. After earning her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from University of North Carolina at Charlotte, she began her career in women's health and oncology at Wake Forest Baptist Hospital, where she advanced from bedside nurse to charge nurse. Mentors recognized both her clinical ability and her initiative, encouraging her to continue her education at Duke, where she entered the Family Nurse Practitioner program with a growing interest in caring for both mothers and babies.

The experience that would define the next chapter of Wilson's career came during a clinical residency in Tanzania near the end of her master's program. At Majengo Health Clinic in Moshi, she saw both the skill of midwife-led care and the heartbreaking consequences of preventable newborn death. One delivery in particular stayed with her: the mother survived a postpartum hemorrhage, but her infant did not. For Wilson, the moment became more than a memory. It became a call to lead, research preventable causes of neonatal mortality, and find a way to turn evidence into action.

That issue became the focus of Wilson's Doctor of Nursing Practice project at Duke. Backed by faculty who supported her



Gina Wilson in Tanzania with nurse midwife trainees

vision, she identified an evidence-based newborn resuscitation program—Helping Babies Breathe, now called Essential Newborn Care 1—and began the work of adapting and implementing it in Zanzibar.

"I feel so grateful to Duke," Wilson said. "I think what's really special about Duke is that Duke said yes to me. They said, 'You want to do this work in Zanzibar? Yes, we'll figure it out,' rather than pushing me towards other options where they already had programs in place. The yeses and the help along the way have meant the world."

Wilson partnered with an established nonprofit, secured approval from the Zanzibar Ministry of Health, and launched a train-the-trainer model designed to build local capacity rather than rely on outside intervention. More than a decade later, some of the original midwives she trained are still teaching others, a marker of the program's durability and Wilson's commitment to sustainable leadership.

What began as a doctoral project eventually became For Mamas, a U.S.- and Zanzibar-registered nonprofit focused on maternal and newborn health. Under Wilson's leadership, the organization has trained 415 nurse midwives and equipped 71 delivery centers with reusable supplies. In partnership with the Zanzibar Ministry of Health, For Mamas also helped establish a new role—Clinical Nurse Educator—to provide on-the-job training, supportive supervision, and debriefing in delivery facilities. Launched in 2025 with 15 educators, this year growing to 50 educators, the model is expected to scale to all 71 public delivery centers by the end of 2027. It is the kind of work that reflects Wilson's larger philosophy: meaningful change lasts only when it is locally led, country-owned, and designed to grow beyond any one person.

Just as important to Wilson as program growth is the leadership pipeline behind it. She often speaks about the mentors who invested in her and the responsibility she feels to do the same for others. Through For Mamas and her broader work, she has championed nurse-led models of care, encouraged nurses to claim a seat at decision-making tables, and helped cultivate leaders who can collect data, improve practice, and mentor those coming behind them. Her story is ultimately one of leadership in its fullest sense: seeing a need, building partnerships, empowering others, and creating systems that continue serving communities long after the first intervention.

Turning Frustration into Innovation

Tiffany Kelley, PhD'12, MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, FAAN, is a Professor in Residence at the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing, University of Connecticut, and Co-Director of the school's Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center. In addition to her academic work, Dr. Kelley is the Founder and CEO of Nightingale Apps and iCare Nursing Solutions.

How has your Duke Nursing education shaped the way you lead today?

The years I spent at Duke as a PhD student challenged me daily to strive for excellence. The bar was set very high from the start, and I had to look within myself not only to meet those expectations, but to strive to excel beyond them. Looking back, the word that describes that personal and professional development is "grit."

Duke challenges everyone to reach their full potential. In leadership, that has prepared me to cast a bold vision for what is possible and put it out into the universe, even when it initially seems unattainable. Creating impactful change is always met with resistance. You need to move regardless of the audience's perspective, and when momentum builds, others begin to see how they can be part of it too.

What inspired your career in nursing innovation?

I never initially sought to build a career focused on nursing innovation. I could not wait to be a nurse in the hospital taking care of children. But quickly in my career, I saw inefficiencies in the process of trying to deliver care. I was always interrupted, missing something, or needing to find someone or something to get to the next step with a patient. It drove me crazy.

That led me to want to understand healthcare from a business perspective: How do we help nurses give the care they want to give and eliminate the wasted energy and time spent searching for IV poles, wheelchairs, pumps, medications, and other resources? What may seem trivial adds up in minutes and takes away from patient care.

While pursuing my MBA, I serendipitously began specializing in informatics and health IT. I had no technology background, but I knew how care was delivered as a nurse. That experience ultimately brought me to Duke, where my dissertation explored whether electronic health record systems were truly driving higher quality care.

What does leadership look like at the intersection of nursing, technology, and innovation?

I could not imagine attempting to lead in nursing without integrating technology and innovation into both day-to-day operations and strategic planning. For students, that means assimilating experiences with engineering students as an expected practice when developing new technologies. It extends into idea development, prototyping, grant writing, pitching, and entrepreneurial pursuits.



Tiffany Kelley

My leadership style is to put the discovery role on the student, faculty member, or team. Innovation is a creative process. We all have ideas, but I believe we gravitate toward problems that frustrate us to the point of pursuing a solution. My role is to help people keep going and move through innovation toward an intrapreneurial or entrepreneurial solution.

How do you encourage nurses and students to see themselves as innovators?

I often ask, "Who can be an innovator?" The first few times I did this, I rarely heard, "We can." I heard engineers, software engineers, CEOs, and other roles that were not in the audience. I would probe further until I got the answer I was looking for: "We can."

If nurses and students do not believe they can be innovators and leaders in healthcare, the journey becomes incredibly difficult. The first step is turning that switch from off to on. Once that mindset shifts, they can focus on learning the science of innovation—the theories, principles, and methodologies. It takes time, but the time will pass anyway. Why not spend it on something meaningful?

What advice would you offer Duke Nursing alumni or students who want to lead change?

My pursuits are driven by curiosity and the belief that we do not need to accept things as they are, especially if they are broken. Everyone knows when there is a problem that needs a solution. We feel it and often complain about it. But many stop there. Vocalizing the problem can bring awareness, but it will not solve it.

Take that energy and consider what an ideal solution would be. Become comfortable hearing no, but keep going anyway. Find another way, another door, another person, another approach, or another opportunity that can get you to the next step. Innovation in healthcare always involves multiple stakeholders, but history gives us countless examples that change is possible. Reflect on those examples and keep moving forward.

Inaugural Fellowship Recipient Selected



Shannon Monroe has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Dean's Faculty and Staff Leadership Fellowship (DFSLF). She currently serves as Director of Clinical Placements, a role she has held since 2022. The DFSLF program introduces Fellows to key leadership roles, strategic priorities, and operational functions within the School. Through mentorship and active participation in leadership activities, fellows will gain firsthand experience in academic leadership and contribute to initiatives that shape the future of the School.



Graduating students wave to family and friends seated in the bleachers of historic Cameron Indoor Stadium during Spring Commencement.

AAMN Distinction

The **American Association for Men in Nursing (AAMN)** has once again named Duke University School of Nursing a "Best School for Men in Nursing." This is the eleventh year in a row the School has received this recognition, highlighting our efforts to create a supportive environment for male nursing students. Over the past decade, the School has worked to address gender barriers in the nursing profession, providing support and resources to help male nursing students succeed.



Men from the May 2026 graduating pre-licensure cohort.

Honoring Faculty and Staff With Two Decades of Service at Inaugural Vicennial Celebration



At the inaugural Vicennial Celebration, Dean **Michael V. Relf, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN** led the acknowledgement of Duke University School of Nursing faculty and staff who have devoted 20 or more years of service to the School. The combined 409 years of service by these 17 individuals, Dean Relf said, have helped shape Duke into one of the top nursing schools in the world. "This is a meaningful and celebratory moment for our School," Dean Relf said.

LEARN MORE

THE 2026 VICENNIAL HONOREES ARE:

Ruth Anderson, 27 years
Donald Bailey, 23 years
Angel Barnes, 22 years
Margaret "Midge" Bowers, 25 years
Debra Brandon, 25 years
Anne L. Derouin, 27 years
Sharron Docherty, 24 years
Cristina Hendrix, 23 years
Angie Keith, 22 years
Eleanor McConnell, 30 years
Bebe Mills, 26 years
Julie Thompson, 20 years
Kathryn Trotter, 20 years
Barbara Turner, 33 years
Kathleen Turner, 22 years
Selnatta Vereen, 20 years
Melissa Ziberna, 20 years

DUSON Earns Our Fifth NLN Designation



Duke University School of Nursing has earned the new National League for Nursing (NLN) Center of Excellence (COE) designation for Creating Learning Environments that Impact Climate Change and Planetary Health, making Duke the only institution in the nation to hold all five NLN COE designations.







Drs. Jill Brennan-Cook, Emily Funk, and **AnnMarie Walton** have each received Duke Climate Commitment Leadership Awards.

CONGRATS

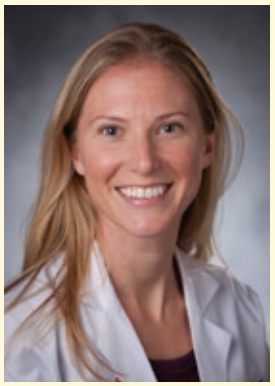




Dr. Jacqui McMillian-Bohler and **Dr. Derrick Glymph** have been named Fellows of the Academy of Nursing Education (ANEF).



Dr. Tolu Oyesanya has been named a Fellow of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (FACRM).



Dr. Maryellen Kelly received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Spina Bifida Association.



Dr. Desi Newberry has been named a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (FAANP).



Dr. Stephanie Gedzyk-Nieman received the American Association of Men in Nursing's 2026 IDEA Award honoring individuals that create and promote diversity, inclusion, and a welcoming environment for all nurses.



Professor Emerita **Dr. Brigit Carter** was named among the 2026 Great 100 Nurses.



Dr. Jessica Szydlowski has been named a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (FAANA).





Dr. Michael Cary and **Dr. Ernest Grant** have been named inaugural Fellows of the American Association of Men in Nursing (FAAMN).



Connect with DUSON

Duke University School of Nursing

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Remember to share your news and accomplishments to: DUSONNews@win.duke.edu

Alumni, students, and friends: Let's stay in touch!

Congratulations!

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING LIVING LEGENDS 2026



ERNEST GRANT



KEVIN SOWERS

Congratulations to 2026 Living Legends, Dr. Ernest Grant, Associate Professor and Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Duke Nursing alumnus Kevin Sowers (MSN'89).

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING FELLOWS 2026

Congratulations to Duke Nursing faculty, leaders, instructors, and alumni that were named 2026 Fellows (from A-Z, left to right): Drs. Marissa Abram, Gillian Adynski, Forgive Avorgbedor, Ragan Johnson, Kathryn Evans Kreider, Theresa (Terry) McDonnell, Jacquelyn McMillian-Bohler, Nicole Seagriff, Benjamin Smallheer, LaDonna Thomas, and Ashlee Vance.













Duke University School of Nursing

& PROMOTIONS APPOINTMENTS



Thomas Blodgett

APPOINTED PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE ACUTE CARE-ADULT GERIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAM



Stephanie Brogdon

APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF THE NURSE ANESTHESIA PROGRAM



Courtney Caiola

APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (D-CHIPP)



Jill Cordell

APPOINTED ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT



Carolina "Callie" Dimsdale

APPOINTED ASSISTANT DEAN FOR ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE CLINICAL EXCELLENCE



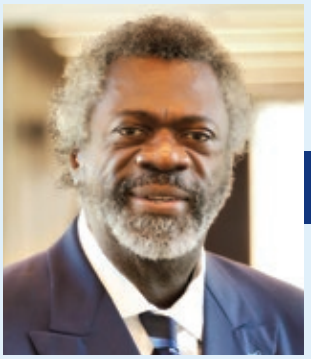
Sharron Docherty

REAPPOINTED VICE DEAN FOR RESEARCH AFFAIRS AND INNOVATION AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RUBY L. WILSON CENTER FOR NURSING SCIENCE AND INNOVATION



Stephanie Gedzyk-Nieman

APPOINTED ASSOCIATE DEAN OF PROFESSIONAL NURSING



Ernest J. Grant

REAPPOINTED VICE DEAN FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING



Mitchell Knisely

APPOINTED ASSOCIATE DEAN OF NURSE SCIENTIST PROGRAMS



Blanca Iris Padilla

PROMOTED TO PROFESSOR, TRACK II

CELEBRATING OUR RETIRING

This year, Duke University School of Nursing celebrates 11 distinguished faculty members whose combined over 140 years of service have shaped generations of nurses, advanced nursing science, and strengthened communities around the world. Eight will continue their affiliation with the School as faculty emeriti, offering their expertise, mentorship, and perspective in new ways. As these faculty begin a new chapter in retirement, we reflect with gratitude on their extraordinary legacy of leadership, innovation, and care.



Professor Emerita Donna Biederman, PhD, RN, FAAN
A champion for health equity and social justice, Donna Biederman has advanced innovative nurse-led models of care that expanded access for underserved and homeless populations while transforming community health outcomes.



Professor Emerita Peggy Bush, PharmD
Through decades of teaching and mentorship, Peggy Bush has helped generations of nursing students build the pharmacology expertise essential to safe, evidence-based patient care while contributing to advances in medical science and drug development.



Associate Professor Emerita Irene Felsman, PhD
Irene Felsman has dedicated her career to improving the health and well-being of diverse populations worldwide through culturally responsive research, global engagement, and advocacy for immigrant and refugee communities.



Professor Emerita Bradi Granger, PhD, RN, FAAN
A leader in cardiovascular nursing research, Bradi Granger has expanded the reach of nursing science by developing innovative models that empowered nurses to conduct research and translate evidence into improved patient care.



Assistant Clinical Professor Elaine D. Kauschinger, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP
Through her leadership in advanced practice nursing, health equity, quality improvement, and emerging healthcare technologies, Elaine Kauschinger advanced patient-centered care while helping prepare nurses to address complex clinical challenges with innovation, compassion, and evidence-based practice.

FACULTY



Associate Clinical Professor Lisa S. Lewis, EdD, MSN, RN, CNE
Through her work in nursing education, student success, holistic admissions, diversity and inclusion, and evidence-based teaching strategies, Lisa Lewis has helped expand opportunities for aspiring nurses while advancing approaches that support achievement, resilience, and excellence in the nursing workforce.



Professor Emerita Marilyn H. Oermann, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN
One of nursing education's most influential scholars, Marilyn Oermann has transformed the preparation of nurse educators and students worldwide through groundbreaking research, prolific scholarship, and editorial leadership.



Associate Professor Emerita Susan Silva, PhD
Susan Silva has strengthened nursing science through her expertise in biostatistics and research methodology, mentoring generations of nurse scholars and advancing rigorous, evidence-based healthcare research.



Professor Emerita Chris Simmons, DNP, CRNA, CHSE
A pioneer in nurse anesthesia education, Chris Simmons has shaped future CRNAs through exceptional teaching, simulation-based innovation, and a steadfast commitment to clinical excellence and inclusive patient care.



Associate Professor Emerita Deirdre K. Thornlow, PhD, RN
Deirdre Thornlow has advanced healthcare quality, patient safety, and geriatric care through impactful scholarship, visionary leadership, and dedicated preparation of nurse leaders committed to improving health systems and outcomes for older adults.



Assistant Professor Michelle Webb, DNP, RN, CHPCA, FPCN
Drawing on extensive leadership in hospice, palliative, behavioral health, and healthcare administration, Michelle Webb has advanced equitable, culturally responsive nursing practice and education while preparing future nurses to lead with compassion, innovation, and a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and high-quality end-of-life care.

Duke University School of Nursing Welcomes New Members to the **Board of Visitors**

The School is excited to welcome three new members to our Board of Visitors. The mission of this group is to assist and advise our Dean on strategic priorities and initiatives focused on attaining our mission. In addition, board members are committed to supporting philanthropic efforts by serving as advocates, connectors, and individual donors.



Margaret Kemp Carlson, BA'83, MBA'89

Margaret is an accomplished business executive, consultant, and leadership coach whose career has spanned healthcare, finance, entrepreneurship, and organizational growth. A passionate advocate for helping organizations and people reach their full potential, she also brings a personal appreciation for the nursing profession through her mother, who was a nurse. Her strategic thinking, business expertise, and commitment to service will be valuable assets to the Board of Visitors.



Tracy Gosselin, MSN'97

Tracy is one of nursing's most respected leaders. As Chief Nurse Executive and Chair of Nursing at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, she leads one of the nation's premier healthcare organizations. Tracy's connection to Duke runs deep, beginning with her early years as an oncology nurse at Duke University Hospital and continuing through her distinguished career in nursing leadership. Her experience, insight, and dedication to nursing excellence will be tremendous assets to the Board of Visitors.



Marti Croll Taylor, MSN'93

Recognized as a Duke Nursing 2024 Distinguished Alumna, Marti joins the Board of Visitors following a remarkable career as a nurse, healthcare executive, and national leader. Whether leading major health systems or championing innovative care models for vulnerable populations, Marti has consistently demonstrated a passion for improving lives. Her strong Duke ties and unwavering commitment to compassionate, equitable care make her a wonderful addition to the board community.

"One of the things I value most about our Board of Visitors is the breadth of experience, perspectives, and passion each member brings to the table," said Kate Gray, Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Affairs. "Margaret, Tracy, and Marti embody those qualities, and I look forward to working with them, and our entire BOV, in helping to advance the Duke University School of Nursing mission."

Alumna **Wanda White Spears RN'47** recently celebrated her 100th birthday with her family, who represents a very special legacy—four generations of nurses! While at Duke, Spears was honored with membership in the Saint Filomena Society, a distinction bestowed by nursing faculty upon outstanding students through a special ceremony. She was also inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, recognizing her academic excellence and commitment to the nursing profession.

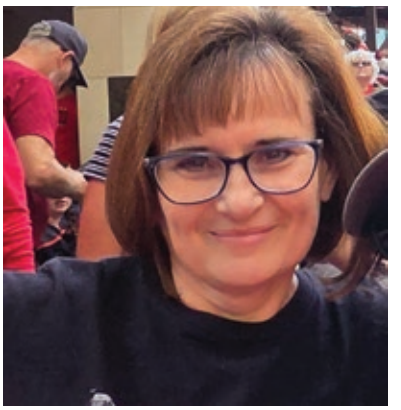
"Gran taught us from an early age that caring for others requires both compassion and grit," her granddaughter Hallie shared. "She instilled in our family a deep commitment to service, a legacy that has been passed down through generations—not only through nursing, but through the belief that helping others is one of life's greatest callings. Her passion for nursing inspired all of us and continues to shape the way we serve our communities today."



In the photo, Wanda sits in front of (from left) granddaughter Madison Asef Mote, RN, MSN, CNL, CPHON; granddaughter Hallie Spears Gunst, RN, MSN, FNP-C; daughter Joan Spears Halcomb, BSN; and great-granddaughter Reese Fessenden, anticipating her BSN in 2028.



Kathy Trotter



Carrie Lewis



Jennifer Selleck

1970s

Christine A. Baser-Habib, BSN'77, is serving as reunion chair for the class's 50th reunion in April 2027 and looks forward to helping classmates reconnect, celebrate their Duke Nursing ties, and show their gratitude to DUSON.

Kim P. Hug, BSN'77, encourages fellow BSN'77 classmates to gather for their 50th reunion weekend, April 9-11, 2027. Recently retired, Hug has moved to Ponte Vedra, Florida, near Jacksonville, to be closer to family, and welcomes visitors.

1990s

Kathy Trotter, DNP'98, Post-Masters'12, received the DUSON Faculty Clinical Practice Award for practice at the Duke Breast Surgery Clinic and the volunteer TROSA Gynecology Clinic.

Crystal Lynne (Harris) Tillman, MSN'97, DNP'13, received the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Meritorious Service Award in Chicago for her work with the North Carolina Board of Nursing, NCLEX and nursing education.

2000s

Carrie Lewis, MSN'02, started a new job as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner with Duke's Pediatric Epilepsy Outpatient Center.

Gina Jones Renteria, ABSN'07, was recently promoted to Chief Nurse Executive at Kaiser Permanente in Southern California, a 257-bed acute care hospital.

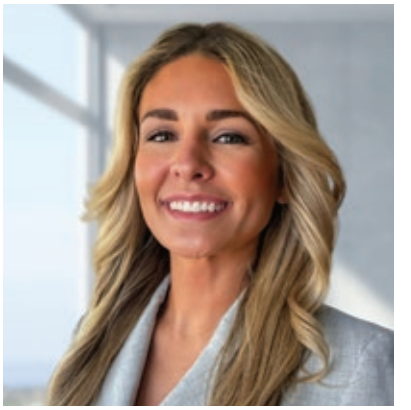
Jennifer Selleck, MSN'08, is a Family Nurse Practitioner and recently founded the private practice Indigo Harmony Health, LLC. She is currently seeing patients in Virginia.



Jennifer Day



Gwen Klinker



Angelika Gale Barth

Angelika Gale Barth, MBA, ABSN'19, is a Patient Care Supervisor for the Float Pool at Fairview Health Services in Minnesota, supporting nurses and nursing assistants across a range of specialties. Previously, she worked in progressive cardiac and post-op transplant care at Mayo Clinic. Barth completed her MBA in May 2026, earned Mayo Clinic's Quality Improvement certification in 2024, and continues to pursue her textiles and design business, Angelika Gale.



Stacy Thomas



Jaya Bhardwaj



Reesa Artz



Jessica Metcalf

2010s

Tracey Bell (Robertson), DNP'11, was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).

Faith Selchick, ABSN'11, received the 3rd Annual Cancer Nursing Today CARE Award. She was also elected to Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) Board of Directors for 2026-2029 term and named Co-Director of Oncology for Global Nursing AI Alliance. She currently works as Assistant Vice President, Cancer Services, for the Westchester Medical Center Health Network.

Jennifer Day, PhD'13, was promoted to Vice President, Nursing Practice & Professional Development, at the University of Maryland Medical System.

Gwen Klinker, DNP'17, was recently elected as President-Elect for the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists. She will serve as President in 2027. Dr. Klinker continues in her role as Clinical Nurse Specialist at UW Health in Madison, Wisconsin.

2020s

Stacy Thomas, MSN'22, DNP'24, was awarded a 2026 AANP State Award (Delaware) for Outstanding Contributions.

Jaya Bhardwaj, ABSN'23, has been working at Duke Urogynecology for almost 3 years and was featured in a Duke Health Careers story. She is currently enrolled in Duke's Women's Health Nurse Practitioner program.

Reesa Artz, ABSN'24, was crowned Miss California Elite with National American Miss in July 2026 and will represent California at the national competition in November 2026. She also received a National Institutes of Health-funded TL1 Research Fellowship through the Institute of Translational Health Sciences to support her work developing an Indigenous birthworker training curriculum in partnership with tribal health organizations. Artz is entering the third year of her PhD in Indigenous and Rural Health at Montana State University and also serves as a Title I school nurse, volunteer birth doula, and childbirth educator.

Jessica Metcalf, MSN'25, accepted a job with Duke Health as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner. She also received the Thelma Ingles Excellence in Clinical Expertise and Scholarly Activities Award, published in the Advances of Neonatal Care "Early Screening for Cerebal Palsy: A Systematic Review," and subsequently presented that publication at the 2026 Spring National Advanced Practice Neonatal Nurses Conference.

Kelva Jones, ABSN'26, has started a new job as a Clinical Nurse II Resident, RN with Wake Med.



Harriet Lefebvre Gillies



Katherine Bunting Randolph



Harriet Danielson Cone



Eleanor M. Helmann



Betsy O'Brien Hackman



Derrick Deon Brown

1940s

Helen H. Rearden, BSN'47

1950s

Harriet Lefebvre Gillies, BSN'55

Katherine Bunting Randolph, BSN'58

1960s

Harriet Danielson Cone, BSN'61

1970s

Eleanor M. Helmann, MSN'71

Betsy O'Brien Hackman, BSN'79

2000s

Derrick Deon Brown, ABSN'06



Dean Michael Relf

Ruby Wilson Center Dedication

On April 9 following the spring meeting of the School's Nursing Alumni Council, alumni, faculty, staff, and students gathered on the fourth floor of the IPEC Building to mark the formal dedication of the Ruby L. Wilson Center for Nursing Science & Innovation (WINS Center). In attendance, alongside faculty and staff, were family members of Dean Emerita Ruby L. Wilson, EdD'69, MSN, RN, FAAN, whose generous estate gift supported both the center and an international visiting professorship: her niece Shawn Jennings, her nephew-in-law Peter Jennings, her cousin Paula Steele, and her colleague and former caregiver Gwen Waddell-Schultz, MSN, RN, NE-BC, who served as executor of her estate.

"It is a joy to celebrate Ruby's outstanding career and immeasurable contributions and to honor her philanthropy and accomplishments in elevating nursing science with the naming of this center," said Dean Michael Relf, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN, in his remarks.





Sharron Docherty, Vice Dean for Research and Innovation, Executive Director of the Ruby L. Wilson Center for Nursing Science and Innovation



Members of Dean Wilson's family pose underneath her portrait alongside Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Affairs Kate Gray, Vice Dean Docherty, and Dean Relf

SAVE THE DATE

REUNION WEEKEND | APRIL 9-11, 2027

Duke University School of Nursing

Mark your calendars and plan to return to Durham for Reunion Weekend!

Reconnect with classmates, celebrate shared memories, see how the School has grown, and engage with fellow alumni, students, faculty, and friends.

Whether you graduated recently or decades ago, we look forward to welcoming you back to campus.

More details, including dates, events, and registration information, will be shared via email and online at **nursing.duke.edu/alumni-friends**







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