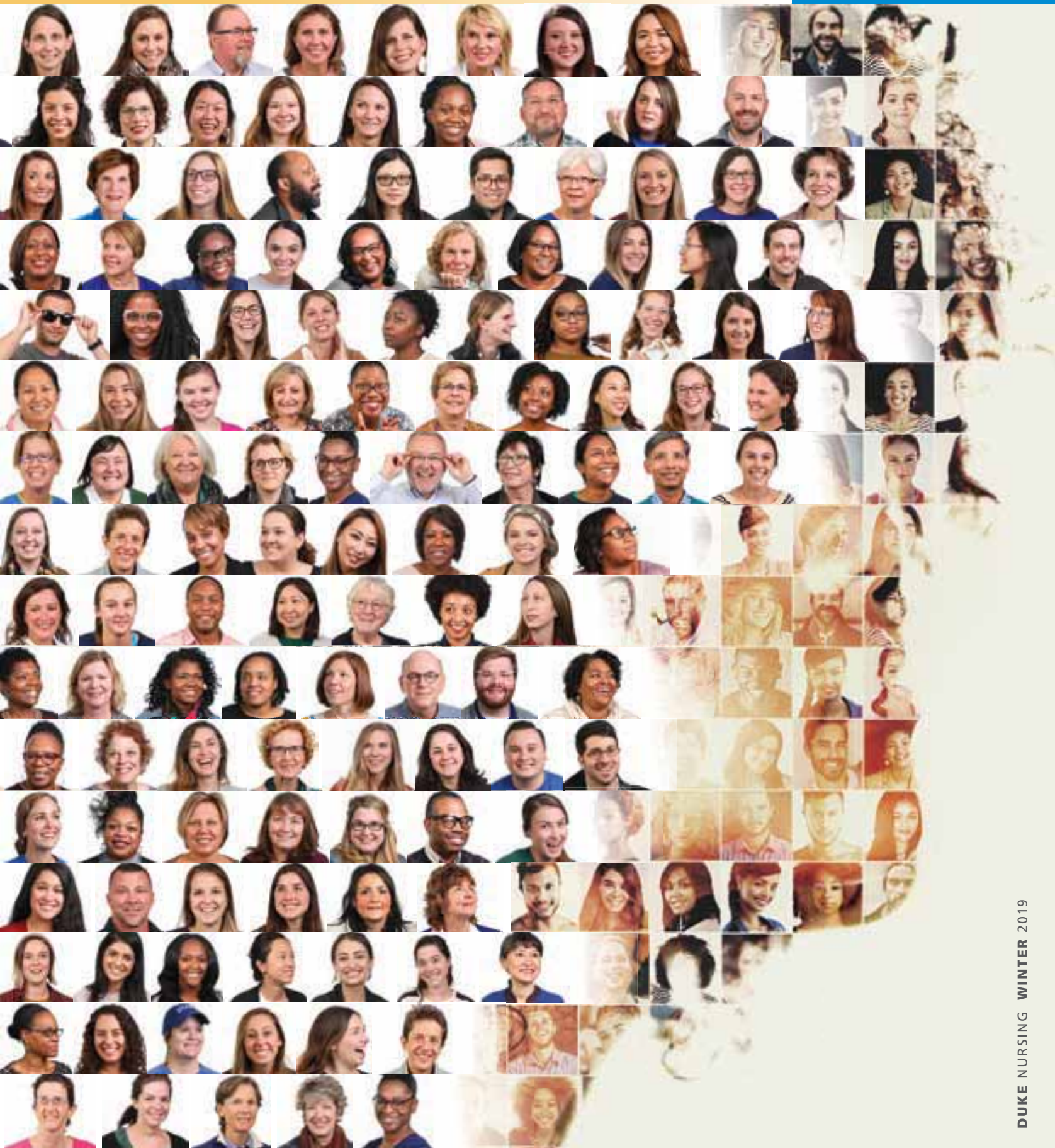


DUSON's Singular Vision

Through the
**Perspectives
of Many**





Being a nurse means embracing certain **core human values:**


Care, dignity, trust, kindness, respect, compassion, empathy; but one can't uphold these values without a sense of understanding. The often quoted Stephen Covey (2014) expression "We first seek to understand before we seek to be understood," captures the essence of the diversity and inclusiveness efforts at Duke University School of Nursing, says **Marion E. Broome, PhD, RN, FAAN**, dean and Ruby Wilson Professor of Nursing, DUSON; vice chancellor for nursing affairs and associate vice president for academic affairs for nursing, Duke University Health System.

Fostering a truly diverse and inclusive environment requires moving beyond conventional ideas of diversity for

certain groups, Broome says. True diversity and inclusion means working to break down those outdated definitions and challenging one's understanding of them.

"The important thing is to get beyond the numbers," Broome says. "It's not just about race or gender or sexual orientation. All those are important, but it's the diversity of thought that people bring. It's the diversity of experience, and the diversity of perspective that makes everyone a better person. I think that is really the important point."

Studies have shown that diverse groups perform better than homogenous groups, Broome says. Teams that have different perspectives and opinions, even ones that clash or cause discomfort, ultimately make better fact-based



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decisions. At DUSON, diversity and inclusiveness are core values that have been the center of a concerted effort to create an environment that reflects those ideas and helps allow everyone to thrive no matter who they are.

In addition to underrepresented minority groups, DUSON encourages diversity in many forms: diversity of lifestyles and beliefs, thoughts and ideas, educational innovation, personal and cultural backgrounds, professional experiences and global perspectives.



Support and Encouragement

DUSON has created a network of support and encouragement through staffing and programs, such as the Health Equity Academy (HEA), under the leadership of **Brigit Carter, PhD, MSN, RN, CCRN**, associate professor, which supports underrepresented minorities through scholarships and with social and academic mentoring. Working to ensure diverse students exist on campus is the first step, but making them feel part of DUSON, knowing they belong and have something to contribute, is the real work. It's really about inclusion.

"A passion of mine is to help men in nursing feel more comfortable in settings that are predominantly female and white," says **Michael Cary, PhD, RN**, associate professor of nursing, who has served on the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) and HEA admissions committees. "A setting such as Duke can be very intimidating and elite. We have regular conversations about how to interact with people from different backgrounds and how that can be uncomfortable."

Cary believes the sense of inclusivity on campus is growing because of the steps DUSON has taken to better educate students, faculty and staff on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness. He cites the HEA along with holistic application admissions — which take into account factors like leadership potential and life experience in addition to academic performance — as having a big impact on the variety of students coming to DUSON. "I don't think it's any one thing. It's this wave of events and activities that help solidify its importance."



Cary

Diversity of Thought

Part of understanding one another is being open to differences of opinion and perspective – and every diverse group will inevitably experience disagreement. Thoughts and ideas are formed from

shared experiences and first semester ABSN students know this first hand. Students are presented with challenging classroom or clinical situations — where, for example, a patient may refuse their service because of their ethnicity or the provider might feel uncomfortable with a patient’s gender identity — but then given a supportive environment to talk about

issues that arise, says **Jacquelyn McMillian-Bohler, PhD, CNM, CNE**, assistant professor and HEA mentor.

“We have a responsibility to listen and help them work through those situations and recognize that none of us are perfect,” she says. “There are going to be people who challenge you in a way that’s uncomfortable and being able to acknowledge it and say, ‘You know what? I know this is bias I’m walking into and I’m going to make a conscious effort to not be judgmental.’”

Before students even arrive on campus, DUSON sets the tone as a School that values diversity, McMillian-Bohler says, noting that it starts with an admission process that asks about background and experiences as a way to promote meaningful reflection. Once on campus, there are student groups focused on multiculturalism, LGBTQ

issues and gender-identity, among others diversity topics.

Preparing faculty to teach a diverse student population is also a priority at DUSON. The Teaching for Equity program is an interdisciplinary year-long fellowship that offers workshops around race and identity, and how to create a culture of inclusiveness that helps improve communication and learning.

“It is ever-present in everything we do,” McMillian-Bohler says. “In terms of hiring, there’s been an effort to be thoughtful about the process and recognize the need to meet the position’s criteria, but to also think about creating a diverse culture for the students because we know if we have a health care force that looks like the patients we serve, then we have better outcomes. The same thing applies to our students.”

“We’ve done a lot over the past four years,” Broome says, citing the School’s strategic plan, diversity-focused programming, and the Dean’s Diversity Conversations — periodic meetings that are open to anyone to talk about issues or concerns on diversity, intolerance or discrimination.

“I would argue we’ve done the easy things. It’s embracing the diversity of thought that can really get you where you want to go. In an academic organization, that’s what makes us so strong — our diversity of experience, education and, frankly, passion. But sometimes when people are very passionate about a subject, they focus on it to the extent that they might not know a lot about other things.” With close to 90 faculty there can be disagreement and different opinions



about what ‘makes’ a professional nurse, Broome says. It comes down to having respect and understanding and being willing to talk about and embrace differences to create the best learning environment for all students.

A diverse nursing faculty will also impact interdisciplinary interactions at Duke, spreading those values beyond DUSON, McMillian-Bohler says. Students should be prepared to go out into the world of nursing with the values of diversity and inclusivity following them to their clinics and practices. “We first must understand what the patient’s idea of health and wellness is, and recognize that we don’t define it — that’s patient-centered and patient-driven,” she says. “If we don’t first understand what’s desired by that patient for an outcome, then no matter what we suggest, it’s just not going to happen.”

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McMillian-Bohler



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Educational Innovation

Helping faculty be especially aware is an important tool in creating a successfully inclusive culture. The main goal of DUSON’s Institute of Educational Excellence (IEE) is preparing faculty to help transform nursing education and continue improving it, says **Beth Phillips, PhD, RN, CNE**, associate professor and interim director of the IEE.

Tailoring education to be mindful of students with different perspectives and backgrounds is one way to help them reach their potential. Through teaching methods such as simulations, case studies and workshops, faculty can incorporate examples such as same-sex couples, racial or ethnic patients, or even transgender patients in their lessons, Phillips says. “We’ll discuss various biases that health professionals might have, or the team and patients may have,” Phillips says. “We’re not afraid to go there.”

Indeed, one of the more recent movements in diversifying teaching is the inclusion of the transgender population. Something as simple as asking patients their preferred pronoun can be awkward for some students, but critical to some patients. “It may seem uncomfortable at first, but for some people, it is very freeing to them to have a health care professional not say, ‘What are you?’” Phillips says.

In addition to biases based around race, ethnicity and gender identity, there are other biases, such as those toward the poor, the uneducated or the morbidly obese. Phillips says using simulation mannequins of different body weights is another way to teach about diversity.

Students are also taught that patients can come in wearing clothing or jewelry that is spiritually or religiously significant to them and it’s important not to dismiss or disrespect those choices. On the contrary, caregivers should try to find something in common with their patients. Broome agrees that finding a point of commonality can be helpful for the patient as well.

“People who are vulnerable, whether it’s due to illness or social determinants of health, in their interaction with a health care provider, want that provider to look like them because they think and feel that what they say will be valued and they’ll be believed,” Broome says.



Phillips



Diversity of Personal and Cultural Background

The world's constantly changing demographics means nurses will inevitably see many types of patients. So beyond the scientific and technical skills the profession demands, nurses need to also hone even more delicate interpersonal skills. Often, assumptions are made about patients based on appearance, where they live or their socio-economic status. These assumptions however can lead providers down a wrong path, resulting in poor health outcomes for patients.



Anne Derouin, DNP '10, MSN '00, APRN, CPNP, FAANP, associate professor and lead faculty for DUSON's Pediatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioner major, says making assumptions can be a real problem, especially with adolescent patients. "We often think at least one parent is paying attention to

Derouin this teenager, but in fact, sometimes it's really not the case, especially if there are social determinants of health working against them." Children maybe are being raised by grandparents, living alone on the streets, victims of trafficking or are undocumented. It's the provider's job to ask the right questions, so that the truth can be revealed, even if it is little by little.

A provider should be asking questions not just about the patient's physical status, but questions such as: how did they travel to the appointment, what do their guardians do for a living, what's their typical meal, what do they do for fun? "Think of the patient coming to you with a backpack," Derouin says. "You're asking them to open their backpack and take a glimpse of what is inside to help inform you when you're making a plan for care."

"We know there's diversity among genders and we know there's diversity among races," Derouin says. "We often stop there. I see diversity in body types, in preferences, in spiritual beliefs, and cultural practices." Even children within the same family can have diverse characteristics or beliefs that can inform their health care needs.

In addition to urging her students to be personally and professionally sensitive to differences, Derouin encourages them to look for a professional home that shares these values. "No one works in a silo anymore," she says. "We work as a team and you have to look for team members who can help you with asking these important questions." It's important that everyone on the care team is collecting information. "I want to make sure that I'm not the only person looking into the backpack."

Derouin says the result of taking the time to really understand the patient is that the patient feels seen and heard and included in their own health decisions.

Diversity of Professional Experience

Diversity also includes being mindful of different responsibilities nurses may have on the job. There are times when diverse professional experiences can create a huge and unexpected opportunity for better understanding. Associate Dean of Finance and Administration **David Bowersox, MBA** teaches an advanced health care finance course to about 100 distance-based Master's and Doctor of Nursing Practice students each year. He's been amazed at how some of the students' responses to questions differ based on what types of positions they hold.

"I had one student who was a senior leader at a big-city hospital," he says, recalling a discussion related to procurement of supplies. The student at the large hospital proceeded to outline the challenging bureaucratic process, involving meetings with the procurement and the budget offices, as well as other staff members. In contrast, another student worked at a clinic in the Arctic Circle. "She's the only one there," Bowersox says. "There is no procurement office; she had to figure it out herself." The "how" for this nurse, included the physical challenges of getting supplies to remote areas, where transportation could involve travel by road, air or even sled.



Bowersox

The stark contrast in perspectives shared by these nurses sparked much discussion, Bowersox says, and challenged students' assumptions about what various jobs entail. The online nature of DUSON's courses allows students from all over the world to share diverse professional experiences, expanding their knowledge and deepening their understanding.



The Global Lens

Going abroad, or interacting with someone from another country, can be an impactful learning experience.

Broome says she herself was able to practice abroad later in her career, and the experience was profound. “You learn how much we get right in our country, and you learn how much we get wrong.”

DUSON’s Office of Global and Community Health Initiatives helps students go out into

the world and visiting scholars coming to DUSON’s campus. Both experiences provide the opportunity to see diversity through a global lens.

Each year, between 70 and 90 students at DUSON have a two-week global clinical immersion experience, says **Michael Relf, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC, AACRN, CNE, FAAN**, associate dean for Global and Community Affairs.

Relf says diversity from a global perspective is not only understanding global health issues, but understanding social justice issues and bringing that information back to the U.S. Relf however, warns about

making presumptions. “Unfortunately, many times we have ethnocentric views that we know how to fix all the problems,” he says, noting that other parts of the world have much better childhood immunization rates and better health outcomes at less cost. For example, the childhood vaccination rate in Barbados is 97 percent, compared to mid- to low-80s in the U.S.

But even if students cannot travel abroad themselves, exposure to visiting scholars at DUSON allows them the chance to gain global perspectives. “We bring nurse scholars from around the world, at all stages of their academic journeys, to be members of our community,” Relf says. Our domestic students learn by going to scholarly presentations about international research or projects and never leave campus.

“You don’t have to leave the U.S. to be global citizens,” Relf says. “You can go a few hundred feet to Duke Hospital where people are speaking multiple languages, who practice different religions and who have different orientation and gender identities. It’s the professional nurse’s responsibility not to make a judgment, but to demonstrate humility and sensitivity to work with that person, that family, that community.”

Broome recalls a recent discussion with a group of PhD students when they asked her why full professors were not more diverse. “I’m not making excuses here,” she responded. “But when I earned my PhD in the mid-1980s, all of us were white....that’s just the way it was. Thirty years later, just look at the incredible diversity of this class.” I told them that years from now, when they themselves are full professors, the conversation they would be having with their PhD students would surely be different.

Until then, DUSON will continue to have the difficult conversations, working towards a place of equity for all. “I ask on a regular basis if people feel happy here,” Broome says. Duke is well known for its welcoming hospitality, she says, but she wants to know if that feeling sticks. “If you’re in a climate where you feel valued and supported, then you will be productive and you’ll be successful.” If students, faculty and staff find their niche for success, the School will shine.

“I think valuing diversity as an organization is what makes us do what we do, and what we do makes us one of the leading nursing schools in the country.” ■



Relf

