

Application for Mildred Dahne Award  
Department of Nursing – February 2020

The Department of Nursing is an energetic and productive community of nurse teacher-scholars that significantly contribute to the mission and vision of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), impact the surrounding community substantially, and influence nursing education and national healthcare through their continuous efforts to improve care and create access. The core of the department consists of 14 tenured and tenure-track faculty members and 4 full-time masters prepared staff, all of which are licensed practitioners in addition to being expert educators, and 1 full-time certified healthcare simulation technician. Five part-time and 32 adjunct clinical instructors that provide clinical education to undergraduate and graduate students at our community partner sites support the work of the department. The majority of faculty maintain clinical practice as licensed and advanced practice nurses and nurse scientists which benefits the students and larger TCNJ community as it enables faculty to bring real world experiences into the curriculum and campus and involve students in the nursing profession at the local, state, and national levels. Faculty offer their clinical practice sites as learning opportunities for students.

### **EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND/OR SUPPORT OF TEACHING**

The intense program of study drives student success as evidenced by students consistently achieving high pass rates for the national licensing exam, averaging greater than 92% since 2012. The most recent class of 2019 with 65 baccalaureate students, achieved a 100% pass rate, a distinction not shared by many nursing programs and exceeding the national average of 88%. The rigorous curriculum closely aligns with current nursing practice. The department of nursing maintains strong academic-practice partnerships with six major health systems in the region, with many of them hiring TCNJ nursing students upon graduation.

The graduate program continues to grow with the current enrollment at 52. Graduates demonstrate consistently high pass rates for the national advanced practice licensing exam; the class of 2019 achieved a pass rate of 100%, exceeding the national average for all advanced practice program types. Employment rates for the graduate program have been 100% since the program began.

Contributing factors to the program's superiority include the robust experiential learning provided in our state-of-the-art simulation center by three certified simulation experts on staff. Unlike most programs, the simulated learning for all graduate and undergraduate students, includes the opportunity for learners to review their video-taped performance and identify areas for improvement. Faculty have created innovative simulations for students focused on national priorities such as end-of-life care, geriatric care, and emergency management care. Student evaluations indicate the value of this kinesthetic learning:

*“The patient was a DNR (do not resuscitate) and I found myself conflicted because I desperately wanted to do something to help the patient but respecting the patient's last wish was more important”*

*“After this class. . .caring for those who have recently lost a loved one might be one of the hardest things I will ever have to do”*

The simulation center provides opportunities for collaboration within the campus community and with our community partners on important social issues. Nursing faculty worked with the Office of Anti-Violence Initiatives (OAVI) staff and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to adapt the *In Her Shoes* simulation which portrays eight scenarios of domestic violence, providing students the opportunity to respond to environmental cues, make

decisions or choices, and see the consequences of those choices. This simulation has been offered on campus annually for 8 years so that nursing students and the campus community can appreciate and support those in the desperate situation that domestic violence creates.

Each year the department of nursing enacts *The Community Action Poverty Simulation*. Participants are assigned a role of a person who must navigate the system for a simulated “month” over a 2-hour period experiencing issues of accessibility, systems-based problems, financial difficulties, and challenges of the daily struggle to survive faced by many. This powerful experience that began as an endeavor to increase understanding and empathy in our students has expanded to include students from other majors including Public Health and Social Work as well as members of the surrounding community healthcare institutions. The faculty continue to create innovative learning experiences. This year faculty added six newly created school nurse simulations, an educational undertaking only offered at TCNJ, and are simulating a mass casualty-learning day in April.

Real world nursing scholarship opportunities frame our distinctive education program where research that faculty are conducting is being used to guide and direct instruction in the classroom and beyond. Dr. Yolanda Nelson’s pilot study and subsequent manuscript on best practices for mentoring African American (AA) students was done in collaboration with two nursing students. Their work was selected for presentation through competitive process for the Eastern Nurses Research Society Conference in Boston this March. Just since January 2019, the faculty have had 6 publications in peer-reviewed journals that were co-authored with 18 baccalaureate students and 2 graduate students.

Beyond what many programs offer, the nursing faculty provide students the opportunity to grow in scholarship together; since January 2019, faculty from the department of nursing have collaborated with students to present 9 podium presentations and 13 poster presentations at state, national, or international conferences. One student won first place for her poster at the New Jersey Asian Nurse Association and another student won a rising star award at the international conference for Sigma Theta Tau, the honor society of nursing. Locally, Dr. Rahshida Atkins worked with a student to present a poster at the Interdisciplinary Research Day at TCNJ this academic year and six students are currently assisting Dr. Atkins in a research protocol studying at-risk disadvantaged mothers’ willingness to be screened for depression.

The blending of robust classroom instruction, innovative experiential practice, and exceptional research opportunities create academic excellence that has earned The College of New Jersey Department of Nursing a ranking of #33 in the national top 100 best nursing schools in the Mid-Atlantic region and #2 overall in the state of New Jersey.

## **DEPARTMENT IMPACT**

The impact of the department of nursing is extensive in the nursing community. Along with offering the traditional baccalaureate of science in nursing (BSN) curriculum, faculty have designed innovative programs to support our community partners. The RN to BSN degree program was specifically developed to provide registered nurses the opportunity to advance their education by earning a BSN off-campus at our community partner institutions that include Capital Health System, Hunterdon Healthcare System, Saint Peter’s Healthcare System, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, and Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center. The masters in the science of nursing program offers 5 tracks that include family, adult, and neonatal nurse practitioner programs in addition to school nurse and clinical nurse leader roles. Students from all programs interface with our community partners throughout their program of study.

Developing a diverse nursing workforce is a national priority to meet the needs of our diverse nation. In September, 2017, Dr. Yolanda Nelson, an AA nursing faculty with a long history of mentoring students of color, established a mentoring program entitled *Moving*

*Forward Together* with the purpose of supporting the growth and success of AA nursing students at TCNJ. This program exemplifies a signature experience in which faculty and nurse leaders within the community mentor students to enhance intellectual curiosity and leadership skills, foster character development, and build self-confidence. Currently 31 mentors (AA nurse leaders within New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) are involved with 29 student mentees. The impact of this program is demonstrated in a mentee comment on a recent evaluation:

*“This very new program started by Dr. Nelson allows African American nursing students like me, the opportunity to connect with and learn from esteemed African American nurse leaders who are exceptional in their given field. As a minority at the college and soon to be minority in my profession, I can’t express enough how important it is for me and other minority students who hope to become nurse leaders to see the path of success that other African Americans have taken.”*

Civic duty is a central theme of the nursing program. Annually, students travel to Capitol Hill Day in Washington, DC with the Black Nurses Association. Because the desire to participate is high among students, this year an essay competition was instituted to determine which students would have the opportunity. Three student nurses from the junior and sophomore classes earned a position in the delegation that attended on February 6, 2020. Additionally, since 2015, each year 2 students have been supported to attend the Health Policy Summit on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

To address the national nursing faculty shortage that profoundly impacts the looming national nursing shortage, faculty developed the Nursing Education Certificate program that began in fall of 2019 and is offered off-site at Hunterdon Medical Center and Capital Health to increase access to education. Recognizing the desperate need for primary care providers, in 2017, the department of nursing formed its first-ever partnership with a primary care agency, the Henry J. Austin Health Center in Trenton, creating a faculty joint appointment role to support educational opportunities for TCNJ students.

The department of nursing’s strong affiliations in the community create valuable learning experiences for TCNJ students and opportunities for resource sharing for the health of the community. An example of our reciprocal relationship was having the chief medical officer of the Henry J. Austin Health Center come to campus in 2019 to speak with students about treatment options for opioid use disorder while our students rotated to the clinic as part of their practicum experience. A major focus in the region and for the clinic is promoting childhood vaccinations. Our students contributed by volunteering and administering vaccines at several publicized events. Other student volunteer activities facilitated by faculty that address extreme needs in the community include serving at the Trenton Soup Kitchen, teaching mindfulness at the Rescue Mission of Trenton, conducting food drives, clothing drives, blood drives, and participating in Narcan training.

Population health has become a national health imperative. In July 2015, Dr. Katie Hooven was awarded an implementation grant of \$198,627.00 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to enhance population-based health care in nursing education through academic practice partnership. This grant spanned several years and created opportunities for faculty to interact with national experts and supported program development to address population health within the nursing curriculum. The impact has been exponential as faculty have created expanded opportunities for students to engage the community in national initiatives to improve health and prevent illness through education and healthy lifestyle choices. Students develop the necessary skills to advocate for and provide needed service to neglected communities and

disenfranchised individuals. The immense need to provide service and support that promotes health serves as an underpinning in every nursing course.

To tackle the national call to support victims of violence, this year, Dr. Dara Whalen was awarded a competitive grant under the Victims of Crime Act. This award originates from the federal government and is allocated to the state government for disbursement. TCNJ was awarded \$435,344.00. This grant will fund the “*Am I Okay?*” program which will lead TCNJ to being a trauma informed care center to support victims of crime with appropriate services and will provide for expansion of the program to nearby colleges.

Because of the rising suicide epidemic, Dr. Eileen Alexy completed a training program to be an instructor in Youth Mental Health First Aid and is now providing that instruction to students and faculty across the campus so that they may help others in crisis.

The 2010 Childhood Obesity Study identified a 49% childhood obesity rate in Trenton, New Jersey public schools. Additionally, Trenton elementary school nurses reported a 50% increase in type 2 diabetes mellitus in children. To address this local crisis, in 2014 Novo Nordisk awarded the first in a series of grants for \$265,000.00 to the School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science. Funding supported faculty collaboration with community partners to develop the SNACK program. Lead by Dr. Tracy Perron, faculty and students, in conjunction with school administrators, nurses, and teachers, have spent the last 5 years working with parents and caregivers as well as children ages 5-10 in Trenton schools to increase their understanding of nutrition and physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles. Data indicate that children’s nutritional knowledge increased over time and the project has afforded TCNJ students the opportunity to participate in research and provide healthy lifestyle education in the community.

In 2016, TCNJ became the first Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Institute Regional Center in the nation, under the direction of Dr. Gerry Altmiller, a recognized national leader for her expertise in quality and patient safety education. The QSEN Institute Regional Center at TCNJ serves the northeast United States and provides education focused on quality improvement and patient safety strategies to students, faculty, and nurses in direct care roles as well as in administrative roles. In 2016, The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, an arm of the Division of Health and Human Services, awarded \$32,800.00 to Dr. Altmiller to support educational programming about quality and safety in healthcare. The QSEN Institute Regional Center partners with the New Jersey Hospital Association which provides continuing education credits for programs held on TCNJ’s Campus. To date, a national webinar as well as 4 on-site programs have been held, bringing visitors from around the country to our campus. Nursing students attend and participate in these events.

Quality improvement and patient safety are now integral in every aspect of the curriculum. Since 2015, Dr. Altmiller has facilitated nursing students from freshman to senior level, in writing for the monthly *Quality and Safety Matters* school newsletter which is distributed to all faculty and students of the school. Following the publishing process, student contributions are reviewed, returned to them for revisions, and edited. The final copy is loaded into the template and sent to them as proof pages, teaching them the publishing process while affording students the opportunity to inform peers about current national initiatives in healthcare safety.

The reach of the nursing faculty has also had international implications. Since 2013 students have had the opportunity to travel with faculty on a week-long medical mission to underserved areas that include Costa Rica, El Salvador and Haiti. In 2016, Dr. Sharon Byrne worked diligently with the Office of Global Affairs and the Center for Global Engagement as well as the Haitian American Caucus to develop a 4-credit elective course for a global health experience in Haiti. To date, 15 baccalaureate and 3 graduate students have participated in the medical missions to Haiti. In 2019, through a competitive process, Dr. Constance Kartoz and Dr.

Byrne co-developed the freshman seminar global experience trip to London to explore how culture impacts societal decisions about healthcare.

In 2019, Dr. Byrne was invited to Loni, India to provide consultation to India-Pavara Medical Institute. Additionally, she traveled to Dubai, UAE for two podium presentations at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress on Public Health and Health Care Management. In August, 2019, Dr. Altmiller was invited to Beijing, China where she partnered with nurses and nurse faculty at Peking University First Hospital to present at 3 conferences, including China's national initiative driven conference focused on increasing the number of men in nursing to combat the national nursing shortage there. In the months that followed, Dr. Altmiller collaborated with her Chinese colleague to publish 2 manuscripts describing their partnership in peer reviewed journals.

## **SERVICE TO PROFESSION**

Faculty achievements demonstrate their pursuit of life-long learning and continuing contributions to knowledge development of both nursing practice and nursing education and is evidenced by their many publications and presentations. In addition to those done in collaboration with students that are described earlier, a one-year snapshot since January of 2019 of faculty scholarship includes **21** peer reviewed publications, **17** national podium presentations, **16** international podium presentations, and **16** national and international poster presentations.

Dr. Sharon Byrne was chosen to participate in the Faculty Fellowship in Israel in 2019. This is a competitive academic fellowship that links scholars from diverse disciplines with their Israeli counterparts for the purpose of initiating exchanges and collaborations for research. Dr. Byrne serves as an ambassador to the National League for Nursing, as secretary of the Tri State Sigma Consortium (the regional chapter of the nursing honor society), and as a dissertation committee member of PhD students at Drexel University.

Dr. Gerry Altmiller was inducted into the Academy of Nursing in 2018, an honor shared by less than 3000 people worldwide. The focus of the Academy is to influence and shape health policy for the nation and the world. In 2019, Dr. Altmiller was inducted into the Academy of Nursing Education, a distinction that only 17 other nurses received that year. The focus of that Academy is to steer the direction of curricula for nursing education nationally. Dr. Altmiller is recognized for her contributions to nursing education as recipient of the Excellence in Nursing Leadership, The Linda Cronenwett Leadership, and the Excellence in Geriatric Nursing Education and Practice Awards. She serves on the national QSEN Advisory Board, is a national consultant for QSEN, and leads the QSEN Academic Task Force, a group of 110 nurse educators from around the country that conduct academic focused research.

Dr. Constance Kartoz serves as treasurer for the Forum for Nurses in Advance Practice. Dr. Kartoz also is a member of the Education Subcommittee for the International Family Nurses Association. Dr. Dara Whalen serves as a co-chair for the Trauma and Resilience special interest group of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculty. Dr. Katie Hooven serves as vice-chair of the Delaware Township Board of Health and as treasurer of Delta Nu Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. Dr. Tami Jakubowski serves on the Charter Review Task Force for Sigma Theta Tau.

Collectively, the Department of Nursing faculty serve as reviewers for 24 peer-review nursing journals. Dr. Altmiller is a member of the editorial board for *Nurse Educator Journal*. The externally funded grants noted earlier attest to the recognized expertise of the faculty as contributors to the nursing profession and to the wider social needs of society. Faculty members' deep commitment of engagement with students in professional activities supports service to the profession in developing tomorrow's leaders.