

FALL 2025

heartbeat

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF NURSING AND HEALTH STUDIES



OPERATION IBIS

A NEW APPROACH TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING

Excellence Attracts EXCELLENCE



The School of Nursing and Health Studies congratulates UHealth—University of Miami Health System on receiving the prestigious **Magnet® with Distinction** for nursing from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. UHealth's ongoing commitment to collaboration, innovation, and compassion continues to elevate the standard of nursing care.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING US PROUD

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

As we wrap up this incredible University of Miami Centennial year, I'm excited to present you with our Fall 2025 issue of *Heartbeat* magazine. Reviewing these pages, I'm impressed by how many moving and important celebrations our community has shared over the past few months. We've welcomed new students and families, sent off graduates in style, recognized the excellent work of our clinical preceptors with help from Miss America (p. 9), administered the nursing pledge at our White Coat ceremonies (see "Inspiring Tradition," p. 18), and a great deal more.

Most striking is the incredible enthusiasm, passion, and positive energy these celebrations generate, the sheer joy of them. And I believe it is because beneath it all, these celebrations are about one thing: community. When we come together, we bridge gaps, connect partners, grow ideas, and build resilience for our nursing and health studies family of learners. In November, marking the U's 100th anniversary, we took part in the ultimate celebration of our beloved University community, Alumni Weekend and Homecoming. And it did not disappoint.

Our celebrations are famously fun. But it's more than that. Festive gatherings provide a through line, a guiding light leading us toward a future that can at times seem uncertain. Our cover story on p. 14 depicts just that—the kind of urgent moments we as health professionals prepare to expect and address. Photos from this collaborative simulation, called Operation Ibis, showcase the intricate, behind-the-scenes choreography, coordination, and communication necessary to save lives, minute by minute, day by day, and we thank the Coral Gables



Fire Department for their partnership, leadership, and enthusiasm in joining us on this important interprofessional journey. "Innovative Learning Through AI and VR" on p. 20 is about another exciting multidisciplinary journey, this one into the realm of artificial intelligence and virtual reality, where our students and faculty are exploring technology's newest horizons for health care education.

I'd like to close with a shout out to our colleagues at UHealth – University of Miami Health System. Led by their chief nursing officer Dr. Elizabeth Vieito Smith, our own 2024 Alumna of Distinction, UHealth has not only achieved Magnet status for nursing excellence from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. UHealth attained Magnet with Distinction.

This highest Magnet status, Florida's first, is awarded to a tiny fraction of hospitals nationwide. Congratulations to the UHealth leadership, Dr. Smith, and her team, who share their brilliance with our students every day.

Read on—there's so much ahead to see and celebrate.

Hudson P. Santos, Jr.
Ph.D., RN, FABMR, FAAN
Dean, Professor, and Dolores J. Chambreau, RN Endowed Chair in Nursing

ADMINISTRATION

Hudson P. Santos Jr., Ph.D.
Dean and Professor; Dolores J. Chambreau,
RN Endowed Chair in Nursing

Arsham Alamian, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Health Studies
and Associate Professor

Carol Biggs, D.H.Sc.
Associate Dean for Academic Health Centers
Integration
Sr. Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive,
Jackson Health System

Nichole Crenshaw, D.N.P.
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Nursing
Programs and Associate Professor of Clinical

Frank Guido-Sanz, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Simulation Programs
and Professor of Clinical

Johis Ortega, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Hemispheric & Global
Initiatives and Professor of Clinical

Maria Ortega Hernandez, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Graduate Nursing Programs
and Professor of Clinical

Tatiana Perrino, Psy.D.
Associate Dean for Engagement and Success
and Professor of Clinical

Guillermo (Willy) Prado, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Research Affairs
and Distinguished University Professor

Elizabeth Vieito-Smith, D.N.P.
Associate Dean for Academic Health Centers
Integration
Chief Nursing Officer, UHealth - University of
Miami Health System

Marina Parada, M.S.
Senior Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives

Zuny Fernandez, M.S.
Senior Business Officer

Jude Dhaiti, B.S.
Executive Director, Office of Student Services

AFFILIATED FACULTY

Jeffrey Hernandez, D.N.P.
Affiliated Assistant Professor of Clinical
Supervisor, Advanced Practice Providers,
University of Miami Department of Neurology

Douglas E. Houghton, D.N.P.
Affiliated Associate Professor of Clinical
Associate Chief Nursing Officer for Advanced
Practice Providers, University of Miami Health
System

Jessica MacIntyre, D.N.P.
Affiliated Professor of Clinical
Assistant Vice President for Advanced
Practice Providers, Sylvester Comprehensive
Cancer Center

JoNell Efantis Potter, Ph.D.
Affiliated Professor of Clinical of Obstetrics,
Gynecology and Reproductive Services
Miller School of Medicine, THRIVE

DEVELOPMENT &
ALUMNI RELATIONS

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Development Officer

FACULTY

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Professor and Director, Ph.D. Program

Lilian Bravo, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Felicia Casanova, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor

Rosina Cianelli, Ph.D.
Professor

Giovanna De Oliveira, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Joseph De Santis, Ph.D.
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Diego Deleon, M.D.
Senior Lecturer

Charles A. Downs, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Yannine Estrada, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor

Ruth Everett-Thomas, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Ashley Falcon, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Cynthia Foronda, Ph.D.
Professor of Clinical and Assistant Dean for
Innovation and Clinical Scholarship

Karina Gattamorta, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor

Nicole A. Gonzaga Gomez, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical and Associate
Director, Nurse Anesthesia Program

Juan M. Gonzalez, D.N.P.
Professor of Clinical and Director,
Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse
Practitioner Program

Yhovana Gordon, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical and Director,
Family Nurse Practitioner Program

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Associate Professor

Patricia Larrieu-Jimenez, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Cynthia N. Lebron, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

LaToya J. Lewis, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Marva Louisville, D.N.P.
Senior Lecturer

Alyssa Lozano, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor

Yui Matsuda, Ph.D.
Professor of Clinical

Mary McKay, D.N.P.
Professor of Clinical and Director,
Doctoral Nursing Practice Program

Heidy Medina, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor

Greta Mitzova-Vladinov, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical and Director,
Nurse Anesthesia Program

Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano, Dr.P.H.
Dean Emeritus

Cindy L. Munro, Ph.D.
Dean Emeritus

Andres Ocampo-Salazar, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Clinical

Brenda Owusu, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical and Director,
Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Program

Andrew Porter, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Carmen Rosa Presti, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical and Director,
Clinical Partnerships

Saribel G. Quinones, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Régine Placide Reaves, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Clinical and Director,
Undergraduate Nursing Programs

Giselle M. Garcia Rivero, D.N.P.
Assistant Professor of Clinical

Deborah Salani, D.N.P.
Professor of Clinical and Director,
Post-Master's Psychiatric Mental Health
Nursing Program

Kenya Snowden, D.N.P.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Beatriz Valdes, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical

Denise C. Vidot, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Christopher P. Weidlich, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Clinical

Renessa Shamar Williams, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Ramniwas Yadav, D.N.P.
Assistant Professor of Clinical

Wonsuk Yoo, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor

Erick Zarabozo, D.N.P.
Senior Lecturer

Mission Statement

Setting the standard of educational
excellence to advance health care.

COVER STORY



Operation Ibis:
A New Approach to
Emergency Response Training

DEPARTMENTS

4 Vital Signs

- DAISY Awards Announced
- Moving the Needle on Nurse Scholarship
- Campaign, Centennial Leave Lasting Legacy
- Double Induction for Dean Santos
- Research Drives New Associate Dean
- Miss America, ACC Leaders Visit
- New Course Creates Simulation Sensation
- Spotted @ SONHS and Abroad

13 Student Perspectives

Elayna Bassuk studies youth empowerment in Africa

22 Faculty Highlights

Awards, Honors, New Faces, Selected Citations

26 Alumni News

Updates, Class Notes, and More

Correction: Brady H. Wallace’s degree should have read
B.S.H.S. ’24 in our Spring 2025 issue, last page.

FEATURES



18 Inspiring
Tradition:
School Hosts
White Coat
Ceremonies



20 Innovative
Learning
Through AI
and VR

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Marina Parada
Senior Executive Director,
Strategic Initiatives, SONHS

Rosa M. Lamazaes-Romero
Director, University
Communications | SONHS

Robin Shear
Senior Editor, SONHS

Javier Corrales
Senior Graphic Designer,
SONHS

WRITER

Robin Shear

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Heartbeat, School of Nursing and Health Studies, P.O. Box 248153, Coral
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Inaugural DAISY Awardees Inspire Students, Veterans

Dean Hudson Santos awarded the school's inaugural DAISY Awards at the School of Nursing and Health Studies Summer 2025 Graduate Awards and Pinning Ceremony, held August 1 at the Lakeside Village Expo Center. The event celebrated 148 newly minted M.S.N., Doctor of Nursing Practice, and Post-Master's Certificate graduates and their guests.

When Dean Santos announced Associate Professor of Clinical Patricia Larrieu-Jimenez as the school's 2025 recipient of The DAISY Award® for Extraordinary Nurse Educator, her students cheered her on with an enthusiastic standing ovation "I feel very emotional," she said after the ceremony. "I'm very proud of my students."

Evelyn L. Santos Guerrero, M.S.N. '25, a registered nurse at Miami's Bruce W. Carter Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, received the school's 2025 DAISY Award® for Extraordinary Nursing Student. "Our culture and our population at the VA Medical Center is totally different from other hospitals," noted Santos. "I really love caring for the people who served our country." Even though she now has a master's degree in nursing, Santos said she plans to "keep



supports her patients by connecting with them on a personal level and advocating for their needs. "I'm so proud to receive my first DAISY Award for maintaining my compassion and loving what I do," she said.

The DAISY Award is a well-known recognition program that celebrates extraordinary nurses around the world by collecting nominations from patients, families, co-workers, and, more recently, students and educators. Any licensed registered nurse, nursing faculty, or nursing student is eligible to be nominated for a DAISY Award.

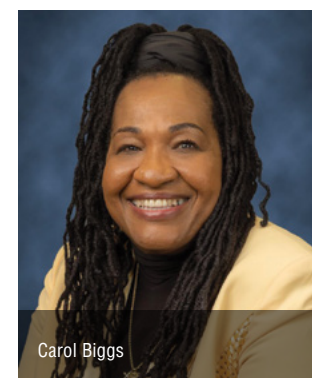
The school presented the awards in partnership with the nonprofit DAISY Foundation, which was created by the family of J. Patrick Barnes in honor of his nurses. After the ceremony, Santos and Larrieu stood together, hugging and posing for photos. Each awardee received a certificate in a DAISY portfolio, a hand-carved Healer's Touch Sculpture from Africa, a congratulations banner, a copy of her nomination, a gift bag, and more. In addition, they will be added to the DAISY Award website and are now eligible for numerous professional development, education, and wellness benefits from the foundation. All school nominees also received a copy of their nominations, a special DAISY Nominee pin, and a congratulatory letter from Dean Santos.

For more information about the school's DAISY Award program, contact SONHS@Miami.edu.



studying, keep educating myself so I can do better every day." Santos was a medical doctor in Ecuador before moving to the United States and beginning her nursing journey. She

Moving the Needle on Nurse Scholarship



Carol Biggs

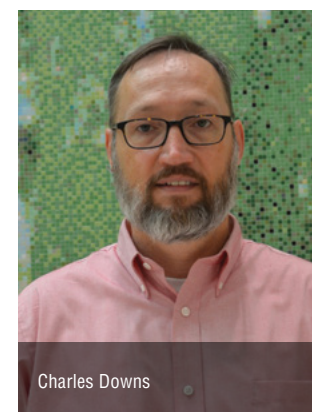
The School of Nursing and Health Studies and Jackson Health System kicked off 2025 with an ambitious plan to bring nursing research to the forefront. As senior VP and CNO for the nonprofit quaternary health system since 2021, Dr. Carol Biggs leads a workforce spanning six hospitals, a network of urgent care centers, two long-

term nursing facilities, and multiple primary and specialty care centers. "Our nurses are doing wonderful things," said Biggs, who started her own nursing career at Jackson. "It's important for everyone to know. We need to share our best practices."

Enter Dr. Charles "Chuck" Downs, associate professor at the School of Nursing and Health Studies and a seasoned nurse scientist. Since the start of the year, he has been working with Dr. Biggs and other nurse leaders at Jackson in a strategic advisor capacity. This innovative academic-clinical alliance first emerged from a series of discussions between Biggs, who also holds the title of associate dean for health centers integration at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, and School Dean Hudson P. Santos Jr. "We are proud to have Dr. Downs serving as a strategic partner in Jackson Health System's aim of becoming a national leader in nursing scholarship, research, and clinical innovation," he said.

"The chance to collaborate on developing Jackson's scholarship program has been highly rewarding," added Downs. "The entire team has been wonderful to work with."

Their effort got under way in earnest on Valentine's Day 2025, when Biggs convened a daylong retreat, attended by Chief Nursing Officers, Associate Chief Nursing Officers, CEOs, Vice Presidents, Assistant Vice Presidents, Directors, and other key stakeholders from Jackson.



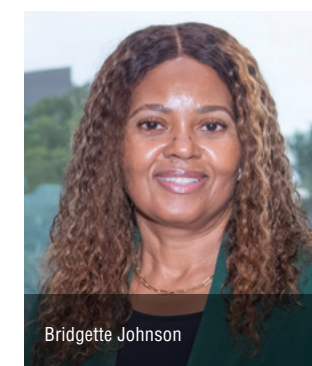
Charles Downs

That meeting helped solidify a Five-Year Nursing Scholarship Strategic Plan that aligns with the American Nurses Credentialing Center



Dr. Biggs, standing right of center, checks out a nursing presentation at a Jackson West Medical Center safety fair.

(ANCC)'s Magnet Recognition and Pathway to Excellence standards. "This is the start of a multiyear journey to embed scholarship into the DNA of nursing at Jackson—where every nurse sees themselves as a scholar," said Biggs. "Dr. Downs' contributions have not only accelerated progress toward short-term scholarship objectives but also have laid the foundation for a sustainable, enterprise-wide culture of inquiry, innovation, and professional excellence."



Bridgette Johnson

Downs also has been working closely on this scholarly collaboration with Dr. Bridgette Johnson, director of Jackson's Center for Nursing Excellence. "Dr. Downs has been able to help us amplify nursing scholarship through research and evidence-based practice," she said. "With his experience, expertise, and

leadership, we are already seeing great tangible results." Those important results include several peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for three forthcoming research studies. These and future achievements, along with scholarly opportunities, are now being communicated to Jackson nursing staff via a newly launched newsletter, "Nursing ScholarShift."

"I want people to understand how important our nurses are to the organization, how the organization values their work," explained Biggs. "Not only are our nurses at the bedside and providing excellent care. They are also adding to the body of knowledge to help improve patient care."

Campaign and Centennial Converge

In 2025, the University of Miami's centennial celebration and capital campaign converged in a big way. In July of its 100th year, the University announced that donors to Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century had given \$2.658 billion in just four years, surpassing the campaign's \$2.5 billion goal by 6.3 percent seven months ahead of schedule. The record achievement—the largest fundraising initiative of any private institution in Florida—will power the U's next century of excellence, fueling groundbreaking research, bold academic innovation, and pioneering medical discoveries, stated University leaders.

"This incredible achievement demonstrates how deeply people feel connected to the University," said Guillermo "Willy" Prado, who served as interim executive vice president for academic affairs and provost through the campaign's conclusion. "Ever Brighter is fueling student success, academic and research distinction, and discoveries that will benefit society."

At a recent state of the school meeting for faculty and staff, School of Nursing and Health Studies Dean Hudson P. Santos Jr. reported that the school's Ever Brighter campaign total was \$20.2 million. Dean Santos, who completed his first full year as dean in 2025, also reported that in FY25, 215 donors raised \$2.58 million for the school, with \$1.05 million going toward endowed support and \$1.95 million going toward scholarships.

Also on the health front, Ever Brighter welcomed the University's largest individual gift ever—a \$126 million anonymous donation to Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center in honor of its director, Dr. Stephen Nimer. Sylvester, which is part of the Miller School of Medicine and is South Florida's only National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center, also received \$50 million from philanthropist Ken Griffin to establish the Kenneth C. Griffin Cancer Research Building on the Medical Campus.

Ever Brighter by the numbers:

- \$2.658 BILLION
Fundraising total
- 472,793
Total number of gifts
- 98
Total number of countries donations came from
- 107,255
Total number of first-time donors
- 564,512
Total square footage of new space added to campuses during the campaign

2025 Grad Program Rankings

The University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies has Florida's top-ranked nurse anesthesia program, according to U.S. News & World Report's "2025 Best Graduate Schools." According to the report, the program ranks 33rd out of 140 accredited programs nationwide, a jump of 38 spots over its 2024 rank.

"Rigorous didactic education, cutting-edge simulation experiences, including the use of virtual reality at our S.H.A.R.E. Simulation Hospital Advancing Research & Education®, challenging clinical experiences, and a strong emphasis on leadership opportunities, peer support, and mentorship distinguish our nurse anesthesia doctoral program as the



leading program in the state," said Greta Mitsova-Vladinov, the program's director.

The school's Master of Science in Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs ranked No. 27 and No. 40, respectively, out of 683 nursing schools the company

evaluated nationwide. Both were No. 1 among all South Florida programs evaluated and No. 2 among all programs evaluated in Florida. School scores reflect average ratings on a scale from 1 (marginal) to 5 (outstanding) based on a survey of academics at peer institutions.

Two Inductions and a National Award



As Professor Hudson P. Santos Jr. celebrated his first anniversary as dean of the School of Nursing and Health Studies this summer, he also traveled to Seattle for induction into the Sigma International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame.

"I am truly honored to be inducted into Sigma's International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame," said Dean Santos. "This recognition is not just a reflection of my work, but of the countless mentors, colleagues, and students who have inspired and challenged me along the way. Nursing research has the power to transform lives, shape health policy, and drive meaningful change in our communities. I hope this recognition serves as an inspiration for the next generation of nurse scientists to push boundaries, ask bold questions, and lead with impact. I look forward to celebrating this moment with my fellow honorees and continuing this important work together.

Around the same time, the Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine of

Florida announced its 26 new members for 2025. Dean Santos was the only nurse elected to the class. According to his citation from the ASEMFL, he was invited because of the significant societal impact his work has made in "advancing understanding of health origins and demonstrating how early adversity affects perinatal health and child development in diverse, high-risk populations."

Dean Santos, the immediate past president of the International Society of Nurses in Genetics, was joined in the 2025 cohort by his University colleague Maria L. Alcaide, M.D., interim vice provost for research scholarship and Miller School of Medicine professor of medicine and public health sciences.

ASEMFL inductees are selected based on outstanding research contributions and innovations with consequential impacts in the fields of science, engineering, or medicine. "Their lifelong dedication, creativity, and talent have resulted in critical and impactful



advances in their fields with resulting benefits to society," said Hortensia Amaro, ASEMFL president, and they are considered for their potential for induction into the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

"It has been my life's honor to work with extraordinary researchers to understand the impact of early-life adversity on health outcomes and translate that knowledge into actionable clinical practice recommendations that are supported by evidence-based protocols," said Dean Santos.

During the 32nd Annual NightinGala, held October 15 in Washington, D.C., Dean Santos was recognized again, this time with the 2025 President's Award from the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research for his "sustained contributions in the field and significant impact on the improvement of the health of marginalized and/or minoritized populations."

New Associate Dean Driven By Research Goals

Guillermo “Willy” Prado’s custom “U” license plate reveals what drives him: RSRCH. “I’ve always said what I’m most passionate about is research,” he explained. “I love to support faculty to excel and grow their research, and I especially love mentoring early career faculty and Ph.D. students.” Since his own first year pursuing epidemiology and public health as a Ph.D. student at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Prado’s investigations have been supported continuously by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Funding for NIH grants that Prado has either led or contributed to total over \$100 million to date.

Now, after a decade of successively higher-profile leadership roles at his alma mater, including Graduate School dean, vice provost for faculty affairs, and most recently interim executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, this double ‘Cane is glad to return to his research roots. “I’m pleased to announce that Dr. Willy Prado has agreed to serve as associate



Guillermo “Willy” Prado

In addition to being appointed associate dean, Prado has been named a Distinguished University Professor of Nursing and Health Studies. “I’m very excited to be back home at the School of Nursing and Health Studies for so many reasons,” said Prado. “This role is perfect for me. I am thrilled to support all of our outstanding faculty and Ph.D. students in advancing their research as we work together toward our shared goal of becoming a top 5-funded NIH School of Nursing and Health Studies in the near future. I want us to be preeminent.”

Prado, a Fellow of the prestigious National Academy of Medicine, is

principal investigator (PI) of Familias Unidas, a nationally recognized NIH-supported parenting intervention aimed at improving family dynamics and communication among Hispanic youth and their families. He is also PI for the school’s collaborative NIH-funded Center for Latino Health Research Opportunities and co-director of the Implementation Science Core for the University’s Center for HIV Research in Mental Health (CHARM). He and his research team have been on the school’s faculty since 2020, and Prado retains secondary appointments at the Miller School in public health sciences and at the College of Arts and Sciences in psychology.



dean for research affairs,” shared School of Nursing and Health Studies Dean Hudson P. Santos in July. “Dr. Prado is exceptionally well-suited for this position. I am confident his deep expertise and extensive leadership experience will significantly advance our research priorities and strengthen our academic mission.”

School Welcomes ACC Academic Leaders

As liaison to the Atlantic Coast Conference Academic Leaders Network (ACC ALN) for the past four years, Tatiana Perrino, Psy.D., was excited to welcome counterparts from 17 other member institutions to the University of Miami for the group’s summer conference. “This is the first time we have hosted, and it turned out to be a true ‘Team UM’ effort,” said Perrino, associate provost for faculty development for the University and associate dean for engagement and success at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. “We’re very proud of how the event came together. It provided over 100 ACC university leaders with valuable opportunities to strengthen their leadership skills and connect with peers, all while experiencing some of the best the University of Miami has to offer.”

Among several tours available to conference attendees was an interactive exploration of technology and resources



at the school’s S.H.A.R.E. Simulation Hospital Advancing Research & Education®. “It was wonderful for many of the participants to experience S.H.A.R.E.,” said Perrino. “The tour was highly engaging and compelling.” In addition to welcoming attendees to the school, Dean Hudson Santos participated in the Dean’s Panel, said Perrino, a professor of clinical. “The

conference was extremely well-received by attendees,” she added. “Their feedback highlighted the relevance of the sessions to current leadership issues and the high quality of the programming and visits.”

The ACC is an American collegiate athletic organization the University joined in 2004.

Miss America 2025 Honors Nurse Preceptors

Dean Hudson Santos welcomed over 75 attendees to the school’s annual Preceptors Appreciation Dinner April 29, honoring the many nurses across South Florida who supervise the school’s students in a range of clinical settings. “We couldn’t do what we do at the school without our incredible team of preceptors and clinical partners,” he said. “We know you put in long hours and dedication to make sure our students are ready for their careers.”

Dean Santos also welcomed Abigail “Abbie” Stockard, Miss America 2025. In the pageant’s 100-plus-year history, just one nurse has been crowned Miss



Dean Santos and Abbie Stockard

America, but Stockard, 22, is the first-ever nursing student crowned. “I stand here not only as Miss America, but as a proud future nurse,” the Auburn

undergrad said. “Doing my hospital clinicals and watching health care professionals on a daily basis, I have seen how every shift is an act of service—offering comfort, advocating for patients, and being a steady presence in moments of uncertainty. Thank you for teaching students like me not just how to treat, but truly how to care; not just how to show up, but how to make a difference.”

At the Biltmore Hotel event, Bonnie Galvez, M.S.N. ’13, who works in Jackson Memorial Hospital’s emergency department, shared her reason for precepting students from the school she graduated from over a decade ago. “Because the University of Miami provided me with the experience and opportunity to be the nurse practitioner I am today, it is with pleasure that I show future nurse practitioners the passion and the culture behind the profession.”

New Sim Course Sharpens Clinical Edge

Launched in January 2025, Applied Basic Principles in Healthcare, or BPH 299, is giving health science and public health majors a head start on career development. The innovative new hands-on health care exploration course takes place at S.H.A.R.E. Simulation Hospital Advancing Research & Education® (S.H.A.R.E.) and is taught by Associate Professors of Clinical Ruth Everett-Thomas, Ph.D., RN, and Ashley Falcon, Ph.D., M.P.H.

As their course's name suggests, the focus is to prepare students for real-world clinical environments by teaching the building blocks of health care, including CPR, proper handwashing techniques, and how to take vital signs. Students also learn about safely donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE), conducting mental health screenings, safety specifications for administering medications, and much more.

"As a health science major, this course was a first opportunity to get some hands-on experience in the S.H.A.R.E. lab.," said Daniela Dechard, B.S.H.S. '25. "The lecture and simulation on motivational interviewing was a huge breakthrough for me. It showed me that the questions you ask a patient can change their mind about seeking help, getting medical attention, or their disposition to access different resources that could benefit them."

Students also benefit from the diverse expertise of two veteran educators. "We help them work out what specialties they want to go into, what options are available to them," said Everett-Thomas. "We also give



Ashley Falcon



Ruth Everett-Thomas



Dr. Everett-Thomas reviews manual resuscitation techniques with health studies students.

them a bird's-eye view of the health care system—and the factors that make or break patients' health care experiences," added Falcon, an epidemiologist.

Bethany Nurzia, a health science senior, enjoyed the theory and practice approach. "You gain a deeper understanding of the American health care system from all angles and then participate in clinical-style demonstrations to apply the skills you learn," she said. "This course definitely solidified my passion for medicine and has given me more confidence in my own abilities."

The course gave health science major Daniel Adili-Khams a chance to grow as well. "This course really told me what I need to work on as a future provider as far as talking to a patient and building that trust with patients," he said. Public health student Carjae Duncombe is eager to share what she learned in BPH 299. "Before this course, there was no way for me to get clinical experience without going to a hospital," she said. "Now I look forward to being able to go into clinicals with knowledge of proper procedures. If they ever need help, I'll know how to step in."

SEEN @ SONHS ...



Summer Scholars get a head start in health care.



Academic Dean's Meeting for Families



"State of the School" Meeting



Take Your Child to Work Day



M.S.N. students give flu shots.



Fall Academic Fair



Fall Orientation



D.N.P. students practice yoga and meditation.



Practicing, presenting and much more



SONHS Spotted Abroad



Dr. Diego Deleon led students in BPH 487: Global Health Practicum on a two-week exploration of health care in Romania and Spain. “This is the type of educational program that really makes the University of Miami special,” said participant Tessa Fabiano, a nursing student. “We got to explore so many different cultures and landscapes while getting to know students from both Romania and Spain. At the nursing school in Bucharest, we got to take part in interactive simulation and virtual reality activities.”



Nurse anesthesia students, led by Drs. Nicole Gonzaga Gomez (standing far right) and Andres Ocampo-Salazar (far left, second from left), volunteer on medical missions in Ecuador and Peru, respectively.



Dean Hudson Santos, Dr. Johis Ortega, and Dr. Erick Zarabozo with M.S.N. students in the Dominican Republic, where they renewed the school's longtime exchange agreement with La Unión Médica Clínica del Norte in Santiago de los Caballeros.



Dr. Brenda Owusu (left) at the International Council of Nurses Congress in Helsinki, Finland

Empowered in Africa

Elayna Bassuk crosses continents and cultures to pursue her passion for public health.

By Robin Shear

Elayna Bassuk barely had time to unpack from her semester in Spain before boarding another international flight out of South Florida. Twenty-four hours later, the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies student was on the other side of the equator, leaving the Kilimanjaro International Airport for the brisk air of Tanzania, where despite it being June, it was wintertime. The first week of Bassuk's University of Maryland-led study abroad program, she lived in a “very nice and modern” university residence in the city of Arusha, learning basics of Kiswahili language and culture. “One assignment was to visit a market and, using the Swahili we had just learned, order the ingredients necessary to make lunch the next day,” said Bassuk, a public health major double-minoring in Spanish and health management and policy.

“I have been to Africa before, so I was not completely shocked by what I saw,” Bassuk said of her month in Tanzania, which has been ranked among the world's 15 poorest nations. “I was shocked at how friendly everyone was to each other and to me. People would wave or smile from the side of the street as I drove by, and everyone went out of their way to say ‘hi,’ which in Swahili is ‘mambo.’ I was fascinated by how individuals with so little money, clothes, and belongings were still so happy and friendly. This is not how people typically are in the United States, so it was a culture shock.”

For the rest of June, she stayed in Arusha's Maji Ya Chai region, at a community center that houses orphans and provides activities and resources for area youth. Bassuk and her cohort were tasked with creating a research project



Elayna Bassuk's interest in public health led her to Voice of Youth Tanzania.

that would help empower youth at the center, which is run by a local nonprofit called VOYOTA, or Voice of Youth Tanzania. Her group's interviews and data analysis led them to present an evidence-based mentoring program to support first-year college students in Arusha.

“I was able to conduct research in another country and learn about data collection methods, mentoring, mental health, and education systems in Africa,” said Bassuk. “I can now compare the systems and difficulties of Florida to Tanzania and try to evaluate what public health issues we should be focusing on versus what is not as important.”

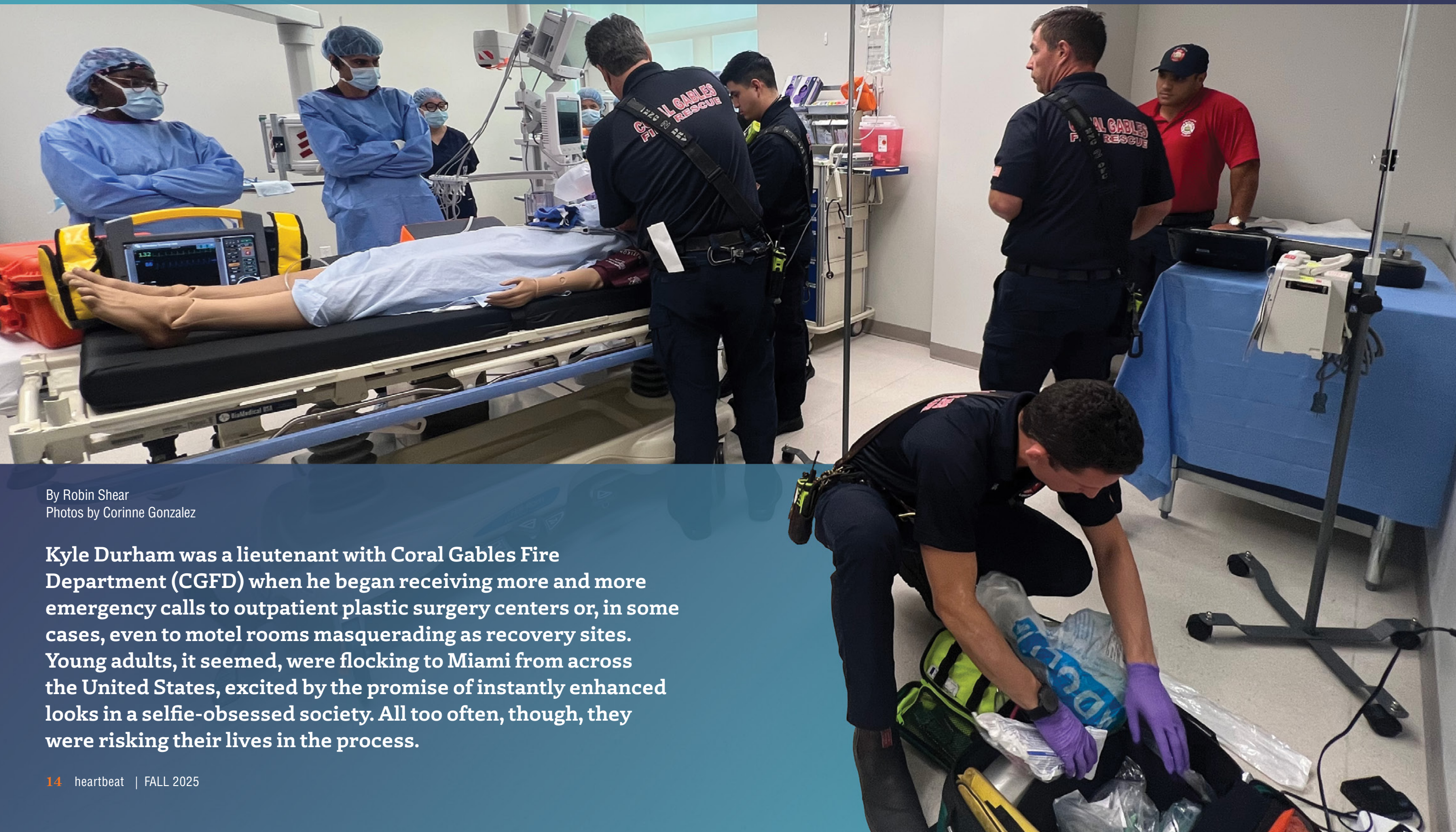
In their downtime, she and the kids at the center played basketball, listened to music, and took selfies together. “I made sincere connections with the people who live at this community center,” said Bassuk. “I'm still texting them via WhatsApp.” Her research continues too. In September, her team led a virtual training session for mentors, and they plan to check in periodically to evaluate the program's progress.

Bassuk, a Boca Raton resident, first fell in love with the University of Miami as a high schooler taking the Summer Scholars program. Since her first year in college, she has been engaged in research initiatives like the Herbal Heart Study led by Associate Professor Denise Vidot and the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center's prestigious Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF), where she investigated effects of extreme heat on people with cancer. Along the way, she has translated lab protocols into Spanish, presented research posters, and even coauthored a peer-reviewed publication.

Recently Bassuk was thrilled to learn she'd been accepted to the University's selective 4+1 Master of Public Health program. “I feel as if everything I have been studying about public health and global health really came to light through this trip to Africa,” she said. “I witnessed people living with inequalities, difficulties, and huge obstacles. I will take this experience with me throughout my career in public health, and generally throughout my life.”

OPERATION IBIS

A New Approach to Emergency Response Training



By Robin Shear
Photos by Corinne Gonzalez

Kyle Durham was a lieutenant with Coral Gables Fire Department (CGFD) when he began receiving more and more emergency calls to outpatient plastic surgery centers or, in some cases, even to motel rooms masquerading as recovery sites. Young adults, it seemed, were flocking to Miami from across the United States, excited by the promise of instantly enhanced looks in a selfie-obsessed society. All too often, though, they were risking their lives in the process.

With increasing frequency, Durham said, he and his crew would arrive on scene to find critically ill young adults. “These are young people who are dying for elective surgery,” said Durham, now a captain with CGFD. “I realized there was a lack of communication of rescues at the time, talking to the surgery center. This is a growing problem in major cities, and I wanted to bring that reality to the scenario experience.”

Captain Durham’s determination to make a difference took flight with Operation Ibis. This summer he and a couple dozen members of his crew came to S.H.A.R.E. Simulation Hospital Advancing Research & Education® (S.H.A.R.E.) at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies to collaborate on three days of intensive first responder education with nursing faculty, staff, and students. The S.H.A.R.E. simulation team has been building its partnership with the CGFD since connecting in 2024 after Operation Phoenix, a University-wide emergency response exercise addressing another terrible trend—mass casualty incidents on college campuses.

For Operation Ibis, CGFD leadership joined forces with school and S.H.A.R.E. educators on a full-scale three-part scenario simulating a trauma response to a post-op emergency in which little is known about the patient or procedure. “Communication and teamwork were the main idea and purpose of this scenario,” explained Professor of Clinical Frank Guido-Sanz, the school’s associate dean for simulation education and research. “Our community partners need to understand the language we nurses use because that communication can really impact the care of the patient they are assuming responsibility for. Operation Ibis offered an incredible opportunity to bring awareness to how we need to start thinking about our partners in health care—how they perceive what we do and how we perceive what they do. The result was an amazing integration of the disciplines.”

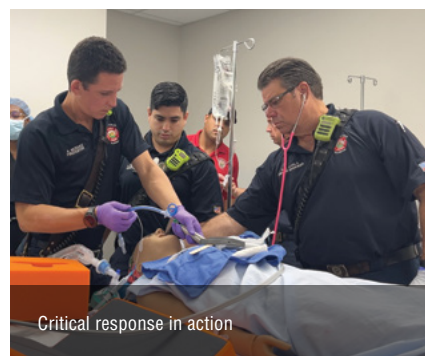
Race to Rescue

Operation Ibis began after an early morning prebriefing with participants.

The first location was a S.H.A.R.E. operating suite portraying an outpatient surgery center. There, observers quickly learned the patient was a young woman in her 30s who had just received an elective cosmetic procedure which involved fat from one part of her body being injected into her gluteal region. This increasingly popular procedure is called buttock augmentation with fat grafting, known more commonly as a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL).

As in real life, the simulated post-operative complications unfolded rapidly. The patient’s oxygen and blood pressure dropped dangerously low while her heart rate spiked. Students from the school’s Doctor of Nursing Practice Nurse Anesthesia program participated as the surgical team. Second-year Student Registered Nurse Anesthetist (SRNA-2) Christopher Lay was assigned the role of lead anesthetist. His job was to call 911 and convey the patient’s condition. “This was the first time in my career I was giving report from the perspective of a provider,” said Lay. “There is a responsibility that comes with knowing the patient’s history and having a detailed understanding of what is happening with the patient.” Within moments of Lay’s call, a real CGFD crew—complete with a full set of gear and stretcher—arrived in the operating room. They knew they had just moments to take over and transport their simulated patient from this location to their emergency vehicle. According to Durham, rescue crews in the field have just 10 minutes to run a trauma call like this.

Assisting the CGFD rescue crew on the transport was acute care nurse practitioner student Irina Kalvarskaya, B.S.N. ’18, M.S.N. ’25. She rode in the truck as they circled the campus



Critical response in action



Operation Ibis emphasized communication and teamwork.

parking lot to mimic city drive times. “Seeing the firefighters get their gear ready, and get into the ambulance, I just felt the responsibility they carry with them, and it was amazing to see how professional they were,” she said. “Sorry for the cliché, but I felt like I was watching a superhero movie.”

On arrival at S.H.A.R.E.’s first floor emergency department (ED), identified as a Level 1 trauma center for the purposes of the drill, the crew wheeled their patient to the awaiting emergency team on duty, portrayed by Kalvarskaya’s peers from the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program. With their patient’s condition worsening by the second, the CGFD crew had to update the hospital staff while working to disconnect and reattach her complex tangle of medical equipment.

From there, the nursing students, led by their program’s director, Juan M. Gonzalez, were tasked with solving this urgent medical mystery. By the end of this 45-minute drill, a successful multidisciplinary effort to save their simulated patient’s life had required intubation, an extensive cocktail of intravenous drugs and fluids, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and three rounds of atrial defibrillation.

“You have to work as a team,” emphasized Kalvarskaya, who graduated in August. “One person can only do so much, but a unit that knows each other’s strengths, weaknesses, and character is always going to be so much more successful and able to tackle more complex issues as a result.”

A Successful Operation

Operation Ibis aimed to replicate as realistically as possible the complex interprofessional choreography that trauma response requires. Program leaders monitored the participants throughout the scenario from a control room linked to multiple video feeds. After hearing the “simulation complete” signal, participants and observers alike gathered to debrief, ask questions, and reflect on their takeaways from this unique learning experience. Dr. Guido-Sanz kicked off the session by asking participants to share one word to best describe the activity. Realistic, communication, remarkable, teamwork, collaborative, amazing, and connection were just some of the most common responses.

“As the University celebrates its centennial in 2025, this is exactly the kind of forward-thinking, immersive, and community-based collaboration we need to lead us into our next century of excellence,” said Dean Hudson

Santos. CGFD medical director Dr. Fred Keroff, CGFD Division Chief of Professional Standards Xavier Jones, and many others also expressed positive impressions from the operation.

“All three times we’ve done this scenario, three different things have happened,” said Captain Durham. “But the common factor I’ve seen in all three scenarios is the communication. That’s a huge deal. We saw amazing teamwork and timelines of critical interventions.” Dr. Gonzalez, who supervised the ED during the drill, praised the quality of information the CGFD crew relayed. “Our colleagues from Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrive at the ED with an insight about the patient we don’t necessarily have,” he noted. “One of the things you made a point to verbalize was, ‘This is a trauma call and I think this patient has lost blood.’ When you don’t see gross hemorrhaging, it’s sometimes hard to conceptualize. Being explicit about this information was amazing. It really triggered the thought process in a different way to everybody in that room.”

Dr. Greta Mitzova Vladinov, associate director of the Nurse Anesthesia program, reemphasized the importance of clear communication. “We get so used to working in our own bubbles and using our own jargon that a lot of times, even when we’re handing off patients from the OR to the ICU, we don’t speak the same language. We have to make sure everybody understands—who’s in charge, who’s handing off the patient and when,” she said. “These are ambiguous situations, so you need to have closed-loop, direct communication with someone. This can save lives. These are essential skills. Communication is making sure you’re

sharing the right information with the right people and the right amount of it.”

Operation Ibis also offered lasting insights about collaboration and communication for student participants like SRNA-2 Lay, a registered nurse from Kansas. “Collaborating through discussion removes the frustration that can occur during tense real-life situations because we have a better understanding of these other points of view,” he said. “I learned that every specialty has their unique ways of handling difficult situations, but they all lead to the same goal of keeping a patient safe.”

This kind of feedback is exactly why Zuzer Calero, S.H.A.R.E. executive director of business operations, is eager to keep advancing new approaches to community-based collaborations like Operation Ibis. “This interprofessional opportunity enabled fire rescue, anesthesia, and acute care students to experience each other’s roles in health care,” she said. “This exposure helps them understand how their roles are interconnected and fosters a greater appreciation for their combined efforts. One of our goals at S.H.A.R.E. is to continue providing these interprofessional exercises to bridge the gap in communication and handoffs among professionals, ultimately improving patient outcomes.”

BBLs by the Numbers

In 2018, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) established a task force to address the “alarming rate of mortality” for the Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) procedure, estimating a mortality rate of 1 in every 3,000 patients, “a rate of death far greater than any other cosmetic surgery,” stated the ASPS. Still, the number of BBLs ASPS surgeons performed rose dramatically from 11,505 in 2014 to 29,466 in 2024—totals that do not even include BBLs performed by non-ASPS-recognized practitioners.

Source: ASPS Plastic Surgery Statistics Report



Simulation complete

White Coats Mark Students' Next Steps

By Robin Shear
Photos by Life in a Flash

More than 320 students pursuing their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.) degrees at the School of Nursing and Health Studies had the chance to take part in a White Coat Ceremony this fall. Alexa Guercia's mother and father flew in from Connecticut for the school's inaugural ceremony in August. Her University roommate of four years came too. "As I begin my senior year of nursing school, I'm honored to receive my white coat and excited to take this next step toward becoming a registered nurse and continuing to grow in the profession I love!" said Guercia.

Dean Hudson Santos formally introduced the school's White Coat Ceremony this year. The event is a tradition in nursing education that symbolizes a student's transition into the clinical phase of their nursing education. "The white coats we are gathered here to present to you symbolize your entry into this esteemed profession, and your commitment to the values, responsibilities, and service it demands," he explained.

Students in the one-year accelerated program begin clinical immersion almost immediately, while students in the four-year, traditional B.S.N. program, start clinical placements at the beginning of their junior year.

Before introducing faculty to present students with their coats, Nichole Crenshaw, associate dean for undergraduate nursing programs, administered the Ibis Nursing Pledge to the nursing students and nurses in attendance. "This pledge will stay with you through moments of triumph and challenge," she said. "The journey ahead will challenge you," she continued, "but it will also shape you into the kind of nurse you have envisioned for yourself—and that the world so desperately needs. We are proud of you, and we believe in you."

The White Coat Ceremony "represents a profound step forward in my journey. I'm excited to continue broadening my skills clinically and educationally with invaluable hands-on experience," said nursing student Alexandra Caruso.

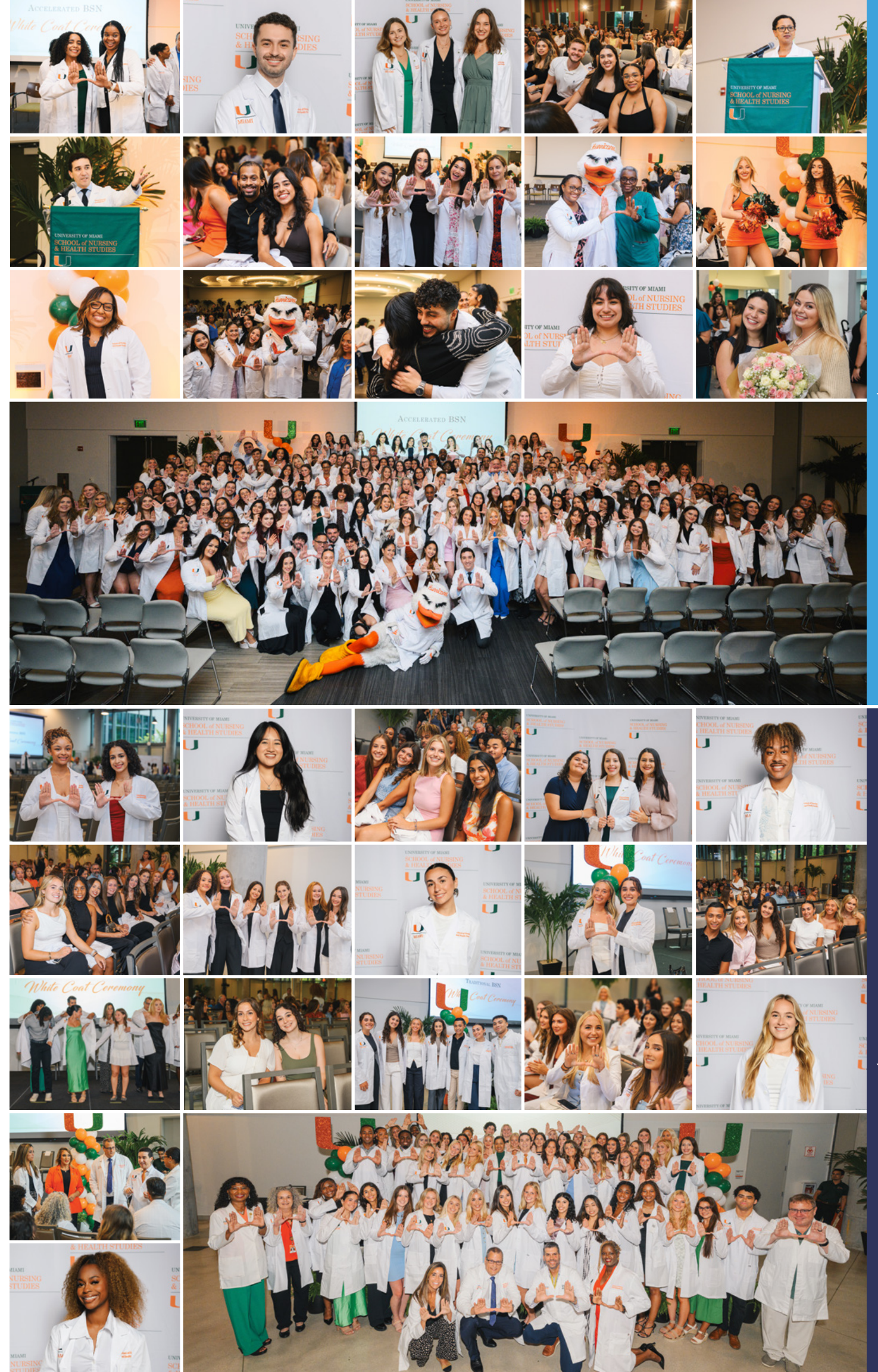
"This moment represents more than a symbol," added Norel Reyes, a senior from Harlem, New York. "It reflects the countless hours of dedication, clinical experience, and growth that have shaped me into the astute nurse I am becoming. Nursing is not just a profession, but a calling to serve, advocate, and care for others with compassion and skill—values I strive to embody every day."

IBIS NURSING PLEDGE

I pledge to uphold the values of compassion, fairness, and excellence in nursing.

I will care for every person with respect, empathy, and integrity—honoring their dignity, culture, and voice.

I commit to ethical practice, lifelong learning, and collaboration across all disciplines to advance health and healing.



SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

AUGUST 25, 2025

Innovative Learning Through AI and VR

Faculty lead grants to test educational value of new technology.

By Robin Shear

Bodyswaps is not Hollywood's latest sci-fi thriller. It's a glimpse into the future of health care education. Emma Mullen, a second year D.N.P. nurse anesthesia student at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, leapt headfirst into that future recently by strapping into a robotic-looking Meta Quest 3 headset and bravely exploring a new virtual world. "The Bodyswaps research study allowed us to practice different simulated patient interactions and experiences, focused on 'body swaps' between the provider and patient and on social and emotional learning," she explained. "For example, how we would react to a combative patient, a patient with memory loss, or a patient who was depressed."

While the headset took some getting used to, Mullen left her virtual learning encounter impressed by its potential to home in on the human side of health care. "VR could be useful in a body-swap scenario where the student is made to feel as if they are a patient about to go under general anesthesia," she reflected. "It's critical to remember that even though clinicians do something every day, the patient does not, and it is our job to make them feel less anxious about being in the hospital."

Betting on the growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) in enhancing health care education, London-based technology company Bodyswaps Inc., in collaboration with Mark Zuckerberg's company Meta, granted 100 higher education institutions, including the University of Miami, free use of their technology and equipment for several months in 2025.



Greta Mitzova-Vladinov, associate professor of clinical and director of the D.N.P. nurse anesthesia program, co-led the University's Bodyswaps pilot program with Miller School of Medicine faculty Gauri Agarwal, associate professor of medicine and medical education and associate dean for curriculum, and Mairead Moloney, associate professor in the Department of Informatics and Health Data Science. Nearly 30 University of Miami graduate nursing and medical students participated.

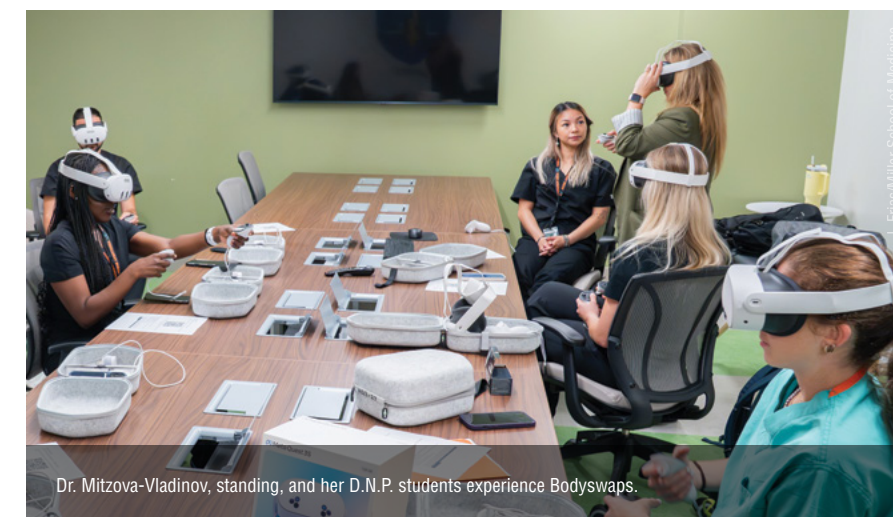
"The scenarios have a unique feature which allows the learner to 'swap' bodies with the patient, experience the interaction, and become aware of how they come across during difficult conversations with patients. Bodyswaps can also adapt to each learner and provide personalized feedback with its AI-powered technology," said Mitzova-Vladinov, a certified registered nurse anesthetist with decades of hospital experience. "The VR training modules immerse the learners in realistic,

impactful scenarios to help them develop essential non-technical skills."

These non-technical skills—like empathy, teamwork, and communication—are as important to the curriculum as technical skills like intubation, she said. Evidence seems to bear this out, with failures in communication and teamwork identified as leading causes of medical error. "Participating in the Bodyswaps activity highlighted how immersive simulation can strengthen communication skills, teamwork, and decision-making for all health care providers," said Mardwina Lasseur, a first year D.N.P. nurse anesthesia student. "Engaging in this activity alongside medical students and fellow nurse anesthetist students further emphasized the role of interdisciplinary collaboration in the improvement of patient outcomes."

Analytic dashboards embedded in the Bodyswaps platform enabled faculty to track student engagement and measure learning outcomes. "We had a great experience with the students," said Mitzova-Vladinov. "This project is yet another innovative way in which the Miller School of Medicine and School of Nursing and Health Studies are leading the field of immersive learning and AI in education."

Mitzova-Vladinov is an internationally certified simulation health care



educator who has been leading the way with immersive learning for several years. At the 2025 Provost's Awards, she received an Excellence in Experiential Teaching honor for "immersing students in realistic clinical scenarios, cutting-edge simulations, and virtual reality environments that prepare them to lead with confidence and compassion," stated Kathi Kern, the University's senior vice provost for education at the time.

Mitzova-Vladinov and nursing colleague Cynthia Foronda, assistant dean for innovation and clinical scholarship, also were part of an interdisciplinary team that launched a course last fall focused on visual thinking strategies (VTS) for health professional students. Learning VTS has been shown to improve

communication and observation skills, tolerance of ambiguity, and readiness for interprofessional team learning.

"This visionary team brought together experts from medicine, nursing, engineering, art, and data science to create a first-of-its-kind curriculum exploring the intersection of AI, health care, and the humanities," stated Kern in awarding the team the Provost's Collaborative Teaching Award for 2025. "Their collaborative teaching has sparked critical reflection, creative thinking, and compassionate dialogue—equipping future health care professionals to use AI ethically and empathetically,"

Now Mitzova-Vladinov and her peers are collaborating on a new National Institutes of Health-supported grant to develop and test a VR version of the award-winning VTS curriculum. This study, led by Brooklyn-based VR company Mediacombo Inc., is called VITaLS: Visual Thinking and Learning Strategies: Enhancing Health Professions Education through Virtual Reality Enabled Art Museum Experiences. VITaLS will be evaluated over a three-month period with graduate nursing, medical, and physical therapy students. "It's a truly multidisciplinary project," she said, "with the external VR company, Miller School, Lowe Art Museum, College of Arts and Sciences, and School of Nursing and Health Studies all contributing."



Dr. Cianelli Wins National Research/Impact Award

Professor Rosina Cianelli has devoted much of her life and career to advancing knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention. This past November, her outstanding evidence-based efforts to improve the health and well-being of women around the world were recognized at the 2025 Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) conference in Philadelphia. “Receiving the 2025 Research/Impact Award from the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care is a profound honor that fills me with immense gratitude and pride,” said Cianelli. “This meaningful award reflects the values I hold dear as a nurse, researcher, and advocate for women’s health. Further it underscores the significance of research that not only advances knowledge in the prevention science but also enhances health outcomes for individuals affected by HIV.”



Cianelli’s research, which has long been funded by the NIH and international, national, and regional foundations and organizations, is focused on HIV prevention among minority communities at higher risk of infection and among women living with HIV, integrating biobehavioral interventions that address biological, social, and cultural aspects of HIV. Her unwavering commitment is to advance knowledge in HIV prevention and improve overall wellness of the women living with HIV, particularly those from minority communities.

According to ANAC’s Awards Committee, the annual Research/Impact Award “recognizes an outstanding current ANAC member who has made a significant contribution through research regarding individuals and

communities affected by HIV and the quality of care provided to them.”

“I am especially honored to be part of ANAC’s mission and to stand alongside so many dedicated scientists and professionals who work tirelessly to make a difference,” said Cianelli. “To be recognized by such a respected organization for my HIV research contributions to the scientific community, individuals, and communities is both humbling and deeply inspiring.”

Cianelli—a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, an Ambassador of the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research, and a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellow—has been a faculty member at the School of

Nursing and Health Studies since 2007 and a tenured professor since 2021, teaching and mentoring in the Ph.D. and D.N.P. programs. An International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), she holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing from the University of Illinois at Chicago, a Master of Public Health from Universidad de Chile, and a bachelor’s degree in Nursing Midwife from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. “My commitment has always been to advance knowledge in HIV prevention and to improve the health, well-being, and overall wellness of women, whether through prevention efforts or by supporting those living with HIV—especially those from minority backgrounds who face disproportionate challenges,” she said.

Honors & Awards



Ashley Falcon, **Yui Matsuda**, and **Andrew Porter** were invited to present at the inaugural University of Miami Summer Pedagogical Research Institute in May. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning workshop they led was titled “From Pilot to Publication: A Journey in Pedagogical Research - Problem-Based Learning,” based on the trio’s new research collaboration.

Cynthia Foronda, and **Greta Mitzova-Vladinov** were on the team recognized with the Provost’s Collaborative Teaching Award 2025. Individually, Dr. Mitzova-Vladinov received an Excellence in Experiential Teaching Award at the 2025 Provost’s Awards. See page 20.

Juan M. González was inducted into the American Academy of Nursing 2025 Class of New Fellows during the Academy’s annual Health Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., themed “Impact Through Integrity and Trust: Our Role as Navigators and Translators.” “I am truly honored to be inducted into such fellowship and could not have done it without the support of my colleagues and Dean Hudson Santos,” said Dr. González, a professor of clinical and, since 2022, director of the school’s Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program. “Through this journey I have been blessed with the mentorship of Dr. Johis Ortega and supported by Dean Santos. It really does take a village, and I am eager to contribute my expertise to this global village of Academy Fellows.” A triple board-certified nurse practitioner, certified nurse educator, and certified emergency nurse, Dr. González previously led the Family Nurse Practitioner program from 2015 to 2020. Also in 2025, he received the Innovative Technology Impact Award from the Florida Nurses Association South Region. “Dr. González exemplifies the best qualities of a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, shaping policy, expanding academic pathways, and strengthening clinical training models across regional, national, and international settings,” said Dean Hudson Santos.

Frank Guido-Sanz was elected to a two-year term (2025-2027) as a member of the Nominations and Elections Committee, representing the 3,000 members of the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL).

Alyssa Lozano was awarded a 5-year research scientist career development grant (K01MH140646) from the National Institute of Mental Health of the National Institutes of Health titled “Planning for Implementation of a Family-based Intervention for Prevention of HIV, Substance Use, and Mental Health Problems among Hispanic Youth at Risk: A Community-Engaged Approach.” She is also chair-elect of the Early Career Preventionist Network (ECPN) of the Society for Prevention Research and recently presented at the 16th European Society for Prevention Research Conference in Berlin. “ECPN has been instrumental in shaping my journey as a prevention scientist,” she said. “I look forward to collaborating with the ECPN Steering Committee and leadership to support the next generation of prevention scientists.”

Brenda Owusu was named director of education and policy for the Ghanaian-Diaspora Nursing Alliance and serves as a mentor in the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing’s Global Leadership Mentoring initiative.

Marlene Rosell, M.S.N., adjunct clinical faculty, was voted by students to receive the 2025 Faculty Clinical Excellence Award.

Beatriz Valdes won the “Excellence in Undergraduate Nursing Education Award” at the 15th Annual Florida Nurses Association South Region Symposium and Awards Ceremony, held April 12 in Hallandale, Florida.

Christopher Weidlich was voted by students as the 2025 Teacher of the Year.

New Faculty



Hospital Advancing Nursing & Education®, teaching Simulation for Advanced Concepts of Anesthesia Nursing I, Interdisciplinary Anesthesia Nursing II, and other courses. He also is a member of the PAD (Peripheral Artery Disease) collaborative, helping develop PAD screening guidelines that can be used in the community.

Ramniwas Yadav, D.N.P. '19, APRN, CRNA, joined the faculty of the School of Nursing and Health Studies as assistant professor of clinical in May 2025. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona, and a Diploma in General Nursing & Midwifery from Mallige Institute of Nursing in Bangalore, India. He earned his Doctor of Nursing Practice degree, Nurse Anesthesia track, at the University of Miami. During his doctoral program, he served as president of both the Nurse Anesthesia Student Association and the Institute of Healthcare Improvement open chapter at the University of Miami. In addition, he won the 2018 Florida Association of Nurse Anesthetist Students Scholarship Award. Since 2020, Dr. Yadav has been a board certified CRNA. He practices at Envision Physician Services in Broward County, providing anesthesia care for a wide range of surgical cases. Prior to becoming a CRNA, he was a nurse for two decades in India and South Florida, most recently as a Critical Care Registered Nurse at Northwest Medical Center. His extensive clinical experience in the operating room includes serving as clinical coordinator at HCA Florida Northwest Medical Center, where he started the robotic surgery program.

As an educator, Dr. Yadav works closely with the simulation team at S.H.A.R.E. Simulation

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Cane Spotlight

Marlo Robinson, B.S.N. '90, who earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from this institution, began her tenure as dean and vice president of the Purdue Global School of Nursing, August 2025, according to a Purdue University news release. In these roles, she oversees nearly 400 faculty and staff members for a school serving almost 4,000 students. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Robinson, of Hollywood, Florida, was an adjunct faculty member with Purdue Global for over a decade. Previously she was the national dean of nursing for Concorde Career Colleges.

“Dr. Robinson brings a breadth of experiences we believe have prepared her to lead our growing school of nursing,” stated Carolyn Nordstrom, provost of Purdue Global, a nonprofit, public online university. “Her knowledge of numerous online platforms, health care organizations, simulation centers, firsthand observations in private practice about the needs of nurse leaders, and her work with nursing students all stood out.”

Robinson holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Purdue Global and a Juris Doctor from Nova Southeastern University. In addition, she is a certified doula and birth trainer, a licensed attorney in Florida, and the National League for Nursing’s appointed consultant to the National Student Nurses’ Association.

QUOTE/UNQUOTE



“It is a testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence, and we couldn’t have achieved it without our nearly 4,300 nursing staff members, and the support and collaboration of our dedicated leadership, faculty, and staff across the UHealth system.”

— **Elizabeth Vieito-Smith, M.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '12**, Chief Nursing Officer of UHealth – University of Miami Health System on learning UHealth had become the first Florida hospital to earn Magnet with Distinction designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the highest level of distinction



“Only 1 percent of doctoral degrees are held by Latinas, and I’m proud to be one of them.”

— **Alexa Parra, B.S.N. '16, B.S.P.H. '16, Ph.D. '25**, who successfully defended her dissertation, “The Effects of Intersecting Identity and Social Determinants of Health on

Afro-Latina Maternal Morbidity and Infant Birth Outcomes in Florida,” in May. She is Nicklaus Children’s Hospital’s evidence-based practice specialist.



“Stay true to yourself and trust the journey. Everything you invest now will shape you into a stronger, more confident, and compassionate provider in the end.”

— **Nia Washington, B.S.N. '21, M.S.N. '25**, winner of the Summer 2025

Master of Science in Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner Excellence in Academic and Clinical Performance Award



“This program, this community became my anchor. It gave me purpose when everything felt uncertain.”

— **Lissette Gutierrez, M.S.N. '25**, student speaker for the Summer 2025 Awards Ceremony

Read these full stories at news.miami.edu/sonhs.



Reflections of a New RN

“I’m happy to share that this past August marked one year since I officially became a nurse. I’m also grateful to share that I recently received my first DAISY Award. This journey hasn’t been without its challenges, but every step has reminded me of the importance of perseverance, teamwork, and compassion. I’m proud to be serving my community and caring for children and families during some of their most difficult moments. I’m honored by this recognition, but even more motivated to continue growing as a nurse and making a difference wherever I can. I want to say thank you to my orienters, my PICU team, and my Nicklaus family for guiding and supporting me. I’m looking forward to continuing this journey of growth, learning, and service in the years ahead.”

— **Fabrice Saturne, B.S.N. '24**, of Hollywood, Florida, Registered Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Nurse, Nicklaus Children’s Health System

CLASS NOTES

1970s, 80s, & 90s

Farides Garcia, B.S.N. '88, president and CEO of Parent To Parent of Miami, was appointed by the governor to the Florida Rehabilitation Council. She belongs to the Miami Dade College School of Education Advisory Committee and received the 2023 Unsung Hero Award from University of Miami/Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism and Related Disabilities.

Sandra Citty, B.S.N. '95, M.S.N. '98, reconnected with her former UM faculty, mentor, and colleague **Lois Marshall, B.S.N. '78**, at the Florida Nurses Association Evidence Based Practice and Research Conference. “She is a huge reason I am an educator, researcher, and clinician,” stated Dr. Citty. Both served on the planning committee with **Claudia Hauri, C.N.P. '76**, **Lila de Tántillo, B.S.N. '13, Ph.D. '19**,

2000s & 10s

Mariana Da Costa, B.S.N. '07, assistant professor and chair-elect (2024-25) of the Faculty Senate at Western Carolina University, reconnected with her former UM nursing professor **Susanna Barroso, Ph.D. '16**, assistant professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who

was presenting a talk titled “Creating Experiential Learning Opportunities Through Simulation to Address Health Disparities in an Unfolding Mental Health and Maternal-Newborn Health Scenario.” “Dr. Barroso played a vital role in building the foundational skills I still carry with me 18 years later,” said Da Costa.

Lainey Kieffer, M.S.N. '11, D.N.P. '14, is cofounder of Prime Care VIP, a mobile advanced primary and urgent care service.

Christopher Perez, B.S.H.S. '12, Registered Technologist in Radiography certified by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, is founder and owner of the continuing education company CE HUB (cehubfl.com).

Khulud Almutairi, M.S.N. '19, Ph.D. '24, was awarded a WAED grant from King Saud University for research building on her dissertation with the aim of expanding her study of nurses’ perceptions and experiences in Saudi Arabia.

Antonio Sanchez Gonzalez, B.S.N. '19, M.S.N. '20, earned his M.S. Healthcare Administration from Northwestern

University and is center medical director for Oak Street Health in Providence, Rhode Island.

Belén Hervera, B.S.P.H. '19, a Ph.D. student in Population Health Sciences at Weill Cornell School of Medical Sciences, was the American Society of Health Economics Conference (ASHEcon) ASHEcon 2025 Diversity Scholar. She received Honorable Mention for Representation in Research at the 2025 American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Annual Conference for her poster “High Risk and Underserved: Drug and Sexual Risk Patterns Among Women Who Inject Drugs Using a Syringe Service Program (SSP),” which she said is “one of the few gender-focused analyses using real-world SSP program data to examine injection practices, sexual risk, and infectious disease outcomes among women who inject drugs with the goal of informing gender-responsive interventions.”

Christopher Otero, B.S.N. '19, M.S.N. '23, is an advanced practice provider team manager for Oncology Clinical Research / Oncology Urgent Care with Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami and a 2025 director at large for the Miami-Dade Chapter, Oncology Nursing Society.

CLASS NOTES

2020s

Coco Dong, B.S.N. '21, Doctor of Nurse Practitioner and Doctor of Philosophy nursing science student at the University of Pittsburgh, presented “Tracking the Economic Burden of Dementia Globally and Within the United States” at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference 2025 and “Enhancing International Health Literacy and Awareness Through Interprofessional Education” at the International Nursing Research Congress 2025. At SLEEP 2025, the Associated Professional Sleep Societies’ annual meeting, she presented on the association between sleep-disordered breathing during REM sleep and cognitive decline.

Nicolas Hernandez, B.S.P.H. '22, was promoted to senior manager of research support for the Lennar and Kendall network sites at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

(Sedona) Rose Webb, B.S.P.H. '22, is pursuing her Master of Public Health at Rutgers University and works as an operations and communications specialist for Listening Lab NYC.

Samantha Melendez-Infante, B.S.N. '24, RN at HCA Florida Aventura Hospital, received an Excellence Always Award in Safety for her “commitment to quality and safety” and for being “compassionate, kind, and resilient.” “Samantha takes initiative without being asked and is an incredible preceptor that others admire,” the citation continued. “As the chair of our unit-based council, she sets the tone for enthusiastic and positive attitude that is infectious to others. She is an exceptional part of our team, and we are so excited to continue to watch her blossom.”

Christian Amecangelo, B.S.H.S. '25, is in his first year at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Tericka “Teri” Smith Cesar, Ph.D. '25, successfully defended her dissertation, “Examining Obesity in African American Families through a Social Environmental Lens: A Comprehensive Analysis,” in July.

Judy Greengold, Ph.D. '25, family nurse practitioner and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine instructor, successfully defended her dissertation, “Operationalizing Connectedness in Hybridized Health Care: Machine Learning Analysis of Blood Pressure Measurement and Diagnostic

Gaps in Real-World Settings,” in June. She directs the Johns Hopkins Telemedicine Education Consortium and was awarded a Johns Hopkins Discovery Grant to fund her Johns Hopkins School of Nursing postdoctoral fellowship.

Sydney Gumbs, B.S.N. '25, passed the NCLEX-RN and received her nursing license from the New York State Board of Nursing. She is now in NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center’s New Graduate Residency Program, working in a cardiac step-down unit.

Grace Kenny, B.S.N. '25, RN, joined NYU Langone Health as a cardiac surgical ICU nurse in August 2025. “This achievement marks the culmination of years of hard work, late nights, and unwavering dedication,” she shared. “I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies for providing me with the education, support, and experiences that prepared me for this moment.”

Ruthie Keyes, B.S.N. '25, began her nursing career in August as a pediatric intensive care nurse at Children’s Wisconsin after passing the NCLEX-RN. “I’m incredibly grateful to everyone who helped and supported me along the way, especially my excellent professors for preparing me for this exam,” she shared.


Jiye Lee, Ph.D. '25, successfully defended her dissertation, “Effects of Neighborhood Environment on Child Behavioral Health,” in June. She is an NIH T32 postdoctoral scholar conducting cancer survivorship research at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Sky McEvoy, B.S.N. '25, is an Emergency Department nurse in the ED Fellowship cohort of North Shore University Hospital in New York.

Dalton Scott, Ph.D. '25, successfully defended his dissertation, “Intergenerational and Cultural Drivers of Depressive Symptoms in Hispanic Sexual Minority Youth,” in June. He also received the University’s 2025 Lavender Celebration Outstanding Research Award, joined Emory University’s nursing school as an Advanced Research Training in Social Determinants of Health Fellow, and began work at the health care tech company HealthStream.

Grace Taylor, B.S.N. '25, passed her NCLEX-RN and in August 2025 began work as a surgical trauma critical care nurse with UNC Health.

IN MEMORIAM



Rosemary F. Hall, April 16, 1939 to June 12, 2025, was a beloved faculty member for 23 years before retiring in 2013. “Dr. Hall will be remembered for her academic excellence and the deep compassion she brought to her work,” said Rosina Cianelli, who joined the nursing faculty in 2006. “Dr. Hall’s legacy is defined by her unwavering support for students and colleagues, especially international learners and new faculty navigating the complexities of academia.” A gifted educator, she made complex nursing concepts accessible, noted Cianelli. She also was “a champion of collaboration, mentorship, and advocacy” who led with strength, empathy, and patience. “Dr. Hall often said, ‘We rise by lifting others,’ and she lived that philosophy daily. Her guidance helped shape inclusive, compassionate educators who continue to carry forward her values.”

Jane Bragg, B.S.N. '83, M.S.N. '89, August 5, 1957 to August 21, 2024, was a certified pediatric oncology nurse at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital for 42 years and member of the Pediatric Advanced Care Team.

Gail Janet Smith, B.S.N. '86, May 25, 1946 to October 6, 2025, was a longtime emergency department nurse in Miami and nurse practitioner who taught at Miami Dade College.

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