

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



PORTRAITS OF EXCELLENCE



**O**n April 30, 2018, the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences unveiled a portrait of Mrs. Nicole Wertheim, for whom the College is named. David Y. Chang, acclaimed artist and Chair of the Department of Art + Art History at FIU, created the striking portrait, which hangs on display in the lobby of the student wing of our building to greet all visitors.

The portrait was commissioned in honor of the Wertheim family's unwavering support and inspiring vision to encourage superior education, research and practice as ways to break down barriers to high quality healthcare.

# PORTRAITS OF EXCELLENCE

**OUR MISSION:** To prepare diverse healthcare professionals who are providers and leaders in the delivery of high-quality, accessible, culturally competent and compassionate care within a highly technological and global environment.

To teach, conduct research and practice in service to the community through interprofessional collaboration.

To create, promote, expand and validate scientific knowledge and evidence-based practice through interdisciplinary research.

**OUR VISION:** To be globally recognized as a higher education destination organization that is innovative, inquiry-driven and technologically advanced.

To draw diverse top-class faculty, students, staff and others for positive transformation of society with a focus on the healthcare needs of underserved populations.

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE **DEAN**

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Supporters,

The collection of works in an art gallery differs vastly in subject matter, composition, medium, space, form, texture, color and presentation, among other artistic elements. Yet, a common thread is that each artist seeks to realize, with every brush stroke, their distinct vision through unyielding energy, passion and dedication. It is the same with the students, educators, researchers, staff and advocates of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences.

Our College is home to a collection of great works and works in progress. Some portrayals of excellence you will read about in this report include the research of our Wertheim Family Endowed chairs; a 3-D pediatric prosthetics project led by a physical therapy professor inspired by her child; the devotion of an occupational therapy faculty member working with children with autism; the search to enhance serenity in the practice of future speech-language pathologists to increase the effectiveness of their care; and doctoral nursing students seeking to expand their impact on patient care and communities through research. These, and countless other untold endeavors, are classics in their own right.

Art is defined as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination. This definition is illustrated in the College's Tree of Life mural by FIU alumnus and local artist Aramis O'Reilly. On closer examination, you will see contributions from the College's students, faculty and staff that share their artistic interpretations of what healthcare means to them. The mural includes a fiery eye painted by me, which I call "God's eye," that watches over all of our College's healthcare heroes as we care for others.

A powerful piece of art is also something that can stir emotion. In the lobby of our building's clinical wing is a stunning portrait painted by David Y. Chang, Chair of FIU's Art + Art History Department, of our patron – Mrs. Nicole Wertheim. Her confident and optimistic gaze constantly reminds us of the Wertheim family's generosity and commitment to our College, which motivates us all to demonstrate excellence and creativity in and out of our classrooms, offices, clinical practice settings and laboratories.

"A Starry Night" is arguably Vincent van Gogh's most recognizable and transcendental work of art. For me, its beauty comes from the constellation of stars intertwining to depict a vibrant and limitless night sky. I see our College in much the same way. Our faculty, staff, students, alumni and supporters are the stars that form beautiful constellations within our vibrant College — creating high quality, limitless and transformative masterpieces in healthcare education, practice, research and leadership to be admired and appreciated for generations to come.

Most sincerely,

Ora L. Strickland  
PhD, DSc (Hon), RN, FAAN  
Dean and Professor  
FIU Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences





**ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Fueled by intellect and driven by innovation and caring, the FIU Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences has earned a national reputation for academic excellence propelled by a philosophy embracing diversity, technology, evidence-based practice and research to prepare leaders across various healthcare disciplines.

More than 16,000 alumni are practicing in the fields of nursing, athletic training, communication sciences and disorders, health services administration, occupational therapy and physical therapy. They are embodying the College's ideals for culturally competent and compassionate care and interprofessional collaboration.

**1,982**

Total Student Enrollment  
(in and out of state)

**1,095**

Degrees Awarded  
(total)

**98%**

Doctorally Prepared  
Faculty

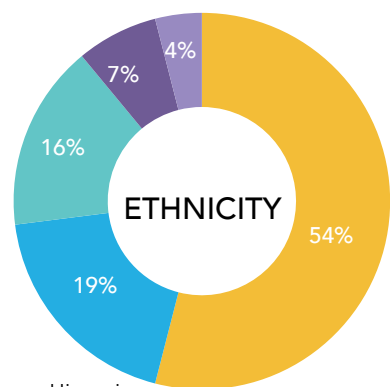
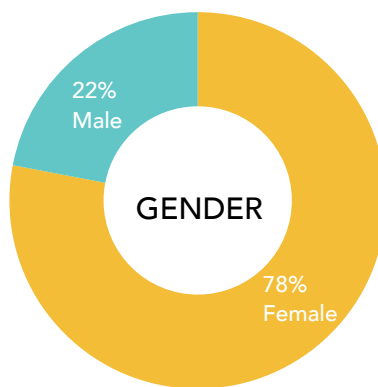
**87**

Full-Time Faculty

**PROGRAMS IN:**

- Nursing
- Athletic Training
- Communication Sciences & Disorders
- Health Services Administration
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy

**STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY**



Average Age: **27.8**

- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other



## DRAWING FORTH EXCELLENCE

College celebrates the impact of research faculty with Wertheim Family Endowed Chairs

In September 2013, Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim and family made a transformational gift that would become the living canvas on which the future of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences would be forever illustrated.

The record-setting \$10 million gift represented the Wertheim family's commitment to clinical and interdisciplinary research, student scholarship, faculty excellence and the overarching belief that the best healthcare is delivered when health professionals work together as a team.

From that day on, the Wertheim family's support has served as a catalyst to assist students on their academic journeys; encourage top educators in their scholarly pursuits; and enrich our research

programs by engaging faculty researchers and clinicians as transformational leaders in their field.

To help propel the College's research endeavors, three endowed faculty chair positions were established to attract and retain research faculty who mentor and participate in collaborative research with students and junior faculty members. Named in honor of Wertheim family members, the Wertheim Family Endowed Chairs reflect their conviction to the development of science and healthcare in key areas of need.

The Wertheim family's philanthropic investment in FIU and our College marked a milestone on April 27, 2021, as the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences celebrated the appointments of three highly regarded nurse researchers as

Wertheim Family Endowed Chair Faculty: Dr. Tami Thomas, Dr. Sandra Gracia Jones and Dr. Ellen L. Brown.

Each has devoted their respective career to giving marginalized populations better access to healthcare by encouraging HPV vaccinations and educating nurses to care for victims of sexual assault; caring for HIV/AIDS patients while promoting prevention of the disease in younger generations; and advocating for patients afflicted with dementia and the caregivers who provide support to those with dementia every day.

As Wertheim Family Endowed Chairs, their contributions to science, healthcare and teaching will continue to create positive change and impacts in the lives of countless patients, students, practitioners and educators, thanks to the unwavering and ongoing patronage of the Wertheim family.

**D**r. Tami Thomas is an award-winning nurse scientist with a background in epidemiology. She is renowned as an advocate and authority in health promotion whose research findings serve as models for culturally appropriate patient education and care for underserved children and families.

Dr. Thomas' illustrious body of research has focused on the HPV vaccine along with rural health and minority health disparities. Her work has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Nursing Research, the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities, the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Her groundbreaking NIH-research on adolescent HPV vaccinations has informed parents and communities about HPV vaccination for teens as a cancer prevention strategy for families across the country. She has shown that healthcare providers could increase HPV vaccine uptake serving to reduce HPV-related cancers through a multi-faceted approach to educate patients by relating to their values and beliefs.

She is a subject matter expert in this field and serves on the National Steering Committee and School-Based Parent Education Work Group for the National HPV Vaccine Task Force in collaboration with the American Cancer Society and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As a highly respected thought leader in health promotion for underserved populations, Dr. Thomas is leading federally funded projects addressing the healthcare gap by increasing the role of nurse practitioners serving in rural communities.

The Advanced Nursing Education Workforce Traineeship program is



preparing advanced practice nurses as primary care providers specifically for rural healthcare settings. Through the Regionally Underserved Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, Dr. Thomas is leading a university-based recruitment and training effort to double the number of Florida's certified sexual assault nurse examiners to aid sexual assault survivors in underserved and rural communities.

Dr. Thomas is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing; a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholar alumna; and former chair of the Immunization Special Interest Group for the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

## **Tami L. Thomas**

**PhD, RN, APRN-CPNP, FAANP, FAAN**

Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim  
Endowed Chair in Prevention  
and Family Health



## Sandra "Sande" Gracia Jones

PhD, RN, ACRN, FAAN

Dr. Vanessa Von Wertheim  
Endowed Chair in Chronic  
Disease Prevention and Care

**D**r. Sande Jones is nationally celebrated as a nurse researcher and advocate for HIV/AIDS care and prevention in various populations. Dr. Jones has been specializing in HIV/AIDS awareness and care for close to three decades, starting with her time working as a clinical nurse specialist for the Special Immunology Unit at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida.

One of Dr. Jones' forays into HIV research was in leading a groundbreaking study funded by the National Institutes of Health on the safer-sex practices of older men and HIV risks associated with using prescribed enhancement and erectile

dysfunction medications. She's also led numerous research projects focused on awareness and prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) through funding from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Office of Women's Health, and the Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy.

Since joining the FIU Nursing faculty in 2000, Dr. Jones has mentored several junior faculty members to develop programs on HIV and substance abuse prevention aimed at college students. The SENORITAS (Student Education Needed in Order to Reduce Infection and Transmission of AIDS/HIV and STIs) project empowered female minority nursing students to serve as campus-based peer educators on HIV/STI prevention for young women at FIU and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The SALSA (Student Awareness of the Link between Substance Abuse and AIDS) project was launched to evaluate the effectiveness of student peer educators to help increase the HIV knowledge/awareness of freshmen college students. She also serves as Principal Investigator for a SAMHSA-funded HIV prevention program for college campuses with a focus on young men who have sex with men.

Dr. Jones is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing; is designated as an HIV/AIDS Nurse Expert by the American Nurses Association; and is the recipient of an HIV Doctoral Fellowship Award and the inaugural HIV Prevention Award from the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care.

**D**r. Ellen Brown's long-standing program of research focuses on the emotional health and well-being of community-dwelling older adults; the mental welfare of those who provide their care; and support for the choice of older adults to age in place. She has received funding from the National Institute of Mental Health, Florida's Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, and most recently, the National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Aging.

Dr. Brown is currently leading a multi-organizational team on a five-year R01 project titled "Integration of Health Information Technology and Promotion of Personhood in Family-Centered Dementia Care." The team is studying how families and long-term care facilities can employ information-sharing technology interventions, such as Augmentative and Alternative Communications and touch-screen devices, to facilitate decision-making and the delivery of care for people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

This research is an extension of her work developing the patented *CareHeroes* web and smartphone app to improve dementia care coordination and communication between healthcare providers and family caregivers. The app also provides resources to support and address the mental health needs of the family caregiver.

Dr. Brown has been working with Miami Jewish Health System for the past 15 years, most recently collaborating with the organization's MIND Institute to pilot a practical model of empathy-based care training for long-term care staff. Known as Miami Jewish *EmpathiCare*, findings could help establish baseline competency levels for nursing professionals in this patient specialty



and hiring standards for health facilities where dementia patients reside.

Dr. Brown is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. In 2011 she received the Academy's *Edge Runner* distinction for her work helping create the TRIAD (Training in the Assessment of Depression) assessment model. TRIAD is used to train home health care nurses to identify depression more effectively in their patients and refer cases for treatment. Dr. Brown is also a member of the American Association of Geriatric Psychiatry and was previously the College's Wallace Gilroy Endowed Nursing Faculty Scholar.

## Ellen Leslie Brown

EdD, MS, RN, FAAN

Erica Wertheim Zohar Endowed Chair  
in Community Mental Health



## COMMITMENT TO CARING: A SELF-PORTRAIT

FIU Undergraduate  
Nursing educator is a  
**picture of dedication**

**T**he goal of a still life composition is to direct the viewer's eye toward what the artist thinks is important. Reflecting on the "anything but still" life of FIU Undergraduate Nursing's Yvonne Parchment, Ed.D., RN, APRN, CNE, it's evident what she thinks is important: a commitment to caring.

Dr. Parchment's distinguished 35-year career in nursing practice and education began in 1974 when she took nursing courses at the University of West Indies while working as an elementary school teacher in her native Kingston, Jamaica. When she relocated to Miami in 1982, she earned nursing

degrees in rapid succession with associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees in hand by 1989, capped off with a Doctorate in Education from FIU in 2002.

Dr. Parchment excelled as a nurse and clinical nurse specialist for two local hospitals through 1995. She was a member of the U. S. Army Reserves Nurse Corps' 324th Combat Support Hospital from 1989 to 2003 and retired with the rank of major.

While caring for patients, she imparted her experiences and knowledge to younger nurses, including training licensed practical nurses while with the Army. She joined FIU's undergraduate nursing faculty in 1995 as an Assistant Clinical Professor and was promoted to Associate Clinical Professor, a position she's held since 2005.

# UNDERGRADUATE NURSING



“Do the best that you can, for whoever you can, whenever you can, and try to keep going forward.”

— Dr. Yvonne Parchment

Dr. Parchment was instrumental in establishing FIU Nursing’s Veterans Affairs Nursing Academic Partnership to clinically train undergraduate nursing students to treat and manage health problems predominant to military veterans and active service members. “Taking students to the same VA facilities where I worked and sharing with them my perspectives as a veteran helped them understand the extent of caring needed for the military population on an even deeper level.”

Dr. Parchment preaches what she practices when it comes to caring. “Do the best that you can, for whoever you can, whenever you can, and try to keep going forward. That’s what I tell my students. And it’s a great feeling to

see them in different hospitals caring for others and flourishing as professionals.”

Dr. Parchment, who is retiring from FIU Nursing after 26 years, has been honored repeatedly for her professional and community contributions. She’s twice been named Zeta Phi Beta Educator of the Year; has received community service awards from the Church of the Ascension and Jamaica Diaspora Committee; was listed among Florida Nurses Association’s Great 100 Nurses; and just last year received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who’s Who, among many other distinctions over three decades of service.

“I’m humbled by the honors I’ve received,” Dr. Parchment contemplated. “It means people care.”



## INSIDE UNDERGRADUATE NURSING

**Chair:** Maria Olenick, PhD, FNP, RN, FAAN

**Assistant Chair:** Monica Flowers, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

**Programs:**

- Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)
- Accelerated Option (AO) BSN
- RN-to-BSN Online

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 409

**Number of Graduates:** 278

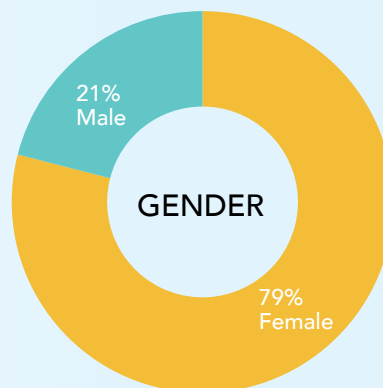
**Graduation Rate:** 95.7%

**First-Time NCLEX (RN Licensure) Pass Rate:** 95.8%

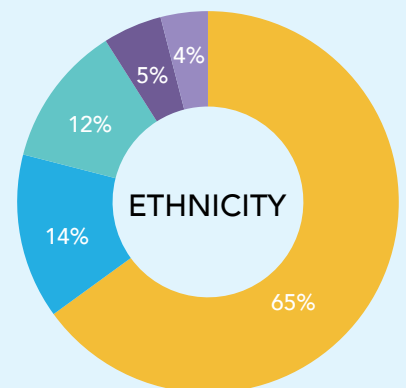
**Full-Time Faculty:** 20

**Accreditation and Approval:** Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE); Florida State Board of Nursing

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY



Average Age: **28.3**

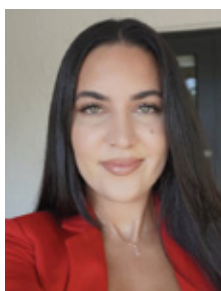


- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

# PREPARING THE CANVAS

## FIU Graduate Nursing students pursue research through **Wertheim scholarship endowments**

Throughout history, great artists have benefited from generous patrons who believed in their talents and championed their devotion to pursue their passion. This is the same for three exceptional FIU doctoral nursing students who are pursuing their passions in advanced nursing education, practice and research with support from two doctoral scholarship endowments from the Wertheim family.



**LEYANIS AVILA** is an FIU Doctor of Nursing Practice student and a **Nicole Wertheim Nursing & Health Sciences Scholar**. Annual distributions from the \$1 million endowment provide scholarship support for graduate students pursuing a doctoral degree in nursing practice or physical therapy whose objective is to serve as healthcare leaders and researchers who will transition research findings to enhance the quality of preventive and clinical care.

Avila's work is focused on pediatric cancer. She chose to work on creating a system for holistic care of pediatric cancer patients because she loves working with that resilient population. "This scholarship has given me the opportunity to save some money for developing my system and to be part of associations that strengthen

my research," she explains. "It has also taken some financial burden off my shoulders, which is something I thank them very much for, especially in hard times like today."

## INSIDE GRADUATE NURSING

**Interim Chair:** Rosa Roche, PhD, APRN, PPCNP-BC

**Interim Director:** Charles Buscemi, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, CWCN | DNP Program

**Interim Chair:** Jorge Valdes, DNP, CRNA, APRN | Nurse Anesthetist Practice

**Interim Assistant Chair:** Ann Miller, DNP, CRNA, APRN | Nurse Anesthetist Practice

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 400

**Number of Graduates:** 211

**Graduation Rate:** 86%

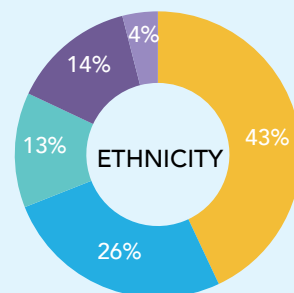
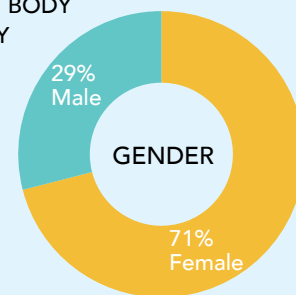
**Full-Time Faculty:** 25

### Programs:

- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)
- Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNP-NA)
- BSN-to-DNP, Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) & Post-Master's Certificates:
  - Advanced Adult-Gerontology NP
  - Advanced Child NP
  - Advanced Family NP
  - Advanced Psychiatric-Mental Health NP
- Nurse Educator Post-Master's Certificate
- Dual MSN Degree/Nurse Educator Certificate

**Accreditations and Approval:** Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE); Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA); Florida State Board of Nursing

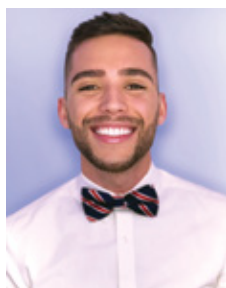
### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

Average Age: **37.3**

FIU PhD in Nursing students Cory Salcedo and Julia Dankanich are **Nicole Wertheim Research Scholars**. They are beneficiaries of funds from a \$1.5 million endowment awarded to nursing or health sciences PhD students to teach and conduct research that contributes to primary or secondary prevention.



**CORY SALCEDO** recently finished a collaborative publication on cultural competencies and best practices for providing care to the LGBTQ+ community. He is conducting research to identify factors contributing to the lack of adherence to pre-exposure prophylaxis use among Latin men who have sex with men and to examine the cultural, social and psychiatric barriers that can hinder them from receiving adequate healthcare. Salcedo's passion for his work is personal. "As a LatinX/Hispanic and LGBT individual myself, I find that minority populations are in dire need of advocacy for health and wellness," he says. "I plan to utilize my diversity and nursing background to implement positive changes to reduce morbidity and mortality rates among these at-risk men and various other vulnerable populations."



**JULIA DANKANICH** is focusing her research on the lived experiences of children and families battling pediatric cancer. She believes it's important to know what they each go through to provide the best possible outcomes by providing the most effective, non-traumatic road to recovery. "I hope to spread more awareness of what children's and parents' lived experiences are during their cancer and survivorship journeys," she says.

## INSIDE PHD NURSING

**Director:** Tami Thomas, PhD, RN, APRN-CPNP, FAANP, FAAN

**Tracks:**

- Post-Master's PhD in Nursing
- BSN-to-PhD in Nursing

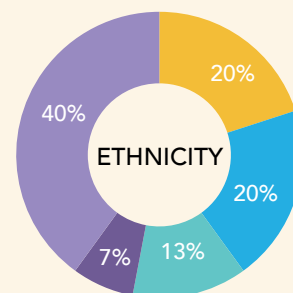
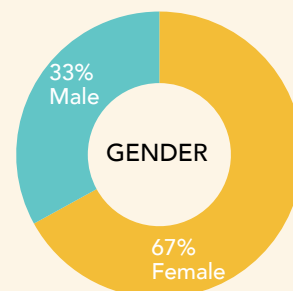
**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 15

**Number of Graduates:** 2

**Faculty/Dissertation Advisor Status:** 19

**Accreditation:** Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Foreign Students

**Average Age: 37.5**

# CAPTURING THE TRUE ESSENCE

FIU Athletic Training takes a clinical look at **CBD and health management**

The therapeutic aspects of the cannabis industry, particularly cannabinoids – the compounds found in cannabis plants – have long-been painted in broad brush strokes. Relying on anecdotal accounts to extoll the benefits of these plant-based products rather than clinical evidence has been typical when it comes to the use of the non-psychoactive compound of cannabidiol (CBD). With this in mind, a public-private collaboration between FIU Athletic Training and the SunFlora company will explore the finer details of the science behind the nature of CBD through the newly formed Global Initiative for Cannabinoid Research & Education at FIU.

SunFlora, which sells proprietary formulated CBD products through its SunMed brand for general wellness purposes, made a \$338,000 gift to support FIU Doctor of Athletic Training (DAT) students and faculty mentors in conducting research on some of its products and other alternative interventions of patient care. “Partnering with FIU Athletic Training to provide third-party, independent exploration of our products represents the first deliberate deep dive into the efficacy of CBD applications for health management, which should elevate cannabinoid science and credibility for the entire industry,” said Anthony Ferrari, Ph.D., SunFlora’s chief science officer.

The research will stem from FIU’s newly established Global Initiative, led by Jeff Konin, Ph.D., ATC, PT, Clinical Professor and Director of the FIU DAT program. “Through this Initiative we can spearhead evidence-based research and collaborative engagements that will produce meaningful



cannabinoid-focused clinical studies and educational resources that lead to transformative innovations locally and globally,” Dr. Konin said.

Over the next two years, Dr. Konin will oversee a team of seven DAT students studying the effectiveness of select SunMed CBD products to manage conditions in the areas of pain, inflammation, anxiety and sleep. The research team will follow a test group of demographically diverse athlete patients to also examine the short- and long-term impacts of continued cannabinoid use.

According to Dr. Konin, sports medicine has traditionally been an early adopter of evidence-based research and practice

for new treatments in acute care, rehabilitation and recovery, and injury prevention that eventually translates to general public use.

“Our team is excited to embark on this groundbreaking work. It should help destigmatize the role of cannabis in health education and practice circles for treating individuals of any patient population safely, effectively and with scientifically proven confidence,” Dr. Konin added. “Together, SunFlora and FIU Athletic Training will establish the cornerstone of certified CBD research that will set the standards for evidence-based applications that will move plant medicine forward for better patient health and well-being.”



Dr. Jeff Konin (top row center) with FIU Doctor of Athletic Training student researchers.

## INSIDE ATHLETIC TRAINING

**Chair:** Michelle Odai, PhD, LAT, ATC | MS-AT

**Director:** Jeff Konin, PhD, ATC, FACSM, FNATA | DAT

**Programs:**

- Master of Science in Athletic Training (MS-AT)
- Doctor of Athletic Training (DAT)

**Student Enrollment**

(in and out of state): 29 (MS-AT) | 28 (DAT)

**Number of Graduates:** 11 (MS-AT) | 7 (DAT)

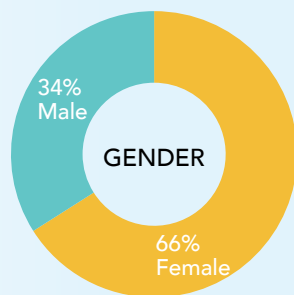
**Graduation Rate:** 92% (MS-AT)

**Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate:** 84.6% (MS-AT)

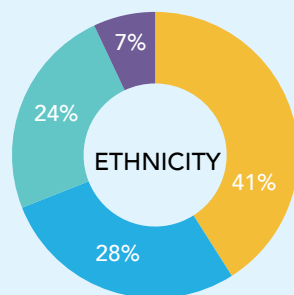
**Full-Time Faculty:** 5

**Accreditation:** Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE)

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY: MS-AT PROGRAM

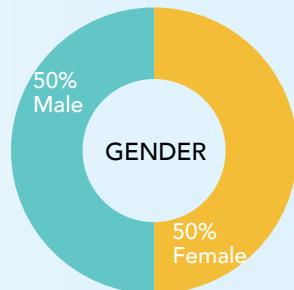


Average Age: **24.7**

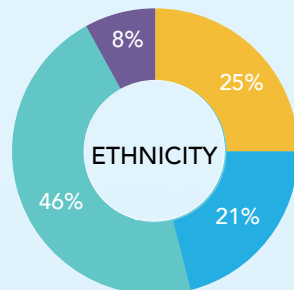


- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Other

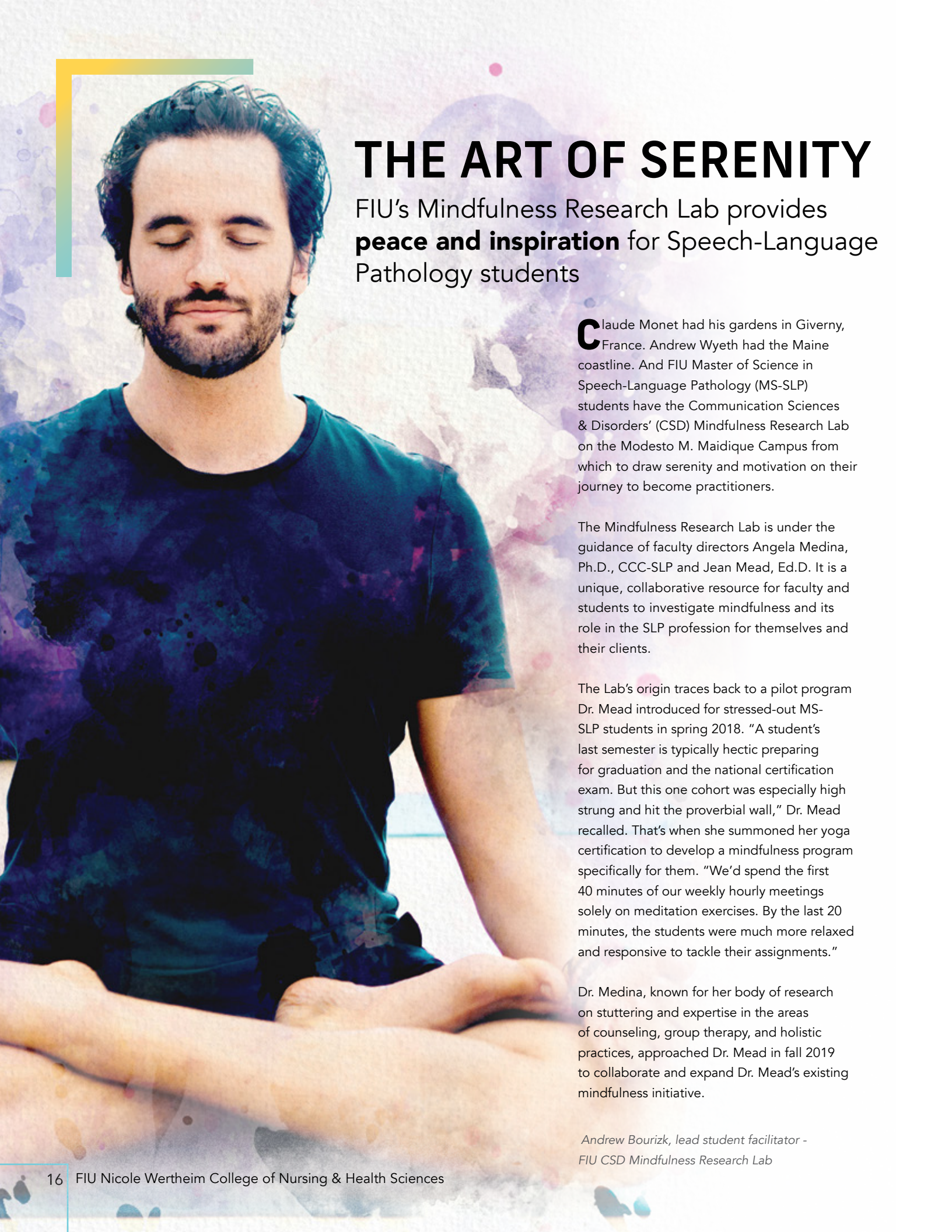
### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY: DAT PROGRAM



Average Age: **35.3**



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Other



# THE ART OF SERENITY

FIU's Mindfulness Research Lab provides **peace and inspiration** for Speech-Language Pathology students

**C**laude Monet had his gardens in Giverny, France. Andrew Wyeth had the Maine coastline. And FIU Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP) students have the Communication Sciences & Disorders' (CSD) Mindfulness Research Lab on the Modesto M. Maidique Campus from which to draw serenity and motivation on their journey to become practitioners.

The Mindfulness Research Lab is under the guidance of faculty directors Angela Medina, Ph.D., CCC-SLP and Jean Mead, Ed.D. It is a unique, collaborative resource for faculty and students to investigate mindfulness and its role in the SLP profession for themselves and their clients.

The Lab's origin traces back to a pilot program Dr. Mead introduced for stressed-out MS-SLP students in spring 2018. "A student's last semester is typically hectic preparing for graduation and the national certification exam. But this one cohort was especially high strung and hit the proverbial wall," Dr. Mead recalled. That's when she summoned her yoga certification to develop a mindfulness program specifically for them. "We'd spend the first 40 minutes of our weekly hourly meetings solely on meditation exercises. By the last 20 minutes, the students were much more relaxed and responsive to tackle their assignments."

Dr. Medina, known for her body of research on stuttering and expertise in the areas of counseling, group therapy, and holistic practices, approached Dr. Mead in fall 2019 to collaborate and expand Dr. Mead's existing mindfulness initiative.

*Andrew Bourizk, lead student facilitator -  
FIU CSD Mindfulness Research Lab*

# COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

While in the midst of their collaboration, COVID-19 redirected the priority from research to students' mental health and wellness. Within days of the nationwide lockdown orders in March 2020, they implemented a Zoom mindfulness program for their students known as *ME Time: MEditation with Dr. MEad and Dr. MEdina*. "We wanted to give students a safe space to connect with one another while learning mindfulness strategies to cope with this new way of life which included isolation, stress, and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic," Dr. Medina said.

Over the past two years, Dr. Medina and Dr. Mead have continued to develop mindfulness programming for health

sciences students, adults who stutter, and parents of autistic children. Dr. Mead leads participants in yoga, breathwork, and guided meditation each session, while Dr. Medina manages research design, which entails program logistics, student outreach, and session production.

Today, the Lab has expanded to include ten graduate research students from FIU CSD and Occupational Therapy, with MS-SLP student Andrew Bourizk serving as lead student facilitator. The Lab continues to produce a line of research publications and presentations, while serving as a space for students to develop mindfulness skills for themselves and their future clients.



Mindfulness Research Lab faculty directors  
Dr. Angela Medina (L) and Dr. Jean Mead (R)

## INSIDE COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

**Chair:** Monica Hough, PhD, CCC-SLP

**Programs:**

- Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP)
- Graduate Certificate in Communication Sciences & Disorders

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):**

- 96 degree program
- 154 graduate certificate program

**Number of Graduates:** 44

**Graduation Rate:** 93%

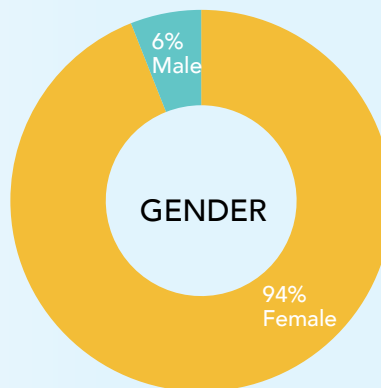
**First-Time Board Certification Pass Rate:** 97.7%

**Overall Annual Pass Rate:** 100%

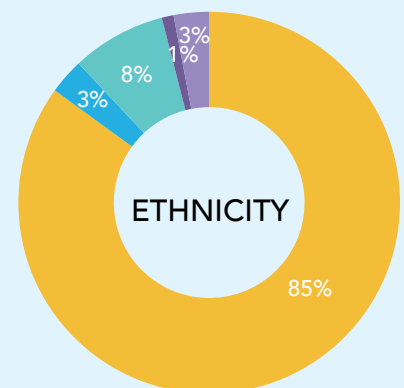
**Full-Time Faculty:** 7

**Accreditation:** Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

**STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY**



Average Age: **26.6**



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

# CERTIFIED MASTERPIECES

Certification **enhances learning value** for FIU Health Services Administration programs



**A**lthough the COVID-19 pandemic forced students worldwide into online learning, students have demanded online options for years. While online proponents tout the opportunity to increase access and enrollment, those who favor a return to in-class learning paint a picture of digital disconnect between teachers and students. FIU's Health Services Administration Department, which has long-embraced the online learning landscape, illustrates that you don't have to sacrifice academic quality for the sake of enrollment quantity.

Chanadra Young-Whiting, Ed.D., MPH/HSA, CHES, Chair of the FIU Health Services Administration Department, and Mariceli Comellas Quinones, Ed.D., Director of the Health Services Administration Graduate Program, are ensuring their students get a valued learning experience by having online and hybrid courses certified by Quality Matters.

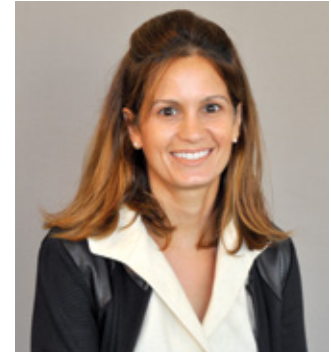
Quality Matters is a third-party certification process that helps online programs regularly evaluate their rubrics, structure of assessments, accessibility of resources, and visibility of materials to the students. Faculty members work with instructional design experts to structure and prepare their courses for submission to Quality Matters.

Dr. Comellas believes the certification process allows instructors to shine. "It forces a rethinking of projects versus presentations," Dr. Comellas explained. "Sometimes we have so much information to deliver to students, but the delivery needs to be just as expert. This process has helped improve our faculty's mode of delivery to be clearer."

"Students like it because they know exactly what's going to happen and what's expected of them and their professor going into the class. They welcome the more structured approach," Dr. Young-Whiting added.

The department works closely with FIU Online on the intensive Quality Matters certification process, which takes about a year to complete. Once a course is submitted, Quality Matters enlists a master reviewer, a subject matter expert, and an external reviewer to go through the course. Those reviewers can be from anywhere in the world. After their review, which takes a few weeks, any noted deficiencies are addressed and the course submission amended. Courses must be recertified every five years.

Currently, the department offers eight undergraduate courses and two graduate courses that are Quality Matters-certified. Some of those courses include Healthcare Finance, Introduction to Health Administration, Cultural Competency, and Communication and IT. Two more graduate courses are in



Dr. Chanadra Young-Whiting (L) and Dr. Mariceli Comellas Quinones (R)

the process of certification, with plans to certify the entire master's curriculum.

Dr. Young-Whiting summarized what she sees as the greatest benefit of the program. "Students want online courses, but they want it to be personal. Student success is always our goal, and this certification program helps faculty understand what they have to do to achieve that."

## INSIDE HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

**Chair:** Chanadra Young-Whiting, EdD, MPH/HSA, CHES

**Director:** Mariceli Comellas Quinones, EdD | MHSA

**Programs:**

- Bachelor of Health Services Administration (BHSA)
- Master of Health Services Administration (MHSA)
- Minor in Health Services Administration

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):**

- 563 (BHSA)
- 164 (MHSA)

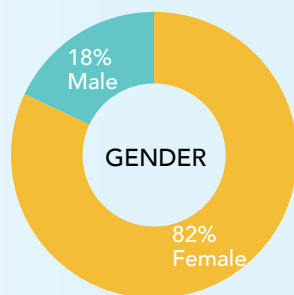
**Number of Graduates:**

- 343 (BHSA)
- 76 (MHSA)

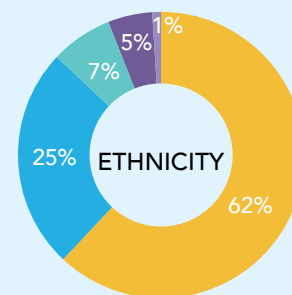
**Full-Time Faculty:** 7

**Accreditation:** Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY: BHSA PROGRAM

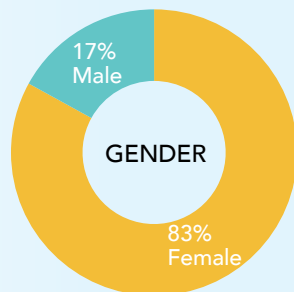


Average Age: **26.7**

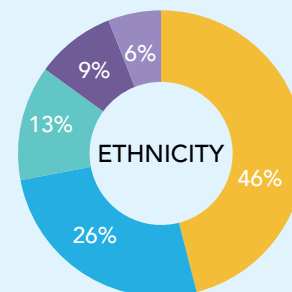


- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY: MHSA PROGRAM



Average Age: **27.1**



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other



# AN EMPOWERING SUBJECT

FIU Occupational Therapy professor helps children with **autism through research and action**



*Dr. Tana Carson*

**C**hewing. Slurping. Loud breathing. Dripping water. Gum smacking.

Many, if not most, people find these sounds to be irritating. But for people with misophonia or hyperacusis, they are far more disturbing, causing emotional or even physical distress. Tana Carson, Ph.D., OTR/L, Assistant Professor with FIU Occupational Therapy, is researching these auditory disorders in the hopes of giving younger patients some relief.

Dr. Carson was exposed to the phenomenon of misophonia through a cousin who has autism spectrum disorder. Misophonia is a condition in which certain sounds can cause an

intense emotional response, including anger. Hyperacusis is a condition in which qualities of sound (e.g., pitch, loudness) can cause distress and a physically painful response in the ears. In both cases, the louder the sound, the more intense the response will be. "When someone is 'sensitive' to sounds, it's not that they can hear sounds more acutely than others, but they are more reactive to certain sounds," said Dr. Carson.

Specializing in sensory processing and neurodevelopmental disorders, Dr. Carson has observed that misophonia is generally treated with a cognitive behavioral therapy approach focused on self and emotional regulation. Meanwhile, hyperacusis is treated through

desensitization techniques. Dr. Carson wants to use this information to improve those treatments for auditory sensitivity in children with autism.

Working with FIU colleagues, Dr. Angela Medina in Communication Sciences & Disorders and Dr. Yuxi Qiu in Counseling, Recreation and School Psychology, Dr. Carson is creating pediatric assessments for these conditions using validated adult tools as the starting point. The multidisciplinary project, funded by the FIU Wertheim Endowed Innovation Fund, is in its initial stages.

While these auditory conditions in children with autism are at the core of her research, working with the children is at the core of Dr. Carson's compassion. She is a long-time volunteer with the Kids4Kids USA nonprofit promoting adaptive sports for children with



special needs, for which she organizes the annual children's charitable triathlon. To her dismay, parents and caregivers of the children at the clinic where she worked told her that the fear of swimming was keeping some kids from participating.

In response, Dr. Carson teamed up with iCan Shine, an international nonprofit that teaches recreational activities for individuals with disabilities, to launch iCan Swim: Florida Keys Adaptive Swim Camp. Children and youth with

disabilities are taught essential water safety skills and receive personalized swim lessons from experienced adaptive aquatics instructors. "I grew up at my dad's dive shop in Key Largo experiencing the joy of the water. I want to safely empower these kids to feel that same joy," Dr. Carson stated.

Dr. Carson hopes to grow the iCan Swim program and incorporate the experience into new research programming at the College.

## INSIDE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

**Chair:** Lynne Richard, PhD, OT/L

**Program:** Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MS-OT)

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 146

**Number of Graduates:** 44

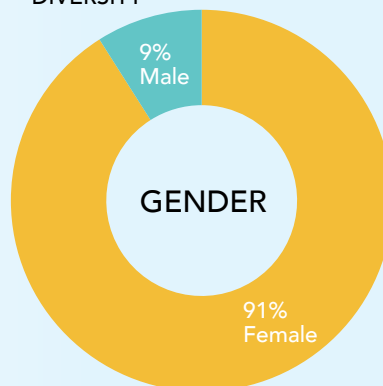
**Graduation Rate:** 88%

**Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate:** 100%

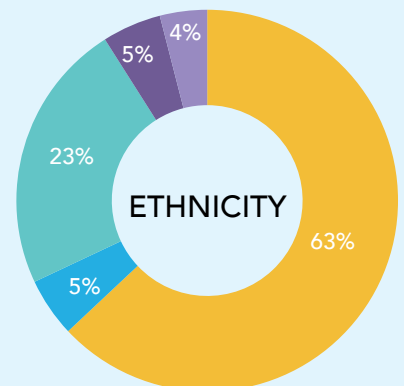
**Full-Time Faculty:** 9

**Accreditation:** Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY



Average Age: **25.0**

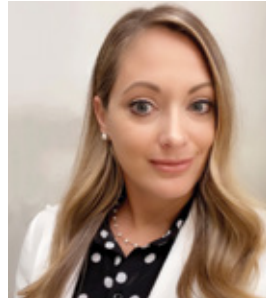


- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other



# HAND OF CREATION

FIU Physical Therapy professor works with **3-D printing to improve prosthetics use for children**



Dr. Amanda Thomas

**P**rosthesis limbs for children cost anywhere from \$10,000 to more than \$100,000 and must be replaced every few years as the child grows. Most health insurance covers a fraction of that cost, causing financial hardships for families of the 1 in every 1,900 infants with congenital and traumatic upper limb reduction. Drawing on her own experience, Amanda Thomas, DPT, Clinical Assistant Professor at FIU Physical Therapy, has set out to design solutions.

Parent to a child born without a right hand, Dr. Thomas saw for herself how parents struggled to cover the costs of prosthetics for growing children. While working as a physical therapist at Nicklaus Children's Hospital in Miami, Florida, she became involved with the 3-D printing team and was inspired by those families and her son to change the circumstances around acquiring needed prosthetics. "I wanted to give something back to him," Dr. Thomas said. "Through time, I've learned a lot about how to make this work."

In a partnership with Dr. Markondeya Raj Pulugurtha at the FIU College of Engineering and Computing, Dr. Thomas is designing a 3-D printed hand suitable for children ages six to 10. FIU students, including eight with FIU Physical Therapy and three with FIU Biomedical Engineering, are also participating in the project.

Dr. Thomas' team is researching a second iteration of the 3-D printed hand – the *Hayden 2*, named for her son – which can cost as little as \$300 to \$500. Although the first version was less expensive, it was body-powered and had no sensory components. The 2.0 edition is powered by lithium-ion batteries and has a touch sensor. The plastic is a bit heavier than in some prosthetics as it's water-resistant and designed to stand up to the wear and tear of childhood.

Five *Hayden hands* have been produced during the project thus far. FIU's Doctor of Physical Therapy students are studying how children use the hand to improve the design

and application for later iterations. Dr. Thomas says the next step is to lighten the weight of the hand. "Overall, the satisfaction level is great," she commented. "Kids like it. It makes them feel like a superhero."

Dr. Thomas has big hopes for the 3-D printed hand and says other limbs might be possible down the road. "I hope to build a program with FIU that can help the community mass produce these with no cost to the families whatsoever," she enthused. "Coming up with a universal model will be a challenge, but this technology has possible global implications for helping people get less expensive prosthetics."



## INSIDE PHYSICAL THERAPY

**Chair:** Mark D. Rossi, PhD, PT, CSCS

**Program:** Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 186

**Number of Graduates:** 60

**Graduation Rate:** 98%

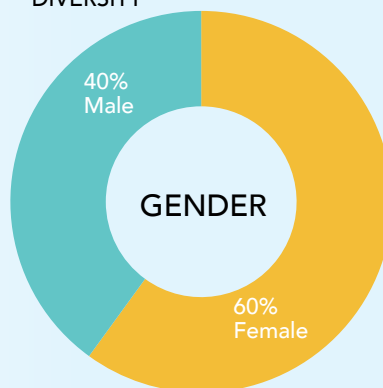
**First-Time Licensure Pass Rate:** 90.2%

**Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate:** 95.1%

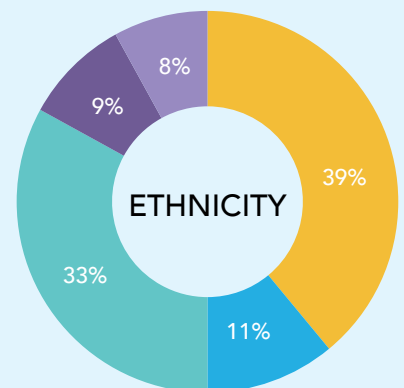
**Full-Time Faculty:** 11

**Accreditation:** Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)

### STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY



Average Age: **24.7**



- Hispanic
- Black Non-Hispanic
- White Non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

# Displays of Philanthropy

Many of the great achievements by faculty and students at the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences are possible because of the generous support of benefactors and partners committed to advancing our mission of preparing quality healthcare professionals and leaders through education and research.



*COVID-19 anteroom unit in the FIU STAR Center.*

## **HUGOTON FOUNDATION: HELPING CLINICAL EDUCATION STAY ON TRACK**

The Foundation's gift of \$122,930 was pivotal for the College to enhance its award-winning simulation education curriculum during the pandemic to keep Bachelor of Science in Nursing students on track to graduate on time and prepare to care for patients under the conditions of COVID-19.

As College leadership made the decision to substitute hands-on clinical practice hours with patient simulations, the gift provided the College's renowned Simulation Teaching And Research (STAR) Center with virtual simulation programming for obstetric, pediatric, foundational skills, and psychiatric nursing practicums from Assessment Technologies Institute and iHuman Patients from Kaplan, Inc. Together, these technologies are an interactive, online learning tool to help students improve clinical reasoning, patient safety and clinical assessment skills.

The Foundation gift also provided equipment to set up a COVID-19 anteroom unit and ventilator in the STAR Center for students to undergo COVID-19 protocol training and simulate pandemic-specific patient care scenarios in anticipation of what they will face in real practice.

The STAR Center was in continual operation throughout the pandemic. Nursing simulations were increased to 50% of the required clinical hours — the maximum allowed under national simulation guidelines — to make up for onsite facilities that had halted clinical rotations for students during this time. Full COVID-19 precautions were instituted and approved by the FIU COVID Response Team.

We are proud to say the STAR Center never closed for any COVID-related incident and our nursing students were able to graduate on time.

**LETTIE PATE WHITEHEAD FOUNDATION** provided a gift of \$212,000 for scholarships for 24 female undergraduate nursing students with outstanding academic achievement. The Foundation is a long-standing supporter of the College, having contributed more than \$1.5 million to the College since 2008. The Foundation is dedicated to supporting women's causes and devotes resources to scholarship programs for deserving female students with unmet financial need in schools and colleges across nine southeastern states.

**JONAS PHILANTHROPIES**, a leading national philanthropic funder of graduate nursing education, awarded a grant of \$30,000, which will be matched 1:1 by College donors, to fund scholarships for two FIU doctoral nursing students whose research efforts intend to improve the quality of healthcare in the areas of psychiatric-mental health, environmental health, veterans' health, or vision health. FIU doctoral students **Erita Snyder** and **Cory Salcedo** are the **FIU Jonas Nurse Scholars** among the cohort of 75 Jonas Scholars selected for 2021-2023.

Snyder's research is in veterans' health. She is studying the role of providers in the prevention of diabetes among the minority rural veteran population and assessing the impact

that these preventive services have on diabetes and other chronic diseases. Salcedo's work spans the areas of psychiatric-mental health and environmental health. The objective of his investigation is to examine cultural stigmatic and psychiatric barriers that impact minority men who have sex with men from receiving adequate healthcare.

**MIAMI HEART RESEARCH INSTITUTE** gave \$15,000 to award Joan K. Stout RN Advanced Cardiovascular Nursing Scholarships for eligible nursing students who are advancing their degrees in cardiac nursing. By providing highly qualified recipients with financial assistance to defray the tuition fees for advanced nursing education, the scholarships aim to help produce highly skilled and competent cardiac nurses, change lives and strengthen our community by providing the opportunity of education.

**DR. THOMAS W. BARKLEY, JR.** generously gifted \$12,000 for scholarships to be awarded to four graduate nursing students during their tenure in the program. The scholarships will be given annually for three years to one outstanding student in each of the nurse practitioner tracks: Adult-Gerontology primary care, Family primary care, Pediatric primary care and Psychiatric-Mental Health.



Nicole Wertheim  
College of Nursing  
& Health Sciences

Alumni and friends interested in contributing to or learning about ways to support the College can contact Kim English, Director of Development at (305) 348-1336 or [kenglish@fiu.edu](mailto:kenglish@fiu.edu).

## NEXT HORIZON

The Campaign for FIU

The mission of FIU's ambitious Next Horizon \$750,000,000 fundraising campaign is to elevate the university to greater levels of excellence in teaching, research, entrepreneurship and public policy. Among the campaign's objectives is to increase student scholarships and lessen the financial burden of higher education. Charitable gifts for student scholarships are essential to increase access for diverse students and expand the pipeline for highly skilled compassionate nurses and health professionals serving communities everywhere.

Gifts to the College in the form of annual or planned gifts and endowments also support our faculty and rising leaders with scholarly development that bolsters the College's research and leadership prominence and its ranking among top schools nationally.

The graduates and faculty of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences and FIU are making a real difference in today's world, and helping shape tomorrow's, because of their academic experiences on this campus. Let's reach the Next Horizon together to enhance educational experiences, optimize 21st century teaching, accelerate research, and escalate discovery to enterprise so we can advance vibrant and healthy communities everywhere. [nexthorizon.fiu.edu](http://nexthorizon.fiu.edu)

# POINTS OF PRIDE

## COLLEGE RANKINGS

The following College programs ranked in the **top 50** among public universities by U.S. News & World Report.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)

**#27**

Health Care Management

**#32**

Master's in Nursing

**#33**

Occupational Therapy

**#43**

## RESEARCH FUNDING

Total New Grants

**\$2.98M**

National Institutes of Health

**\$1.7M**

Health Resources & Services Administration

**\$1.26M**

TRUTH. FREEDOM. RESPECT.  
RESPONSIBILITY. EXCELLENCE.  
COMPASSION. CARING.  
INNOVATION. INTEGRITY.  
COLLABORATION. CULTURAL  
COMPETENCE.

**WE ARE FUELED BY INTELLECT.**

**WE ARE DRIVEN BY INNOVATION AND CARING.**

The faculty and staff of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences contribute greatly each and every day to the many important strides in program excellence made with every passing year. It is through their steadfast dedication we can provide students with high-quality academic health programs that address the culturally diverse healthcare needs of South Florida and the country. These professionals personify the mission, vision and values of the College in everything they do and with every student and colleague they support.



**Nicole Wertheim  
College of Nursing  
& Health Sciences**

## Dean's Leadership Council

Darlene Boytell-Perez, '96, '89  
*APRN*  
Gastro Health

Edward C. Garabedian, PT '90  
*AVP-Hospital Administration*  
Doctors Hospital

Diane Ramy Faulconer, '74, MSM '74  
*Registered Nurse (retired), Philanthropist*

Dr. Herbert A. Wertheim, OD, DSc  
*President and Founder*  
Brain Power, Inc.

Kim Greene, LCSW  
*Private Practitioner*

Nicole Wertheim  
*Honorary Chair*

Maggie Hansen, MHSc, RN, BSN  
*Senior Vice President and  
Chief Nurse Executive*  
Memorial Healthcare System

Vanessa Wertheim, PhD, MBA, PHN, CCRN

Colonel Brodes Hartley  
*President and CEO*

Harpreet Smith, RN, MSN, CCRC  
*Senior Director of Operations*  
Quotient Sciences

Community Health of South Florida

## About Florida International University

Florida International University is Miami's public research university, centered around real students with real goals and responsibilities, rooted in the realities of the world today. As an ever-evolving top-50 public research university, FIU holds the R1 Carnegie classification for Highest Research Activity and is designated as an "Emerging Preeminent State Research University" by the Florida Board of Governors. U.S. News and World Report places dozens of FIU programs among the best in the nation, and Washington Monthly Magazine ranks FIU among the top 20 public universities contributing to the public good.



**260,000+**

alumni  
worldwide



**\$310M**

in research awards  
received



**58,000**

average annual  
enrollment



**#1**

awarding bachelor's  
and master's degrees to  
Hispanic students



**#17**

ranking of most innovative  
among public U.S.  
institutions