

Annual Report 2019-2020

# MOMENTUM

*SHIFT*

Moving forward through COVID-19

**FIU**

Nicole Wertheim  
College of Nursing  
& Health Sciences

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# OUR VALUES

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



# 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 DEAN ORA STRICKLAND



Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni and Supporters,

**It is our calling as educators to optimize teachable moments so our students learn how to be skilled health professionals and grow as individuals whose contributions will benefit our communities.**

When I reflect on the past year and how the world has shifted and changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that the many teachable moments were not just for our students. Whether a professor, an alumni practitioner, or community partner, each of us has grown and given in ways we did not think possible before.

The stories in this year's annual report reflect progress and transformation as members of this College and extended healthcare family have risen to the occasion to reshape healthcare education and practice on the fly and on the horizon.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our faculty and students demonstrated their commitment to community service by helping test South Floridians at the COVID-19 FIU testing site at Tamiami Park.

Our nurse anesthetist and STAR Center faculty and students provided training to military healthcare providers to prepare them to care for COVID-19 patients at the Miami Beach field hospital.

Our faculty showcased teaching originality as students made remarkable transitions to online teaching and learning with virtual patient care simulations due to cancellations of clinical placements. New paradigms are being created to keep healthcare instruction evolving, while graduates from this point forward will enter the workplace with added capabilities and confidence to adapt and navigate through every instance of a "new normal."

Our alumni, colleagues, and healthcare partners on the frontlines set powerful examples of caring, compassion and bravery that went well beyond job descriptions.

These stories, and countless untold others, sprang forth because of the tenacity to learn, change and grow in the face of crisis. Healthcare education and delivery will forever be transformed because of the pandemic, but I believe it will be transformed for the better. One day the pandemic will be a memory, and the lasting lessons of this ultimate teachable moment will be revealed in the actions, compassion, innovation, leadership and promise we embraced to help each other and our communities endure and thrive.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ora L. Strickland".

**Ora L. Strickland**  
**PhD, DSc (Hon), RN, FAAN**

Dean and Professor  
FIU Nicole Wertheim College of  
Nursing & Health Sciences

### About Florida International University

As Miami's first and only public research university offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, both on campus and fully online, Florida International University is worlds ahead in its service to the academic and local community. FIU is designated as a top-tier research institution holding the R1 Carnegie classification for Highest Research Activity and has 26 programs in the top 50 in the nation among public universities, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

# 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.

Total Student Enrollment  
(in and out of state): 2,125  
Degrees Awarded (total): 917  
Doctorally Prepared Faculty: 94.3%  
Full-Time Faculty: 88

**Programs in:**  
Nursing  
Athletic Training  
Communication Sciences & Disorders  
Health Services Administration  
Occupational Therapy  
Physical Therapy

## Student Body Diversity:



● 77% Female  
● 23% Male



● 56% Hispanic  
● 21% Black Non-Hispanic  
● 14% White Non-Hispanic  
● 6% Asian/Pacific Islander  
● 3% Other



  
**225,000+**  
alumni  
worldwide

  
**\$225M**  
total research  
expenditures

  
**58,000**  
average annual  
enrollment

  
**200+**  
bachelor's, master's and  
doctoral programs

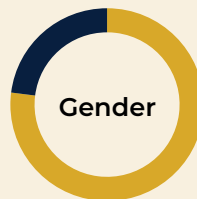
  
**26**  
top 50 programs among  
public universities

# A SHIFT IN REALITY



FIU BSN students practice on a patient mannequin in the FIU STAR Center (2019).

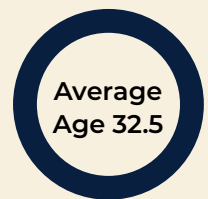
## Student Body Diversity:



● 77% Female  
● 23% Male



● 59% Hispanic  
● 17% Black Non-Hispanic  
● 12% White Non-Hispanic  
● 9% Asian/Pacific Islander  
● 3% Other



# FIU NURSING INTENSIFIES SIMULATED CLINICAL INSTRUCTION

Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery. But for FIU Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students, it is also an enhanced source for their clinical education. FIU Nursing has long been a leader in healthcare simulation education. With many facilities halting clinical rotations for students during this pandemic, FIU Undergraduate Nursing pivoted to simulated and virtual delivery of clinical training for BSN students through online learning and the College's acclaimed Simulation Teaching and Research (STAR) Center.

"We've created our own inventive solutions to uphold the quality and breadth of the clinical experience for students," said Maria Olenick, Ph.D., FNP, chair of FIU Undergraduate Nursing. "Since our students can't go to a clinical facility, we'll bring the facility to them."

The STAR Center, which opened its doors in 2010, conducts nearly 50,000 clinical simulation hours annually for students. It is South Florida's only simulated clinical center accredited in teaching/education by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare Accreditation. The cutting-edge 20,000-square-foot center delivers simulated care and treatment scenarios in authentically recreated clinical settings featuring a 15-bed hospital unit, primary care exam rooms, operating rooms, and the latest technologies and equipment used in health facilities today.

FIU Nursing and the STAR Center's national reputation as healthcare simulation education leaders stems from their contributions to a 2010 landmark study by the

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. The study concluded that up to 50% simulation education can be effectively substituted for traditional clinical experience in all prelicensure core nursing courses.

Instructional hours at the STAR Center have increased from 20% pre-pandemic levels to 50% of the required clinical hours - no small task considering the added challenge to reduce student capacity in accordance with proper social distancing and providing full personal protective equipment for all students and faculty. The STAR Center is meeting the challenge by adding more faculty and staff; expanding to a 16-hour/6-days-a-week schedule; and moving obstetrical simulation training to the STAR Center North on Biscayne Bay Campus, among other measures. FIU Nursing is also partnering with top national vendors to provide other required clinical hours in the form of virtual online clinical simulation.

"This simulated 'hands-on' / 'on-screen' approach is a paradigm shift in the delivery of our top-class clinical education," said the STAR Center's director, Henry Henao, APRN. He added that the simulated and virtual clinical curriculum was carefully developed to meet all accrediting body standards.

"While there may be 'nothing like the real thing,' here at FIU Nursing, we are getting as close as possible to replicating the clinical experience without compromising learning outcomes to ensure the professional goals of our BSN students become reality."

## INSIDE UNDERGRADUATE NURSING

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

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

**Program(s):**

- Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)
- Accelerated Option (AO) BSN
- RN-to-BSN Online
- Foreign-Educated Physician to BSN/MSN
- Veterans Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN)

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 452

**Number of Graduates:** 241

**Graduation Rate:** 97%

**First-Time NCLEX (RN Licensure)**

**Pass Rate:** 93%

**Full-Time Faculty:** 20

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



# LEANING INTO LEADERSHIP

## FIU GRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS EMBRACE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE IN A CRISIS

The pursuit of an advanced nursing degree entails learning to become a leader to advocate for and improve the health and well-being of entire populations. While the traditional plan of study infuses leadership throughout the curriculum, this year, FIU Graduate Nursing students found the leader within and took action to combat the pandemic at a COVID-19 testing site.

The Tamiami Park COVID-19 testing site has been a collaborative effort between FIU and the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County to provide drive-up testing for up to 750 people daily, oftentimes reaching that capacity before mid-day. FIU Graduate Nursing students joined faculty and other members of the College working alongside counterparts from the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine to staff the site under the supervision of FIU's Division of Operations and Safety, Emergency Management, and Environmental Health and Safety.

According to the site operation team's nurse lead and FIU Graduate Nursing's director of clinical education, Vanessa Gordon, DNP, APRN, more than 30 graduate nursing students who had already met their clinical requirements seized this chance to contribute to the community. Although protocols did not allow them to conduct the patient testing, they took on supporting roles to schedule and check-in patients to put them at ease; perform initial respiratory checks to evaluate the severity of a patient's condition; and staff the calling center to notify patients when their tests came back negative.

"These students were afforded the opportunity to utilize their leadership skills in real time for a real crisis," said Dr. Gordon. "The educational value came from the launch and management of the testing site, as students realized the critical-thinking and decision-making aptitude needed for being a nurse practitioner was applicable beyond the primary care provider role."



## INSIDE GRADUATE NURSING

**Chair:** Tatayana Maltseva, PhD, APRN, PMHNP-BC

**Assistant Chair:** Charles Buscemi, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, CWCN

**Interim Chair:** Derrick Glymph, DNAP, CRNA, APRN | Nurse Anesthesia program

**Assistant Chair:** Jorge Valdez, DNP, CRNA, APRN | Nurse Anesthesia program

**Program(s):**

- 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
  - Advanced Child NP
  - Advanced Family NP
  - Advanced Psychiatric-Mental Health NP
- Nurse Educator Post-Master's Certificate
- Dual MSN Degree/Nurse Educator Certificate

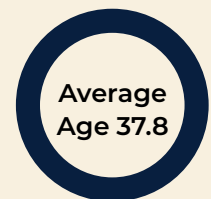
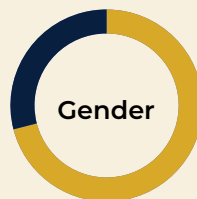
**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 374

**Number of Graduates:** 239 | **Graduation Rate:** 93%

**Full-Time Faculty:** 20

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

### Student Body Diversity:



- 71% Female
- 29% Male

- 44% Hispanic
- 26% Black Non-Hispanic
- 16% White Non-Hispanic
- 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 7% Other

Each day, Dr. Gordon had a graduate nursing student shadow her as part of the operations team. Students sat in on meetings, prepared and presented reports to team leaders, and took turns as the person in charge making decisions and managing the day's activities from start to finish.

Dr. Gordon recounted how the students were in the thick of things making their presence felt, shifting their way of thinking into project managers, strategists, administrators, emergency management specialists, logistics coordinators and other roles they may not have envisioned themselves adopting as health professionals.

"In pivoting from the planned to the unexpected, they exhibited leadership qualities when more than a degree was on the line," Dr. Gordon remarked. "It may not have been what they originally signed on for, but it was clear this unique opportunity made for an even more enlightening and rewarding academic experience that will shape them as practitioners ready to serve their communities."

## INSIDE PHD IN NURSING PROGRAM

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

**Tracks:**

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

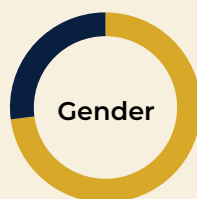
**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 15

**Number of Graduates:** 2

**Faculty/Dissertation Advisor Status:** 17

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

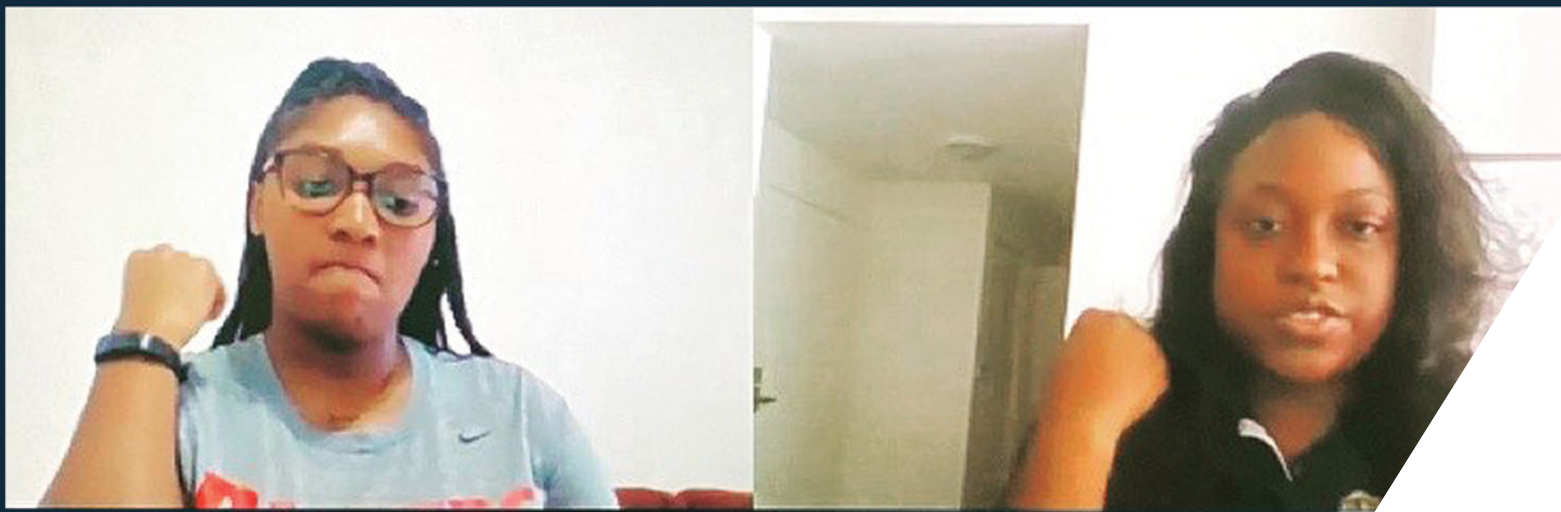
### Student Body Diversity:



- 73% Female
- 27% Male

- 7% Hispanic
- 47% Black Non-Hispanic
- 7% White Non-Hispanic
- 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 32% Foreign Students

# “WEB-SIDE” CARE



(R-L) FIU MS-AT '20 student Miracle George evaluates an elbow injury on FIU Athletic Training alumna Shaniece Jackson (MS-AT '18, DAT '21).

## INSIDE ATHLETIC TRAINING

**Chair:** Michelle Odai, PhD, LAT, ATC | Master's program

**Director:** Jeff Konin, PhD, ATC, FACSM, FNATA | Doctoral program

**Program(s):**

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

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 26 (MS-AT); 14 (DAT)

**Number of Graduates:** 14 (MS-AT); DAT inaugural class graduating August 2020

**Graduation Rate:** 100% (MS-AT)

**Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate:** 100% (MS-AT)

**Full-Time Faculty:** 5

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

# FIU ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENTS ADAPT TO OFF-THE-FIELD PRACTICE

Personal, client-focused interaction that enhances healthcare is among the hallmarks of a great practitioner. But how do you teach such a trait to health professions students when they can't see patients in person – or in the case of athletic training students – on the field? When classes abruptly moved online in March, Michelle Odai, Ph.D., chair of FIU Athletic Training (AT) and master's program director, came up with a solution for students to continue essential clinical education in a virtual environment to complete their training on schedule while helping them learn a new skill: web-side care.

Telemedicine has been emerging in the highly tactile field of sports medicine but was not yet a formal component of FIU's AT curriculum. With clever thinking and lightning fast adaptability, Dr. Odai incorporated it into the program curriculum at a moment's notice with the help of FIU's incredible alumni network.

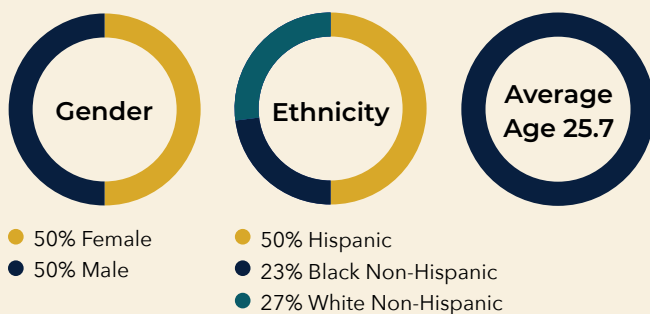
Dr. Odai implemented simulated and virtual clinical training opportunities for students to connect with FIU AT alumni practicing throughout the country via Zoom to learn a range of skills. With alumni taking on the role of patients – complete with a designated injury and timeline for recuperation – students worked on various mock clinical scenarios to conduct evaluations, give diagnoses, and implement rehabilitation sessions fully online.

All sessions were recorded so faculty and students could debrief on areas of needed improvement in their clinical assessments, treatment protocols, and patient interaction – e.g., eye contact, communication, attitude, and follow-up – to build their web-side manner. Alumni also provided feedback from their professional perspective that contributed to the students' training experience.

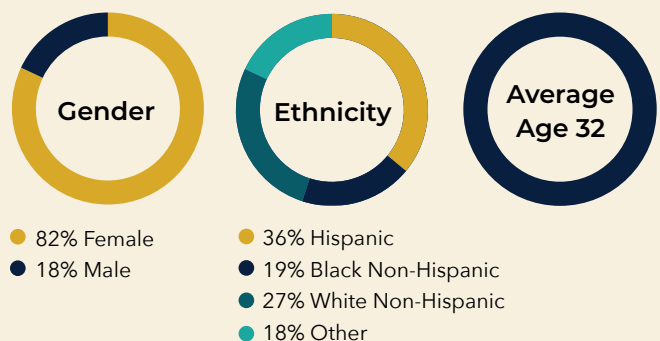
"After students overcame the learning curve of practicing through telemedicine, they realized how much they could do with this new modality and how resourceful they can be to improve on the care they provide," said Dr. Odai. The emergence of telemedicine in AT education will allow students to learn and contribute to the treatment of rare ailments and conditions that are normally only seen in textbooks, further enhancing their well-rounded and rigorous training education.

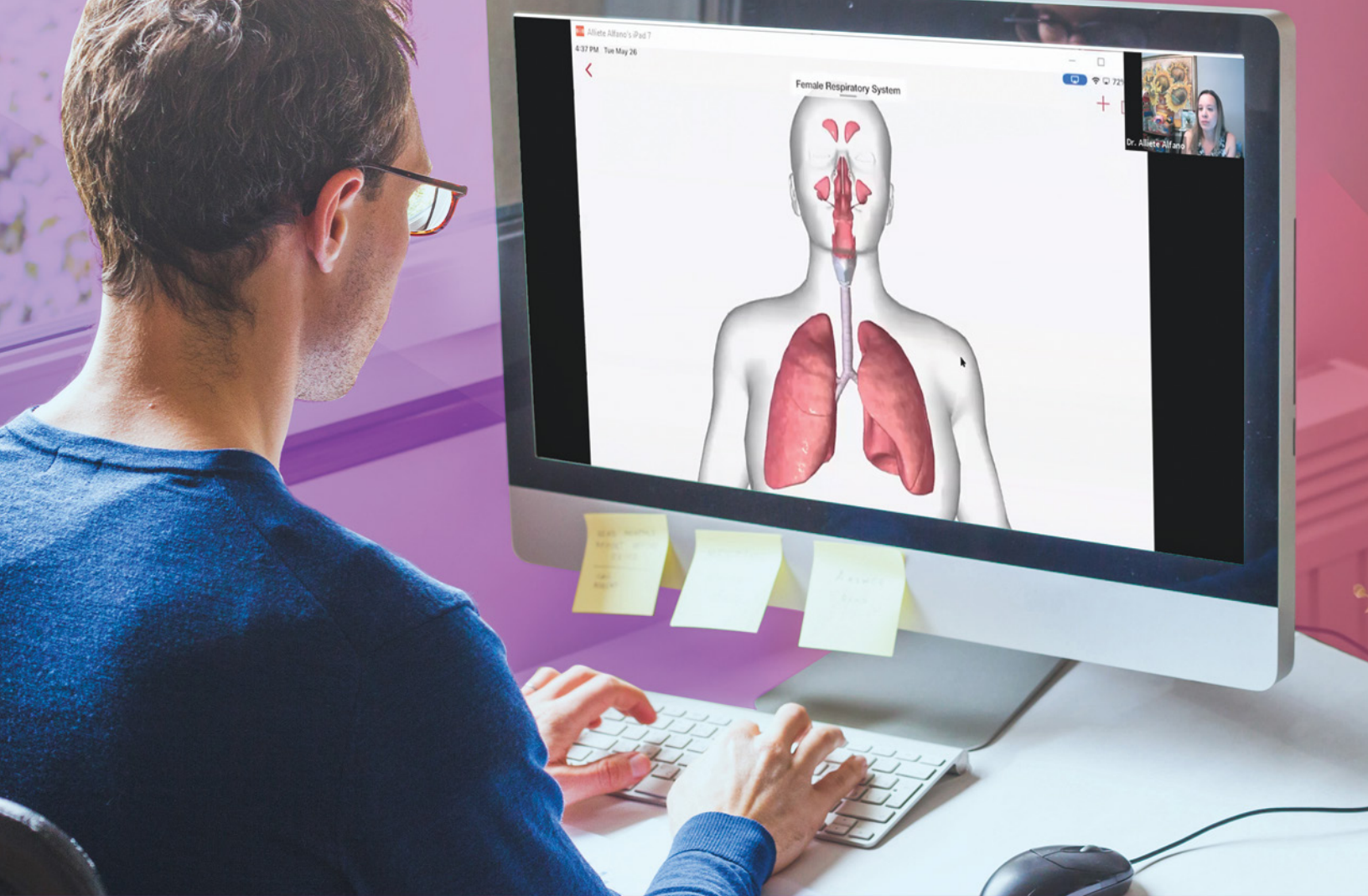
"Innovation is the key to building great practitioners prepared for integrated, interprofessional healthcare," Dr. Odai remarked. "These students are the next generation of athletic trainers who will embrace new technologies and create resourceful solutions to advance the latest evidence-based practice breakthroughs for our profession."

## MS-AT Program | Student Body Diversity:



## DAT Program | Student Body Diversity:





# TELE-COMMUNICATION

## FIU COMMUNICATION DISORDERS EDUCATOR USES TELEHEALTH TO BRIDGE THE GAP FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) professions can be challenging to adapt to telehealth because of the non-verbal cues that many patients suffering from speech disorders or who are hard of hearing rely on to communicate. But one FIU CSD educator isn't letting that stop her students from learning how to alter the delivery of this specialized care to the challenges and reach patients to continue their treatment.

Assistant Professor Alliete Alfano, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, LSL, reworked the way she teaches her courses to Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP) students in response to the pandemic-driven closure of the speech labs and clinical sites. "Reconceptualizing courses that have been taught a certain way for nearly 10 years was no easy undertaking, but the path forward is one that embraces innovation and flexibility to offer a higher quality of education and care," said Dr. Alfano.

To do this, she rolled out virtual study packages to first-year MS-SLP students using Pearson Q-Global and Pro-Ed software that teaches effective communications and how to work with patients in this new online environment. These virtual programs offer a wider range of patient testing and evaluation materials beyond what students would have access to in the lab, and introduces them to various disorders and how to work through them with patients in telehealth speech therapy sessions. For example, students practice testing each other with the remote materials during role playing activities and live-score the assessments to determine diagnoses and levels of severity.

"This new format is helping students learn more than just a new way of care. It is fundamentally challenging them to problem solve and be more aware of their therapies," added Dr. Alfano. "By completing diagnosis training over Zoom and through telehealth, our students are observing important cues they may



## INSIDE COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

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

**Program(s):**

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

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

93 (degree program); 164 (graduate certificate program)

**Number of Graduates:** 44

**Graduation Rate:** 92%

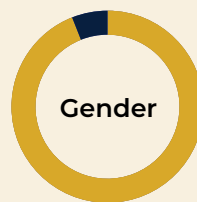
**First-Time Board Certification Pass Rate:** 97%

**Overall Annual Pass Rate:** 100%

**Full-Time Faculty:** 7

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

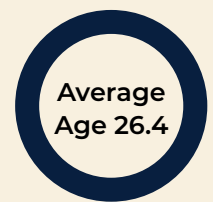
### Student Body Diversity:



- 94% Female
- 6% Male



- 77% Hispanic
- 2% Black Non-Hispanic
- 15% White Non-Hispanic
- 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 4% Other



not have considered before – like how to accommodate sound being muffled through masks, or how reliant hearing-impaired patients are on lip reading.”

Dr. Alfano sees another long-term silver lining to the obligatory transitions the profession was forced to accept for virtual training and online practice. “Telehealth is opening up access for us as practitioners to bridge the gap for patients who live further away or face obstacles to seeking proper, continuous care.”

Telehealth will continue to be part of the FIU CSD curriculum far beyond COVID-19 so students become more adept at finding alternative approaches in providing quality patient care and therapies outside of the traditional methods.

Dr. Alfano concluded, “While not a complete replacement for in-clinic care, faculty and students are excited to incorporate telehealth proficiency as a new skill set in their training and shape the evolution of practice for CSD professionals.”

“THIS NEW FORMAT IS HELPING STUDENTS LEARN MORE THAN JUST A NEW WAY OF CARE. IT IS FUNDAMENTALLY CHALLENGING THEM TO PROBLEM SOLVE AND BE MORE AWARE OF THEIR THERAPIES.”

# CHANGEMAKERS



FIU MHSA student  
**Esther Desire-Rey**

## INSIDE HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

**Chair:** Chanadra Young-Whiting, EdD, MPH/HSA, CHES | Bachelor's program

**Director:** Mariceli Comellas Quinones, EdD | Master's program

**Program(s):**

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

**Student Enrollment (in and out of state):** 729 (BHSA); 160 (MHSA)

**Number of Graduates:** 299 (BHSA); 71 (MHSA)

**Full-Time Faculty:** 7

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

# FIU STUDENTS TACKLE TODAY'S CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE TOMORROW'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The healthcare industry will emerge forever changed in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. From exacerbating hospital capacity issues, to provider burnout, to financial and technological demands, COVID-19 will continue to leave a lasting impact on healthcare systems worldwide. It will also leave a lasting mark on FIU's Health Services Administration (HSA) department, which prepares tomorrow's leaders to manage the complex shifts in the dynamic healthcare landscape. This year, faculty and students found themselves in a position to use the coronavirus pandemic as a learning opportunity and redirect their plans to take a critical look at multiple systemic issues from a COVID-19 perspective and put forward solutions.

Flexibility was key in the approach of the department team led by Chanadra Young-Whiting, Ed.D., MPH/ HSA, CHES, undergraduate chair, and Mariceli Comellas Quinones, Ed.D., graduate program director.

"While courses have always been available online, the bachelor's student internships and master's residencies were also reorganized and recreated as fully online simulations for the first time," said Dr. Young-Whiting.

Kellen Hassel, Ed.D., clinical assistant professor and coordinator of clinical education, constructed the courses in a way that students had access to live discussions with industry leaders that complemented simulations of real management dilemmas tied to issues such as healthcare

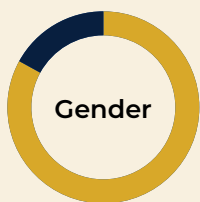
policy, delivery, and law. Additionally, the research-based project option for master's students was converted to a virtual delivery format.

Master's student Esther Desire-Rey, for example, completed her research-based project on medication treatment options and social support for patients with sickle cell disease from her home country of Angola and signed on at nearly 1 a.m. West Africa Standard Time to participate. The new virtual option for research projects and online residencies will continue to open doors for international students in the future.

The research-based projects aptly focused on the impact of the pandemic and tasked students to assess their workplaces or societal issues to develop programs for problem solving and positive change. Topics including provider burnout, depression in the elderly in long-term care facilities, and the impact of telehealth in providing access to healthcare to minorities were tackled, and students presented assessments to faculty for engaging discussions.

"Those who pursue a career in health services administration can be changemakers trained to observe and rethink the status quo," Dr. Comellas Quinones added. "While the effects of COVID-19 intensified the challenges in the healthcare environment, it also gave us a new lens with added relevancy and urgency for shaping the future of healthcare delivery and management."

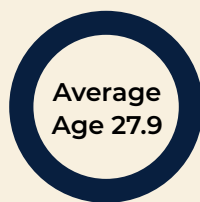
## BHSA Program | Student Body Diversity:



● 83% Female  
● 17% Male

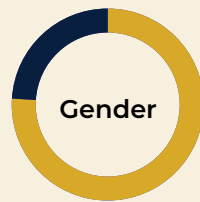


● 61% Hispanic  
● 28% Black Non-Hispanic  
● 7% White Non-Hispanic  
● 3% Asian/Pacific Islander  
● 1% Other



Average Age 27.9

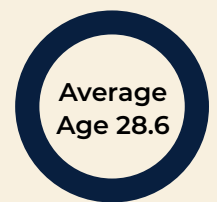
## MHSA Program | Student Body Diversity:



● 76% Female  
● 24% Male



● 51% Hispanic  
● 28% Black Non-Hispanic  
● 9% White Non-Hispanic  
● 6% Asian/Pacific Islander  
● 6% Other



Average Age 28.6



# ADAPT-ABLE

## REIMAGINED APPROACHES PRESERVE THE FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE FOR FIU OT STUDENTS

With the goal of getting people back to the job of living, improving the functional capabilities of individuals with short- and long-term disabilities through adaptation is essential in the occupational therapy profession. This school year, FIU Occupational Therapy (OT) faculty had to practice what they teach on adaptability to help students get back to the job of learning in the face of pandemic-driven limitations.

Hands-on fieldwork education is a vital training element for FIU's graduate OT students. As many clinical sites that regularly supervise students for fieldwork could no longer participate for the summer and fall semesters, the problem-solving adaptability of the department's faculty kicked in.

Clinical Assistant Professor Ingris Treminio, Dr.OT., OTR/L, fieldwork coordinator for the summer semester, drew from a deep network of industry peers and alumni to develop new and flexible fieldwork opportunities. Proving the power of

community and the strength of FIU OT's reputation, a handful of local clinicians opted to sustain fieldwork placements and went the extra mile to continue supporting student education. Jackson South Medical Center occupational therapist and FIU alumna Caitlin Kovacs ('13) created the first fieldwork program onsite to take on students full-time. The Alfano Center and Progressive Therapy clinics were among clinical partners that reconfigured their fieldwork schedules and methods of supervision, including telehealth, to take on more students.

FIU OT also reimagined the delivery format for fieldwork education to accommodate almost 100 students, offering new research-based, telehealth, and a hybrid of clinical and simulation experiences due to the pandemic. Assistant Professor Jacklyn Schwartz, Ph.D., used video conferencing to lead a telehealth interventions study where students learned research protocols for motivational interviewing.

(L-R) FIU OT alumna  
Caitlin Kovacs supervises  
FIU OT student Tiffany  
Morejon at Jackson South  
Medical Center.

## INSIDE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Interim Chair: Lynne Richard, PhD, OT/L

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

Student Enrollment (in and out of state): 142

Number of Graduates: 49

Graduation Rate: 94%

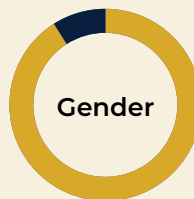
Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate: 100%

Full-Time Faculty: 9

Accreditation(s):

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)

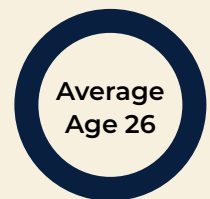
### Student Body Diversity:



● 91% Female  
● 9% Male



● 65% Hispanic  
● 6% Black Non-Hispanic  
● 22% White Non-Hispanic  
● 4% Asian/Pacific Islander  
● 3% Other



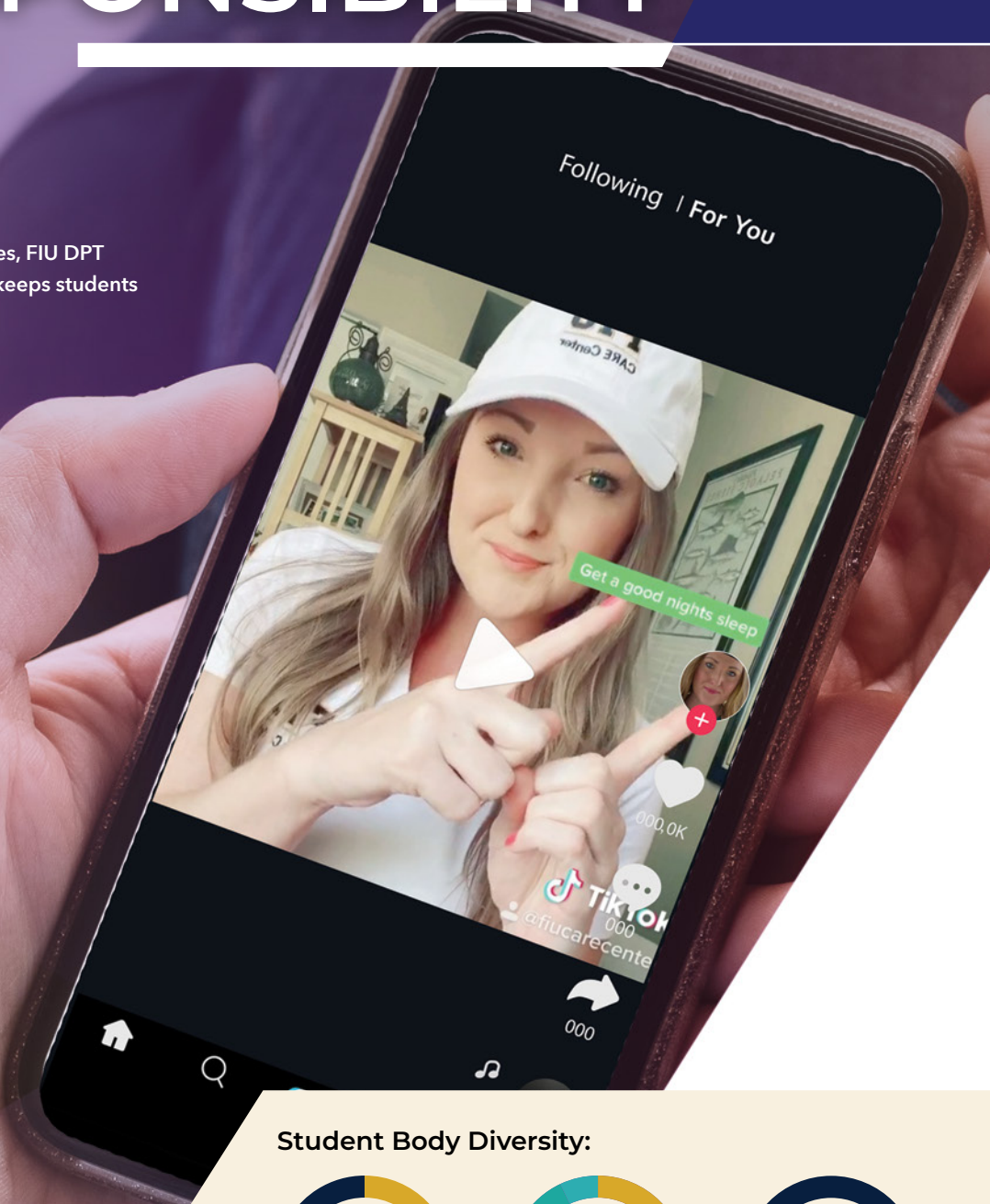
"As occupational therapy moves increasingly toward telehealth and assistive technology, the on-screen experiences provided increased relevancy and valuable exposure to this next generation of practitioners to successfully incorporate high-tech into an already high-touch discipline," said department head Lynne Richard, Ph.D., OT/L. "Students embraced the new learning environments by bringing their unique strengths and creativity to each interaction. For example, some created treatment plans leveraging TikTok and gamification to engage children and young adults with developmental disabilities."

Feedback from FIU OT students about learning under these new conditions was overwhelmingly positive, and the great majority felt their academic needs were still being met, despite the changes to the curriculum. Dr. Richard concluded, "Based on students' outlook, commitment from community partners, and innate adaptability of our profession, FIU OT is prepared to shift gears to optimize the program into the future, no matter what challenges come along."

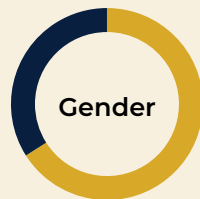
"AS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MOVES  
INCREASINGLY TOWARD TELEHEALTH  
AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, THE  
ON-SCREEN EXPERIENCES PROVIDED  
INCREASED RELEVANCY AND VALUABLE  
EXPOSURE TO THIS NEXT GENERATION  
OF PRACTITIONERS TO SUCCESSFULLY  
INCORPORATE HIGH-TECH INTO AN  
ALREADY HIGH-TOUCH DISCIPLINE."

# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Left to her own devices, FIU DPT student Lucy Church keeps students engaged with CARE.



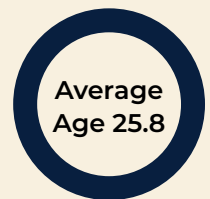
## Student Body Diversity:



- 66% Female
- 34% Male



- 39% Hispanic
- 9% Black Non-Hispanic
- 36% White Non-Hispanic
- 9% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 7% Other



Average Age 25.8

# FIU DPT STUDENT'S DEDICATION TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Physical therapy is quite literally a hands-on practice. Practitioners rely on physical touch and presence to ensure proper treatment is applied. The same goes for those pursuing an education in this discipline. With the onset of COVID-19 and social distancing, understandably FIU Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students were no longer able to participate in their usual clinical rotations. The world may have seemed to have stopped, but physical therapy education had to continue.

Enter Lucy Church, an FIU DPT student who had one semester to go before graduating when the pandemic arrived. Her involvement with the College's Diane Ramy Faulconer Collaborative Advanced Research & Rehabilitation (CARE) Center put her in a position to help her fellow students continue developing their clinical skills under the circumstances.

The labs and clinical settings of the 16,000-square-foot CARE Center are focused on interdisciplinary healthcare and rehabilitation training, teaching and research. Lucy has worked at the CARE Center since 2017, facilitating lab and research work for students and faculty. But she was also responsible for creating and growing the facility's social media pages. Lucy leveraged her previous experience in social media management for a private practice employer to create and build a following for the CARE Center's social channels with the expressed intent of better engaging and informing students on facility activities and educational opportunities.

Prior to the pandemic, Lucy would share posts live from the Human Performance Lab of students using innovative motion capture technology - similar to what is used on blockbuster movie sets - to measure gait and other body motion as part of a research project. But with the campus' distance learning modalities to prevent coronavirus spread, these posts were no longer possible. Resourceful as she is dedicated, Lucy determined, "We needed to remain active to keep students involved. If you take a few months off from posting, that's when you lose followers and engagement."

With students unable to participate in crucial research projects and labs within the CARE Center, Lucy used Instagram to promote live Zoom webinars, instructional videos and important information to keep students across departments in the loop on CARE Center skills training and provide them with resources to sustain their clinical comprehension.

Even through the pandemic, the CARE Center Instagram page has seen steady growth, proving Lucy's efforts bringing students together to keep them engaged has been effective. "I hope that the content we push on our social page provides my classmates with some comfort that we're in this together to support each other and reminds them of the awesome work we do at the CARE Center."

## INSIDE PHYSICAL THERAPY

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

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

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

**Number of Graduates:** 57

**Graduation Rate:** 100%

**First-Time Licensure Pass Rate:** 93%

**Ultimate Licensure Pass Rate:** 97%

**Full-Time Faculty:** 11

**Accreditation(s):**

Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)



# SPRING TO ACTION

Spring 2020 was the world's collective turning point as we reacted and responded to the global pandemic. Following are a few more stories about members of the FIU Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences springing into action to contribute their time and talents for the greater good.



## FIELD GENERALS

Educators, staff and students from the College and STAR Center were recruited in April by the Florida National Guard to prepare up to 70 of their healthcare personnel to man the 450-bed COVID-19 field hospital at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The "Just in Time" refresher training provided to Florida National Guard physicians, nurses, combat medics and others included demonstrations, simulations and hands-on training to set up patients on ventilators, respond to respiratory and cardiac distress, proper donning/removal of personal protective equipment and more.

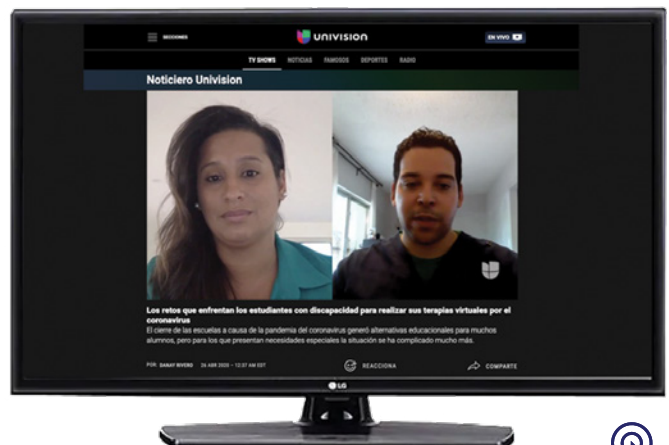


## HANDS-ON CARE GOES ONLINE FOR KIDS

Social distancing measures have made it challenging for children with special needs to get the occupational or physical therapy treatments they need. That did not stop FIU Occupational Therapy alumna Jennifer Gober ('02), founder of Kinetic Kids Therapy, and Doctor of Physical Therapy alumnus Jorge Carreño ('18) of Better Kids Clinic.

Jennifer enlisted her clinic's speech pathologists, who already had experience with telehealth, to bring the entire Kinetic Kids team onboard with online therapy. After mock sessions and training to familiarize themselves, the staff is providing teletherapy services to half of the clinic's 200 families. Jennifer told [FIU News](#) she has found that for the types of therapy her practice offers, school age children adapt especially well since they regularly use computers.

Jorge used telemedicine to help patients such as young Abel - who was born premature and suffered a stroke at birth - as well as other children for whom after-school physical therapy



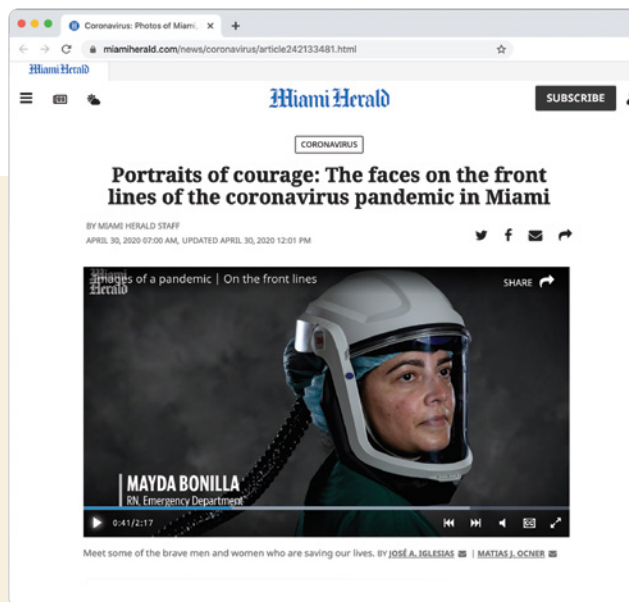
sessions were put on hold with school closures. As highlighted by a [Univision news segment](#), Jorge conducted therapy sessions via Zoom to help Abel's parents in real time and step-by-step to perform the necessary treatments on Abel from their home to help strengthen his arms, legs, and core to maintain Abel's mobility until in-person sessions can resume.



Yania Ortega

Virginia Escudero

Jessica Myers



## THE POWER OF PICTURES

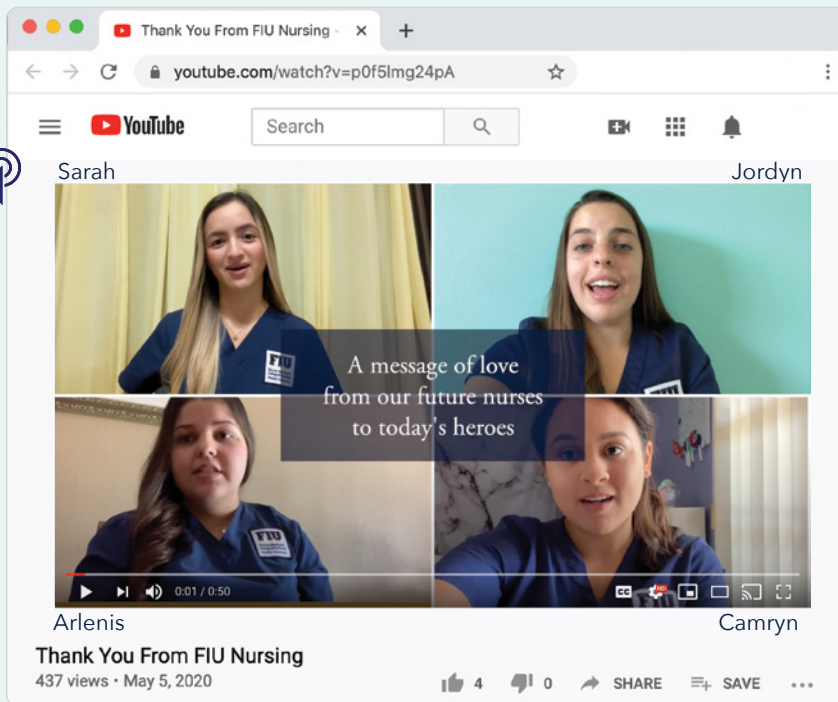
FIU Nursing alumnae were featured among The Miami Herald's powerful photo gallery of COVID-19 healthcare warriors entitled, "Portraits of courage: The faces on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic in Miami." Photojournalists visited hospitals across South Florida to capture portraits of the brave men and women risking their lives on the front lines combating the coronavirus, including emergency room nurse Mayda Bonilla ('15); coronary unit nurse Virginia Escudero ('14); registered nurse Jessica Myers ('14); and associate nurse manager Yania Ortega ('11).



After a hectic week of caring for COVID-19 patients in a New York City ICU, 30-year-old nurse anesthetist Steven Winnett blew off steam last weekend dancing and listening to music. He even stayed up until 4:30 a.m. on Sunday — a mighty

## MUSIC TO SOOTHE THE SOUL

For FIU nurse anesthetist alumnus Steven Winnett ('19), music became his escape from the mental and emotional stresses of working in a New York City ICU during the pandemic. He and a few friends turned that escape into the All Day I Stream Instagram channel - an outlet for anyone anywhere to gather via Zoom for livestream concerts and dance parties to cope with COVID-19. Steven's ingenuity and intrepid endeavor was featured by [Rolling Stone magazine](#) and [Miami New Times](#).



### FUTURE NURSES PAY TRIBUTE TO THEIR ROLE MODELS

FIU Nursing students are proud of what they do, and even more proud of what they will become. In honor of National Nurses Week in May 2020, FIU Undergraduate Nursing students Arlenis Barrios, Jordyn Doren, Sarah Marin and Camryn Webb put together a [tribute video](#) for their heroes. The video, which was featured on local TV stations, thanked nurses on the pandemic front lines and everywhere for their dedication and shared their hopes of making the same impact when they enter the field.

### CALLING AN AUDIBLE

Invention is the mother of necessity. This was the case for FIU Athletic Training faculty Dr. Nikki Harris and Dr. Shane Vaughn of FIU's Athletic Training Services (ATS) clinic to continue helping FIU students recover from the physical discomfort of an injury. In a matter of weeks from the onset of the pandemic, Harris and Vaughn worked closely with administration in FIU's Student Health Services and Wellness & Recreation Center to employ electronic medical records and telehealth technology for the ATS clinic to stay connected with patients and keep rehabilitations on track with live appointments. The ATS staff also developed social media campaigns and hosted the "Live with Athletic Training Services" weekly call-in event for the FIU community to take questions and provide injury prevention advice and self-treatment techniques.

### VIRAL VIRTUAL GRADUATION

If you can't go to graduation, bring graduation to you. That's exactly what FIU Bachelor of Science in Nursing Class of 2020 graduate Anabelle Petisco did when spring commencement ceremonies were canceled on campus. The [viral video of her commencement](#) walk down her home hallway to receive her diploma from her brother - donned with face cutout and playing the role of FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg - perfectly captured the spirit of optimism FIU graduates have adopted in these unprecedented times.



# HONORING A LIFE'S WORK

## SANDRA "SANDE" GRACIA JONES

### VANESSA VON WERTHEIM ENDOWED CHAIR IN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND CARE

Congratulations to undergraduate nursing professor Sandra "Sande" Gracia Jones, Ph.D., ARNP, ACRN, ACNS-BC, FAAN, who was named the Vanessa Von Wertheim Endowed Chair in Chronic Disease Prevention and Care in December 2019. The appointment reflects Dr. Jones' widely regarded reputation as an esteemed nurse researcher and advocate of HIV care and prevention in various populations.

It was while working as a clinical nurse specialist for the Special Immunology Unit at Mount Sinai Medical Center nearly three decades ago that Dr. Jones began her life-long mission to improve the care of persons hospitalized with HIV/AIDS and develop prevention initiatives. Since joining the FIU Nursing faculty in 2000, Dr. Jones has implemented several studies and disseminated her work through publications and presentations.

Her federally funded body of work includes fielding a study on the HIV risk for older men; creation of the SENORITAS (Student Education Needed in Order to Reduce Infection and Transmission of AIDS/HIV and STIs) project to empower female, minority nursing students to serve as campus-based HIV prevention peer educators; and mentoring junior faculty colleagues to develop programs focusing on HIV and substance abuse prevention for college-age men and women.

She is designated as an HIV/AIDS Nurse Expert by the American Nurses Association, is a recipient of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care's (ANAC) HIV Doctoral Fellowship Award, and is the inaugural recipient of ANAC's HIV Prevention Award.



# PLANNING IT FORWARD



When Charles Buscemi, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, CWCN, and Jose “Joe” Martinez (’12 MS-MIS) resolved to bestow financial support for the College and LGBTQ nursing students into the next decade and beyond, the reason for giving was simple: “Because FIU is what unites us.”

Dr. Buscemi and his husband Joe (pictured above L-R) have deep connections to FIU and the South Florida healthcare community. A 30-year nursing veteran, Dr. Buscemi has spent the past 12 years as an FIU Nursing faculty member going back to his days as an adjunct professor. Today, he is a clinical associate professor serving as the assistant chair for FIU Graduate Nursing. Mr. Martinez, a 2012 FIU Master of Science in Management of Information Systems graduate, works for Jackson Memorial Hospital as a clinical information specialist.

“I’m an FIU alumnus married to an FIU professor who sees FIU nursing graduates in action every day. Giving back to FIU was a no brainer for me,” said Mr. Martinez of their decision this past March to leave a planned gift to the College for the Dean’s Discretionary Fund.

Dr. Buscemi has been an active donor through FIU’s faculty Ignite fundraising campaign, but the time was right to do more. “While the means and modes of healthcare education evolve with each generation, the need for quality healthcare education is constant. We crunched the numbers and gladly saw we were in a position to help endorse the College’s future endeavors,” Dr. Buscemi remarked. “We can’t forecast the College’s needs that may exist once we are gone, so earmarking our gift for the Dean’s Discretionary Fund was our way to aid the leadership with the most pressing needs of the College in any era.”

Buoyed by the planned gift and wanting another channel to share their good fortunes in a meaningful way, they also established a scholarship program for the FIU LGBTQ student community.

For the next 10 years, the Dr. Charles Buscemi and Jose “Joe” Martinez Scholarship program will award a \$1,000 scholarship each year to one academically deserving Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) student who self-identifies as LGBTQ.

As ardent champions for LGBTQ rights and equality, Dr. Buscemi explained how the scholarship program goes beyond the education and training of more nurses. “Joe and I believe in the environment of fairness and inclusivity here at FIU. We want to empower LGBTQ students on their journey toward becoming exceptional practitioners, respected healthcare advocates and peers, and confident individuals who will leave the world a better place by their actions and contributions,” Dr. Buscemi reflected.

“FIU has been a big part of our lives and has our hearts,” Dr. Buscemi shared. “We hope through our example of paying it forward that we can inspire other educators and alumni to express their appreciation and transform the support they received on their academic and professional path into their own legacy of giving and encouragement for future generations.”

# IN APPRECIATION

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**DR. STUART I. HARRIS** contributed a philanthropic gift of \$514,878 to enhance the Yanet S. Harris, RN Scholarship Endowment. Dr. Harris established this visionary endowment in 2018 to honor the life and achievements of his wife Yanet, an FIU Nursing alumna. Annual distributions from the endowment provide full-tuition scholarships to two outstanding undergraduate nursing students enrolled in the College.

**LETTIE PATE WHITEHEAD FOUNDATION** provided a \$184,000 gift for scholarships for female undergraduate nursing students with outstanding academic achievement. The Foundation has contributed \$1,350,500 to the College since 2008, and 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.

**THE PEACOCK FOUNDATION** continues its generous support for FIU BSN students with a gift of \$60,000 for scholarships. The Foundation has supported the College and additional initiatives at FIU with charitable gifts of \$545,833 since 2012. Established by the trust of the late Henry B. Peacock, Jr., the Peacock Foundation serves to enhance and promote the good health and well-being of children, families, and underprivileged persons in Southeast Florida through contributions, gifts, and grants to eligible nonprofit organizations.

**THE FLORMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION** made a gift of \$120,000 to continue its support of scholarships for students pursuing their Doctor of Nursing Practice and accelerated BSN degrees. This gift enhanced the Foundation's philanthropic giving of \$670,000 since 1997 to the Nursing Program, which established the Betty Florman Nursing Scholarship Endowment for undergraduate nursing scholarships in 1997.



Nicole Wertheim  
College of Nursing  
& Health Sciences

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

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## NEXT HORIZON

The Campaign for FIU

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)

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

# COLLEGE RANKINGS

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

Nurse Anesthetist

**#38**

Master's in  
Nursing

**#42**

Doctor of Nursing  
Practice (DNP)

**#45**

Occupational Therapy

**#43**

Health Services Administration Bachelor's program ranked No. 1 and  
Master's in Nursing program ranked No. 22 for Florida online programs by OnlineU.com

Online BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) program is  
ranked among the top 15 for 2020 by BestHealthDegrees.com



**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 have made possible the many recent strides in program excellence this past academic year - which was as unprecedented as they come.

Each member of our team worked relentlessly and went the extra mile to minimize disruption and still enhance the learning experience for students while keeping the College operating at peak capacity under these new conditions.

It is through our faculty and staff and their unwavering dedication that we can provide our students with high-quality academic health programs that address the culturally diverse healthcare needs of South Florida and the nation.

These professionals embody the mission, vision and values of the College in everything they do and with every student they support.



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



Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences  
Modesto A. Maidique Campus  
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Miami, FL 33199  
305-348-7703  
[cnhs.fiu.edu](http://cnhs.fiu.edu)

## DEAN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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*Chairman of the Board*  
FHE Health

Sherief Moustafa, RN  
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*AVP-Hospital Administration*  
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*President and Founder*  
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Erica Wertheim Zohar  
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Harpreet Smith, RN, MSN, CCRC  
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Quotient Sciences