

University of
Southern Indiana

WINTER 2021

Synapse

College of Nursing and Health Professions



TOGETHER
We Care

Letter from the Dean



Together We Care. These three words not only describe the College of Nursing and Health Professions, but also our generous supporters. John M. Lawrence '73 has funded several scholarships at USI because he cares about this University and wants to play a role in our students' success. Two nursing students and a future dietitian are the most recent recipients of Mr. Lawrence's scholarships. In this issue, read about how his generous gifts are helping students earn degrees and launch their careers.

Also in this issue is an article about Emily Holt, another person who cares about students. Part of her role as clinical faculty in the Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting Programs is making sure the students are prepared for their licensure exams. I am proud to report that Emily's hard work over the years has resulted in her being promoted to clinical professor—USI's first ever clinical track full professor!

Every day, there are many ways faculty and students in our College show they care about others. Examples in this magazine include helping design ventilators during the pandemic, improving the lives of people living with dementia and teaching young adults who are visually impaired how to safely prepare meals.

"Because I want to help others" is often the answer to the question, "Why did you decide to become a nurse, respiratory therapist, dental hygienist, sonographer, dietitian, occupational therapist, etc.?" At USI, our students have the benefit of excellent faculty and community support to guide them on the path to becoming caring health professionals. As we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all in this together.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Ann White
Dean, College of Nursing and Health Professions

Synapse

College of Nursing and Health Professions

Synapse magazine is published by the University of Southern Indiana College of Nursing and Health Professions.

Dean

Ann White

Vice President for Development

David Bower

Vice President for Marketing and Communications

Kindra Strupp

Director of University Communications

John Farless '98

Director of Alumni Relations and Volunteer USI

Janet Johnson M'05

Editor/Senior Writer

C. L. Stambush

Writers

Mary Scheller

Graphic Design

Amy Ubelhor

Photography

Elizabeth Courtney Randolph
Barbara Goodwin

Address

University of Southern Indiana
8600 University Boulevard
Evansville, Indiana 47712

USI.edu/health

CONTENTS

Lifechanging Gift for Students	2
Investment in AI Research	4
Around the College	5
Faculty Achievements	8
Alumni News	12
Student Takes the Stage at International Conference	13

The University of Southern Indiana is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Lifechanging Gift



JOHN M. LAWRENCE '73 IS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS PASSION FOR SAVING RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS. HOWEVER, HE ALSO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT PRESERVING THE DREAMS OF USI STUDENTS PURSUING CAREERS IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS, INCLUDING NURSING AND FOOD AND NUTRITION.

A certified public accountant, Lawrence established a scholarship in 2006 in memory of his late wife, which has helped 28 students realize their dreams of becoming nurses. Nichole Taylor and Damon Weaver are the most recent recipients of the Melissa Faye Lawrence Endowed Memorial Nursing Scholarship. They both plan to graduate in Spring 2022.

Nichole Taylor grew up in Newark, Delaware, but has lived in Indiana for the past nine years. She is the mother of three children, 5-year-old twin girls and an 8-year-old son.

"I was inspired to become a nurse because of the important role the nurses played when my children were in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)," she said, adding that one of her twins was transferred to the NICU at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

"If I ever meet Mr. Lawrence in person, I will first and foremost tell him, 'Thank you,'" she said. "I want him to know that without him, I would not be able to finish my degree and graduate on time. I will tell him how much it means to me to be able to have the opportunity to succeed and provide for my family. His generous scholarship allows me to be able to achieve my dream of becoming a nurse!"

Taylor said in five years, she would love to be working in the NICU and eventually become a nurse practitioner. "Because of this scholarship, I am able to take the first step in that journey," she said.

Damon Weaver also is an adult learner in the USI Nursing Program. He commutes to USI from Owensboro, Kentucky, where he lives with his wife and children. The scholarship has relieved some stress about paying for a nursing education. "With COVID hitting, my wife was required to take a pay cut. As classes became more difficult, I had to drop down to working part-time," he said. "The financial impact of the scholarship really helped calm some financial concerns."

Weaver says his short-term goals are to work in the intensive care unit. "I am currently a paramedic and want to experience the continuation of

For Students

care for the critical patients I have been bringing to the hospital for the past 12 years," he said. "I have met some incredible people and helped people who were in a very difficult place. I was able to spend only a short amount of time with them in the ambulance. Over time, this made me want to experience the next step of their care and be able to have more interaction with patients."

He said he was extremely grateful to Lawrence for the nursing scholarship he received because "his generosity had a great impact on me."

This year Lawrence also funded a new scholarship for the Food and Nutrition program at USI and will be creating an endowment for a second scholarship this coming year. "These scholarships will benefit students pursuing careers related to nutrition and healthy living," said Dr. Julie McCullough, Associate Professor and Chair of Food and Nutrition. "We are grateful for Mr. Lawrence's ongoing support of our College and especially his interest in supporting USI students who are studying to be nutritionists and dietitians." The 2022 recipient of the Food and Nutrition Scholarship is Holly Hawkins, who is majoring in food and nutrition with a concentration in dietetics.

"I am absolutely overjoyed to receive this scholarship," said Hawkins. "It is an honor to be selected as the first recipient of this new scholarship in the Food and Nutrition Program!"

Hawkins, originally from Mt. Carmel, Illinois,

transferred to USI in 2019. She has been an active member of the Food and Nutrition Student Organization, recently serving as president-elect and now as president.

When Holly was in elementary school, something happened which impacted her future career choice. "Growing up, my younger brother became my inspiration," she said. "He was diagnosed with cancer just a few weeks after birth. I watched how the healthcare field positively influenced not only my brother's life, but also the life of every family member and caregiver around. I knew I wanted to be a part of that."

After graduation in May 2022, Hawkins will apply for a dietetics internship and eventually earn her registered dietitian credentials. "In five years, I hope to see myself with a master's degree completed and working as a registered dietitian in the Evansville area," she said. "This scholarship not only helps further my career goals from a financial aspect, but also serves as encouragement. Finding out about Mr. Lawrence, and how our program impacted him to such a degree he chose to create an entire scholarship motivates me. I have chosen a career field I not only love, but one which is valued as an essential part of our community as well."

Lawrence, a native of Evansville, graduated from Reitz Memorial High School in 1969 and earned a degree in accounting from USI in 1973. A

CPA with special expertise in forensic accounting, he continues to oversee the accounting firm he founded in northern Ohio more than 30 years ago. He maintains a residence in Newburgh, Indiana.

He also has a scholarship for nursing students in memory of his aunt, Carole Anne Dipple, and the Melissa and John M. Lawrence Excellence in Teaching Award for faculty in the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Each semester, he provides healthy snacks for the College's students preparing for finals. He has honored his revered former professors by establishing scholarships and awards in the name of Dr. Daniel C. Scavone, the late Dr. Helen R. Sands and her husband, the late William H. Sands.

Like those Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in his extensive collection, the stories being written by USI graduates and current students are part of Lawrence's personal legacy. "It is a priority of mine to honor the University which gave me so much and to say 'thank you' for all the great things USI has been to me in my life," he said. "Additionally, I see the motivation, hard work and determination of the students in the various fields I am supporting. In this regard, I feel inspired to be an indirect part of their eventual success. In helping a student achieve their goals, alumni leave the ultimate legacy of success."



Nichole Taylor, (L-R) fiancé Roy, brother Tyler, Violet, Xylon and Delilah

College of Nursing and Health Professions



Damon Weaver



Holly Hawkins

INVESTMENT IN AI RESEARCH



The University of Southern Indiana received a \$50,000 Catalyst Award from the U.S. National Academy of Medicine (NAM)—part of the National Academy of Sciences—for a project to improve emotional well-being and independence for people living with dementia, especially those aging-in-place.

Dr. Lisa Fournier, Project Coordinator for the USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), entered NAM’s Healthy Longevity Global Competition with a proposal to investigate whether an artificial intelligence (AI) virtual assistant can help create a positive emotional environment for people with cognitive disabilities. Her application was one of 25 accepted this year by NAM and was among 145 international awardees announced during a virtual event in September.

“To be recognized on a global stage is very exciting,” said Fournier. “I’m so inspired by all the research and innovative projects that are taking place worldwide to help maintain health and well-being as we age.”

Fournier’s project, *Joy for People Living with Dementia Using a Virtual Assistant*, is based on “Joi,” an AI virtual assistant that creates personalized “joy pops” for people living with dementia within a smart-home living environment. “Joy is linked to dopamine systems that reward the brain when having a positive experience, as well as reinforce behavior, motivating a person to repeat an activity,” she said. “Our goal is to harness the power of AI and combine it with joy, meaning and positivity to help people living with dementia grow and rise above the challenges of cognitive disabilities and maintain independence.”

Fournier and the GWEP team will use the NAM Catalyst Award to accelerate “Joi” in the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well, a 600-square-foot home on the USI campus that integrates technology, adaptable living and innovations in aging and wellness. She said the AI “joy pop” triggers will be based on input from sensors in the smart home, including

motion, sound, temperature and light to provide a comfortable and moderately stimulating environment to reduce agitation, apathy and anxiety.

According to NAM, older adults will begin to outnumber the young for the first time in recorded history in the year 2030. This demographic shift poses significant challenges, but also is an opportunity for innovation around healthy longevity. NAM founded the Healthy Longevity Global Competition to accelerate research and entrepreneurship with a series of monetary awards and prizes. The first of three cycles of the Catalyst phase began in January 2020, and there are also Accelerator and Grand Prize phases.

For more information about GWEP, visit the Project website at USI.edu/GWEP.



AROUND THE COLLEGE

Expanding Career Opportunities

The University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees approved the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) Program in its November meeting. It will be the third doctoral program offered by the University. The OTD Program will next be reviewed by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Higher Learning Commission and the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. It is scheduled to begin instruction in Fall 2023.

“USI is proud to start offering our second healthcare doctoral program as we seek to meet the needs and goals of ever-changing healthcare demands,” said Dr. Ann White, Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions. “As our population ages and the demand for qualified healthcare professionals continues to rise, our program will provide extensively-trained, doctorally-prepared occupational therapy practitioners to serve southwest Indiana, the state and the nation.”

The OTD Program will require a minimum of 100 graduate credit hours. Students entering the program with a bachelor’s degree will take classes in person on the USI campus and at the Stone Family Center for Health Science in downtown Evansville. An online track will also be available for post-professional and master’s degree-holding students requiring 31 graduate credit hours.

Between 2016 and 2020, there were more than 633,000 unique job postings for occupational therapists nationwide, including more than 4,400 in the Tri-state. The rise in demand for providers is expected to coincide with a rise in demand for doctoral preparation, specifically in the areas of clinical practice and administration. Upon approval, USI will be the only state-supported institution in southern Indiana offering a doctorate in occupational therapy.

Engineering Health

Medical supply shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic motivated USI engineering students to design a simple, inexpensive ventilator for their 2020-2021 senior project. To learn more about how a mechanical ventilator works, they turned to faculty and students in the USI Respiratory Therapy Program.

“The students’ motivation was to provide a ventilator design that could be made in remote hospitals in impoverished locations, using parts that could be locally sourced,” said Dr. Brandon Field, Associate Professor of Engineering. “The motor was actually a windshield wiper motor that was selected because it had sufficient power output and also because it would run off of a 12-volt battery that could then be recharged with solar panels or any other source.”

Prior to building the ventilator, the students met with respiratory therapy faculty and observed two mechanical ventilation labs, led by Julie Morgan, Assistant Professor of Respiratory Therapy. Morgan said her students demonstrated the application of mechanical ventilation to a patient scenario and assisted in answering questions.

After the engineering students built their ventilator, Morgan met with them to assist in testing the accuracy and reliability of their product. “They needed a method of assessing the amount of volume their ventilator provided with each breath,” she said. “Each time we met, we tested their ventilator and they documented their findings to make necessary adjustments and modifications to their ventilator to meet their requirements.”

Field said, “They learned a lot visiting Julie’s lab, especially about the typical applications and usages of the ventilators, and her equipment was vital to characterize their final product and demonstrate that it could meet the requirements of the project.”



All graduates of the 2021 Class of Radiologic and Imaging Sciences have passed the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) national certification examination on their first attempt, according to Joy Cook, Program Chair and Associate Professor. She said two of the students passed with scores in the 98th percentile. “Our program typically has very high pass rates, but to have 100% on the first attempt is definitely something to celebrate,” said Cook. “Our faculty work very hard to ensure our students are prepared for this exam. We are very proud of all of them.”

New Student Trustee



Liam Collins, USI Class of 2023, is the first student from the College of Nursing and Health Professions to join the USI Board of Trustees. Indiana Governor Eric J. Holcomb appointed Collins to a two-year term as the student trustee, beginning July 1, 2021.

A native of Lowell, Indiana, Collins is pursuing a bachelor of science in nursing and is a Presidential Scholar for the Class of 2023. He currently holds a 4.0 cumulative GPA and works as a mathematics coach for students participating in Academic Super Bowl. He is involved in a number of groups and activities including Sigma Pi Fraternity, Special Olympics and College Life at USI Campus Ministry.

As a student trustee, Collins said he plans to contribute his perspective and experiences

as a student to “inform decisions as we move forward to returning to a more recognizable, pre-COVID-19 environment” and that he would strive to “ensure every student feels their opinions are heard, valued and respected.”

The student trustee, a voting member of the nine-member USI Board of Trustees, brings a student’s perspective to the governing board. The USI Board of Trustees must include one alumnus of the University, one current student and one resident of Vanderburgh County. The student trustee must be a full-time student, a U.S. citizen and resident of Indiana, have a 2.5 GPA or above, and have completed 24 credit hours at USI.

A Lesson in Seeing

What would it be like to attend college with a visual impairment? USI students learned about the unique challenges faced by students who are blind or visually impaired during a summer program on the USI campus with the Evansville Association for the Blind (EAB).

“The purpose of the program is to help guide incoming students to campus life before an actual semester begins,” said Elizabeth Ramos, Instructor in Food and Nutrition. “USI University Division, Academic Skills, Disability Resources, and Housing and Residence Life participated. Food and Nutrition was asked to open the Food Science Lab in the Health Professions Center for cooking classes, so that is how I got involved.”

Krysti Hughes of the EAB allowed USI students to help facilitate the cooking classes, which offered mutual learning, according to Ramos. “Our students learned about the visually impaired, the need for adaptations and the special utensils and equipment used in food preparation, while the EAB clients learned the kitchen basics, including cutting, chopping foods, range top, oven and Instant Pot use, recipes, planning a menu and grocery shopping,” she said.

Ramos said she was amazed at the EAB clients’ curiosity and willingness to learn about food safety and preparation. “I had to marvel at the fun the students had especially making their own creations with a waffle iron. The CNHP students were involved at every step,” she said. “The joy



During a summer program with the Evansville Association for the Blind, USI dietetics students helped teach food safety and preparation while making waffles in the Food Science Lab in the Health Professions Center.

of watching them eat and savor every bite was heartwarming.”

In addition to two dietetics students, Ramos also had one USI occupational therapy student participate in the volunteer service-learning project.

Michaela Jones, a dietetics student who plans to graduate in Spring 2022, volunteered for each of the four cooking classes. She bonded with the EAB students, offering good conversation, menu

and cooking suggestions and hands-on assistance. At the conclusion of the classes, Jones said, “Going into this project, I was excited to work with the students but completely unaware of the impact each of them would have on my life. As I taught them how to cook, they taught me that a disability does not disable you. With a new approach, you can overcome any obstacle. Each day when I left the kitchen, I felt like I had experienced a miracle.”



As part of the Red Cross "Pillowcase Project," presented virtually by USI nursing students, the third-grade class at Newburgh Elementary School decorated pillowcases to be used to store home emergency supplies.

Pedro, Pillowcases and Preparedness

During the Spring 2021 semester, Dr. Karen Parker, Assistant Professor of Nursing, collaborated with the American Red Cross on a project to help fulfill some of her students' clinical hour requirements. Sixteen USI nursing students were instructed how to present "Prepare with Pedro" and "The Pillowcase Project" across southwestern Indiana. In total, the USI students presented 37 virtual programs, impacting 827 students. They also shadowed Red Cross staff to observe disaster follow-up with clients.

"Prepare with Pedro" is a Red Cross education program for kindergarten through second grade that teaches students how to

be prepared and take action for either home fires or a local hazard. Students learn coping skills by reading a story featuring a penguin named Pedro, and they receive a storybook to share what they have learned at home.

The Red Cross "Pillowcase Project," for third through fifth grades, also teaches students about personal and family preparedness, local hazards and coping skills. Upon completion, students receive a sturdy pillowcase in which to build their personal emergency supplies kit.

New Employees



Taylor Elpers
Instructor in Nursing



April Fehlinger
Instructor in Nursing



Melissa Rockman
*Instructor in
Diagnostic Medical
Sonography*



Dr. Jenna Thacker
*Assistant Professor
of Occupational
Therapy*

Faculty Achievements



Dr. Charlotte Connerton,
Assistant Professor of Nursing,
is the new Chair of the RN to
BSN Completion Program.



Jody Delp, Clinical Assistant
Professor of Respiratory
Therapy, was named Chair of
the program.



Karla Diekemper, Instructor
in Gerontology, passed
the Indiana Health Facility
Administrator exam and is
now a licensed nursing home
administrator in both Illinois
and Indiana. Before joining
the USI Geriatrics Workforce
Enhancement Program team,
she worked in the long-



term industry for more than 32 years as a physical
therapy assistant and nursing home administrator. At
USI, her area of focus is the long-term care industry,
more specifically, the field of gerontology and the
Administrator-in-Training (AIT) Program.



Dr. Jennifer Evans, Associate Professor of Nursing, is the new Chair of the Undergraduate (BSN) Nursing Program.

Jennifer Fehrenbacher was promoted to Assistant Professor of Dental Hygiene.

Emily Holt '00, B'01, M'04 was promoted to Clinical Professor of Dental Hygiene/Assisting, becoming USI's first clinical track full professor.

Dr. Phoneshia Wells was promoted to Contract Associate Professor of Health Services.



EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS

Each year, the College of Nursing and Health Professions presents the Melissa and John M. Lawrence Excellence in Teaching Award to shine a spotlight on faculty members who contribute significantly to students in the College. The 2020-2021 recipients of this award are Shawna Haywood, Instructor in Nursing and Sean Weir, Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy Assistant.



Haywood



Weir

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Dr. Mikel Hand, Associate Professor of Nursing, and Dr. Connie Swenty, Assistant Dean and Associate Professor of Nursing, received the 2021 College of Nursing and Health Professions Faculty Development Award. The funds from this award will be used to implement their project, *Lived Experience of Third Semester Transition: A Qualitative Study*.



Hand



Swenty

AROUND THE COLLEGE



Leaning into Learning from Past Experiences

A new podcast from the University of Southern Indiana Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness is showcasing and exploring the dynamic lives of older adults in southwestern Indiana. *bOLDer People*, hosted by Dr. Katie Ehlman, USI Professor of Gerontology, features interviews with a wide variety of experts and elders about their life experiences and how aging has played a role in those experiences. Topics of conversation include innovation in the field of gerontology, including age-friendly initiatives, living-in-place opportunities and more.

"This podcast is about people who have been given the gift of longevity and are willing to reflect on their lives, lessons learned and living well," said Ehlman. "They will share captivating stories of decades of experiences, and we will listen and be inspired."

The inaugural episode of *bOLDer People* was released in late August. Titled "Dr. Coudret & the Spirit of Innovation," it features an interview between Ehlman and Dr. Nadine Coudret, Dean Emerita of the USI College of Nursing and Health Professions. The two discuss Coudret's career in education, her activities since retirement and her view on the current direction of nursing and the health professions.

In the second episode, released in October, Ehlman talked about retirement with SWIRCA & More board member and former educator, Sandy Lasher.

bOLDer People is available to download or stream for free on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. The podcast is produced on the USI campus with help from USI faculty, students and staff.

The podcast team is seeking recommendations of older adults from different backgrounds to include on the show. Email bolder.people@usi.edu or visit USI.edu/bOLDerPeople/podcast

The bOLDer People podcast is a project of the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program at the University of Southern Indiana. Support for bOLDer People comes from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$3,691,706 million with zero percentage financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

Mentor of the Year

"Jennifer goes above and beyond to make sure her dental hygiene students receive the best education possible."

Jennifer Fehrenbacher, Assistant Professor of Dental Hygiene and Coordinator of the USI Dental Hygiene Clinic, received the Mentor of the Year award by Volunteer USI in August. Fehrenbacher prepares students to treat patients in the clinic and guides them through the process throughout their time in the Dental Hygiene Program. She fosters clinical and leadership skills in her students, inspiring them to be culturally aware and civically engaged, and is devoted to helping her students learn valuable critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Fehrenbacher's nominators write, "She is a great teacher and is always there for her students no matter what. She is an advocate for us. You can tell she really and truly cares about her students. She goes above and beyond to make sure her dental hygiene students receive the best education possible."



USI Provost Mohammed Khayum presents Jennifer Fehrenbacher with the Mentor of the Year Award during Volunteer USI's annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner on August 25, 2021.

"Mrs. Fehrenbacher is the kindest soul I have ever met. She works hard to make every student feel like they're able to succeed in every way possible. She deserves the best, and I believe this award is meant for her!"

Inspiring First



Emily Holt '00, B'01, M'04, faculty member in the USI Dental Hygiene/Assisting Program, knew the bar was set high when she started down the clinical faculty promotion road at USI. No other individual at USI had ever been promoted to clinical professor, but that didn't deter her from her goal to be the first, inspiring not only her colleagues, but her children.

"I love leaving behind a legacy that my family and I can be proud of," said Holt. "My pursuit of being the first clinical track faculty member to be promoted to clinical professor is a testament to my children that we can do hard things."

Holt said USI's decision to create a clinical track for promotion was a step in the right direction. "So many health professions' faculty members have a practice focus and fit nicely into this track," she said. "Recognizing the practice as an impactful component to teaching and employment at USI is beneficial to the students' learning and the growth of our education programs."

Holt began teaching as an adjunct in the clinical and lab settings in August 2001 and her full-time teaching assignment began in August 2006. She graduated from USI three times, earning an associate of science degree in dental hygiene in 2000, bachelor of science degree in dental hygiene education and health services in 2001 and a master of health administration degree in 2004.

Originally from Jasper, Indiana, Holt became interested in a career in dental hygiene as a teenager. "When I was in high school, my mom encouraged me to be a dental hygienist because one of my cousins had that career," she said. "I worked for my own dentist during my junior and senior year of high school and decided I liked the field."

Holt says the courses she teaches at USI influence the research she performs. "This includes chairside application of content," she said. "I also prepare students for licensure examinations that include didactic and clinical. I have published several pieces with that focus, as well."

Outside of the education setting, Holt has had long standing positions at several dental practices and continues to work as a dental hygienist once a week at an Evansville office.

During the spring and summer months, she travels as an examiner for the CDCA/WREB licensing agency to administer clinical examinations in dental hygiene throughout the United States.

New Certifications

USI offers an Administrator-in-Training (AIT) residency for undergraduate students and an Administrator-in-Training (AIT) Graduate Certificate option for graduate students in the Master of Health Administration Program for those interested in applying for a nursing home administrator license. Students who successfully complete the AIT residency or Graduate Certificate are eligible to sit for the national Nursing Home Administrator board exam and the State of Indiana Health Facility Administrator licensure exam.

Completion of this certificate involves nine credit hours of coursework, including hands-on experience of 1,040 hours of AIT residency in a long-term care facility in conjunction with USI faculty-led licensure examination preparation. The students will be applying and demonstrating learned knowledge to actual post-acute care situations in the healthcare industry with AIT Preceptor guidance.

The areas of foci include:

- Management, Governance and Leadership
- Human Resources
- Finance/Business
- Environment
- Patient/Resident Care

For more information, contact Karla Diekemper, Instructor in Gerontology, at kdiekemper@usi.edu.



The USI Master of Health Administration (MHA) Program hosted Quint Studer for a morning conversation and session in September, as part of a new speaker series, *Transformative Leadership in Healthcare*. Eighty regional healthcare leaders, along with graduate and undergraduate students, were engaged and inspired by Studer's messages on gratitude and leadership as a calling, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studer is former president of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, Florida, and founder of the Studer Community Institute, a not-for-profit with a mission to improve quality of life. He has written 10 books, including *The Busy Leader's Handbook*, which debuted at number five on the *Wall Street Journal's* Best Sellers list in 2019.

2021 Distinguished Nursing Award Recipient

Lois (Stallings) Welden '94 M'01 D'14, a clinical nurse specialist with more than 40 years of nursing, research and leadership experience, is the 2021 recipient of the University of Southern Indiana Distinguished Nursing Alumni Award.

"Lois is an outstanding mentor for nursing staff at all levels, sharing knowledge and critical thinking skills in a calm, compassionate and easily approachable manner," wrote one of her award nominators. "She educates on the importance of using nursing research and evidence to support practice changes to improve nursing care and patient outcomes. She is a nurse who exhibits passion for the nursing profession by being a role model and encouraging others to strive to improve and develop themselves."

Welden, one of seven children, was born in Indianapolis and raised on a farm in north central Indiana. When she was only 15 years old, she applied to work as a nurse aide at Clinton County Hospital in Frankfort, Indiana, with the intent to earn tuition and room and board money while attending a Christian high school and college that was a few hours from home. When she was denied employment because of her age, she returned three months later at the age of 16 to speak to the director of nursing, who abruptly said, "I will not hire 16-year-olds because they are not dependable!" Welden immediately reached out to her teachers and others to obtain letters of recommendation, giving the letters to the director as they came in. "She finally gave up and hired me, saying (while pointing her finger at me) that she would train me herself!" said Welden. "She was an old Army nurse whose uniform was heavily starched, and she had a stern, no nonsense look that was quite intimidating, but I refused to be diverted. I was determined to show her I was dependable."

This young farm girl with no prior nursing experience embraced the various tasks she was given at the hospital, which set the stage for her future career. "While working as a nurse's aide there, I realized the joy of caring for patients and that I could be instrumental in alleviating their pain and providing comfort," she said. "Growing up, I thought I wanted to be a missionary, but with my exposure working as a nurse's aide, I knew I wanted to be a nurse."

In 1979, when her four sons were age 7 and under, she made the decision to begin her nursing studies while working full-time as a nurse's aide at Deaconess Hospital, Evansville. "The hospital made a difference in my life," she said, recalling the tuition support offered by Deaconess to earn her associate degree in nursing. "They believed in their employees and believed in me. After I graduated [from college], I had other job offers, but I



felt like I had something to give back to Deaconess, so I started working as a staff nurse in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit there. Deaconess has also been supportive of the other nursing degrees (bachelor, masters and doctorate) I have earned."

Throughout her career at Deaconess, she has held the titles of Assistant Head Nurse and Department Director, and today, at age 70, she still works full time in nursing leadership as a clinical nurse specialist in the Deaconess Magnet Program and Employee Education Department.

She has also served as adjunct faculty at USI since 2015, teaching online Clinical Synthesis and Nursing Informatics over the years.

Welden credits USI faculty for her decision to become a nurse manager. "They knew I had high standards," she said. "One day, I was walking on campus with two of my instructors, and one of them said, 'Look at your hands. Imagine if you could influence 80 to 100 nurses to give the same care that you do?' I had four kids. . . I wasn't interested in the manager job, but what they said got me thinking. I've been fortunate to hold positions to influence nurses to provide excellence in nursing care, use evidence-based practice and be involved in research."

Each year, the USI Nursing Alumni Society recognizes a graduate who has made outstanding achievements in a career or public service. For more information about the USI Nursing Alumni Society, visit the society's web page.

More Nursing Alumni

Debra Wilson '10 M'11 was named Vice President of Oncology for Lee Health in southwest Florida in August 2021. In her new role, she is responsible for establishing the vision and strategic direction for cancer services at Lee Health. She worked at Deaconess Health System in Evansville for 19

years, five of which she served as the director of oncology services.

Katrina Etter '13, current student in USI's Doctorate of Nursing Program, shared that a presentation she created with an Anthem

medical director for a class project was added to the company's Sharepoint site and incorporated into new hire training for several other regional departments as well. "It's always so helpful when a class helps to spark an idea that ends up being beneficial for the organizations we serve," she said.

STUDENT TAKES THE STAGE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



Hortensia Almanza, seated fourth from left, participated in a student panel on the last day of the conference with students from USI and Danubius University in Galati, Romania.

A student in the Radiologic and Imaging Sciences Program was one of three representatives from USI selected to attend an international conference in Romania in September 2021, titled *Two Democratic Societies in Transition: Exploring the Dynamics of a Post-COVID World*.

Hortensia Almanza '23 of Veraguas, Panama, said attending the conference was an “amazing” experience. “Having the opportunity to connect with students from another country and being able to express our opinions about current issues around the world gave me a light of hope again,” she said. “Our lives have been impacted because of COVID, but all those people that I met help me understand how the youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.”

Dr. Oana Armeanu, Chair of Political Science, Public Administration and Philosophy, accompanied the USI students, which also included a biochemistry (pre-med) major and a psychology major.

Growing up, Almanza said she always knew she wanted to work in healthcare. “After several years, I realized that radiology is a fundamental part of diagnostic medicine and is needed every day in every hospital,”

she said. “I would love to continue seeing in the future how we could help more people.”

She said her family played an important role when she was selecting her major. “They always motivated me to study and find the best opportunities for my future. A few years ago, they supported my decision of coming to USI and study radiology,” she said.

Almanza has served as president and vice president of USI's International Club, and she works for USI's Center for International Programs as an international orientation assistant, which gives her the opportunity to welcome new international students and help them create connections on campus. She also works as a manager at the Recreation, Fitness and Wellness Center.

After she graduates in 2023, Almanza plans to work a few years in the United States and pursue a master's degree before returning to Panama to promote projects that advance education and health for women and youth.

Center for Health Professions Lifelong Learning

2022 Conferences

- February 23-24, Virtual Pediatric Conference: *Pulling It All Together for the Kids*
- March 7-11, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Course
- March 2022, Focus on Healthcare 2022 Recorded Webinar
- Spring 2022, Imaging Workshop
- April 6, 19th Annual Nursing Leadership Conference
- April 20, 26th Annual Research, Evidence-Based Practice and Performance Improvement in Healthcare Conference (abstracts accepted)
- April 29, 24th Annual Advanced Practice Nursing Symposium
- May 12, 28th Annual Midwest Care Coordination Conference
- May 18, 19 & 20, 39th Annual Institute for Alcohol and Drug Studies
- August 10, 11 & 12, Mid-America Institute on Aging and Wellness
- September 23, 19th Annual Pharmacology Update for Healthcare Professionals

2022 Online Certificate Programs

- Anticoagulation Therapy Management, eight weeks, begins January 10, March 21, May 23, August 1, October 10
- Case Management, eight weeks, begins March 21 and August 8
- Coronal Polishing, six weeks, begins March 14*
- Diabetes, 10 weeks, begins February 7 and August 1
- Fluoride Application, six weeks, begins March 14*
- Faith Community Nursing, six weeks, begins March 14 and September 12
- Heart Failure, seven weeks, begins March 7 and September 19
- Hypertension Management, seven weeks, begins February 7 and July 25



- Local Dental Anesthesia, six weeks, begins January 10*
- Medical Coding, 16 weeks, begins January 17 and July 11*
- Pain Management, eight weeks, begins January 10 and August 1

Online Independent Study Courses

- Anticoagulation: Oral
- Anticoagulation: Patient Self-Testing
- Behavioral Health
- Clinical Simulation
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program (CAM)
- Genetics
- Limited Cardiac Catheterization Radiography Certification
- Lipid Management
- Nitrous Oxide and Oxygen Sedation (dental)
- Oncology

- Opioid, Nonopioid and Nonpharmacologic Treatment of Pain
- Patient Care in the Primary Setting
- Pediatric Pain Management with Opioid and Opioid Alternatives
- Pediatric Type 1 Diabetes
- Wound Management

Registration and Program Information

Visit **USI.edu/health** or call:

Conferences:

812-464-1989

Certificate Programs:

812-461-5217