

# MIZZOU NURSING

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SINCLAIR SCHOOL OF NURSING | 2024-2025



Oh, the places  
nurses serve! **2025**

## FROM THE DEAN



As we considered ideas for this issue of "Mizzou Nursing" magazine, I thought to myself, perhaps it's time to be playful. We don't do that enough in nursing. Every day, we deal with weighty life events and do so willingly, with open hearts. It's healthy to take time to reflect on the good work nurses do for individuals and for society as a whole.

I had just returned from talking with some inspiring Mizzou alumni and thought about how far their Mizzou nursing degrees have taken them — the wonderful places they've been and the remarkable things they've accomplished in their careers. I laughingly said, perhaps we should take a page from Dr. Seuss and embrace the spirit of his book "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" So that's what we did.

We're celebrating the many places our nurses serve and their everyday impact on the world. It's a journey through the exceptional versatility of a nursing degree and a reflection of the strength and purpose that define our Sinclair School of Nursing community.

In "Courageous Careers — Oh, the Places Nurses Serve," we spotlight four Mizzou Nursing alumni and one faculty member whose paths illustrate the endless possibilities of a nursing degree. Their stories remind us that nursing is both a science and a calling.

"Where Evidence Meets Impact" dives into the essential connection between nursing research and real-world outcomes. Research led by our nurse scientists improves patient outcomes, strengthens health systems and addresses pressing public health challenges. The evidence we generate and translate into practice truly improves and saves lives.

### MAGAZINE STAFF:

Executive Editor & Writer — Anissa Lockett  
Managing Editor & Art Director — Madison Crane

### COMMITTEE:

Amber Vroman  
Anne Sales  
Cheryl Byrd  
Deidre Wipke-Tevis  
Julie Miller  
Lori Popejoy  
Miriam Butler  
Robin Harris  
Sean Pridgeon  
Whitney Harlan



In "Building a Foundation for Future Nursing Scientists," we celebrate the ripple effect of one family's generosity and one nurse's enduring legacy. Through the Ann Crowe Essig Undergraduate Research Fund, our students are discovering the excitement of inquiry and building the confidence to pursue a research career. Mentorship builds the next generation, helping students gain knowledge and leadership skills to advance the profession.

Collaboration is another key to our mission. In "Less Stress, More Care: A Special Partnership in Precepting," we share how our partnership with MU Health Care is transforming the preceptor experience. At the heart of nursing is competent, compassionate care learned through excellent preceptorship.

Finally, Mizzou Nursing student Dylann Henley reminds us of the courage and tenacity that define the spirit of nursing. Her story of perseverance through illness, supported by family, friends and faculty, illustrates the resilience and hope that inspire our entire community.

As you read this issue, I hope you take a moment to reflect on the many ways nurses serve. Wherever there is need, you'll find a nurse — leading, teaching, researching, healing and building healthier communities for all.

Because that's what Mizzou Nurses do.

Warmest Regards,

Lori L. Popejoy, BSN '93, MS(N) '96, PhD '07  
Dean & Professor  
Sinclair School of Nursing

We want to hear from you!  
Send feedback about this issue,  
suggest future article ideas or  
share your story on how the  
Sinclair School of Nursing has  
impacted you.  
Email us at  
[mussoncommunication@missouri.edu](mailto:mussoncommunication@missouri.edu)

# TABLE of CONTENTS

## 03 COURAGEOUS CAREERS

Written by Anna Colletto

## 08 MIZZOU NURSING STUDENT'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE & HOPE

Written by Sara Diedrich

## 10 AROUND THE SCHOOL

Written by Anissa Lockett

## 12 LESS STRESS, MORE CARE: A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP IN PRECEPTING

Written by Colin O'Brien

## 14 MIZZOU NURSES FOR MIZZOU NURSES

Written by Cheryl Byrd

## 15 WHERE EVIDENCE MEETS IMPACT

Written by Dale Smith

## 18 BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE NURSING SCIENTISTS

Written by Anissa Lockett

## 21 2025 ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Written by Cheryl Byrd



Show Mizzou Nursing pride  
every time you wear our signature  
apparel! Order yours here.



## FROM THE NURSING ALUMNI ORGANIZATION



The Sinclair School of Nursing's alumni community continues to grow in both strength and spirit. With that growth comes the opportunity to evolve. I'm excited to share that the Nursing Alumni Organization (NAO) has launched a refreshed structure to better serve our graduates and current students, and to align more closely with both the Mizzou Alumni Association (MAA) and the School's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

At the heart of this new direction is a two-part engagement model designed to provide more meaningful, inclusive and flexible ways for alumni to stay involved and connected.

The Nursing Alumni Advisory Council (formerly the NAO Board of Directors) will serve as a strategic leadership group. These alumni will help guide programming and advise school leadership on alumni engagement, student support, professional development and fundraising.

The MAA Mizzou Ambassadors program is a new, flexible framework that empowers nursing and other Mizzou alumni from across the country to participate through short-term volunteer opportunities, regional and campus events, student outreach and more. Whether near or far, every alum has a place in this growing network.

We're thrilled that MAA has officially launched the Mizzou Ambassadors program! This initiative connects alumni with one-time, low-commitment volunteer opportunities that can be done either remotely or right in your area. It's a great way to stay involved without a long-term time commitment.

If you've already signed up to be a Mizzou Ambassador — thank you! You'll hear from MAA quarterly with new opportunities, and you can also look forward to regionally based messages and options specific to Sinclair School of Nursing alumni. Learn more or sign up at [mizzou.com/MIZAmbassador](http://mizzou.com/MIZAmbassador).

This evolution is grounded in the principle: Mizzou Nurses for Mizzou Nurses. Whether through mentorship, volunteering, attending events or sharing your experiences, alumni play a key role in enhancing the School of Nursing experience for current students and graduates.

As we begin this new chapter, I invite you to reconnect. Consider serving as an ambassador, attending an event or reunion or reaching out to a fellow alum. Your involvement makes a difference. Together, we are building a legacy that honors our history and strengthens our future.

Happy Fall — MIZ!

Jeri Doty, MS(N) '81  
President, Nursing Alumni Organization



## NEW TO OUR SCHOOL

Meet Cheryl Byrd: Supporting the Mizzou Nursing Alumni Family. With over 20 years of experience in alumni engagement, donor relations and event planning, I'm honored to serve as your alumni partner at the Sinclair School of Nursing. My goal is to help you stay connected to one another, to current students and to the mission of the school through meaningful programs and opportunities that reflect what matters most to you.

Mizzou Nurses give so much of themselves to others, and I want to ensure our alumni feel engaged, informed and supported. Whether through mentoring, reunions, volunteer service or sharing your story, there are many ways to be involved. I'd love to hear from you and look forward to building a strong, thriving alumni community together.

Email: [byrdch@missouri.edu](mailto:byrdch@missouri.edu) | Phone: 573-884-9538



## COURAGEOUS CAREERS - OH, THE PLACES NURSES SERVE

Written by Anna Colletto // Photo courtesy of Sean Pridgeon

With brains in their heads and feet in their shoes, Mizzou Nurses can go wherever they choose.

There simply isn't a lifetime long enough to explore all the careers a nurse can choose from, or the places they can serve. These five Sinclair School of Nursing alumni and faculty use their education in a variety of ways — at home and abroad, in schools and capitol buildings. But a deep commitment to service ties them together as MizzouMade leaders and caretakers.

### From scrubs to the Capitol

Missouri House Representative Gregg Bush, BSN '12, believes nurses bring something special to politics: Putting others first.

"In this time of violent and cynical electoral politics, what's a better skill set?" he said.

The skills Bush first learned as a nurse — building rapport and finding common ground — carry over even when caring for 37,000 citizens living in his district.

Bush entered the health care field as a University of Missouri Hospital ICU janitor and clerk after a varied career as an artist, newspaperman, professional harmonica player and school bus driver. Despite Bush's nontraditional background,



Representative Gregg Bush speaking to a class of nursing students.

colleagues encouraged him to give nursing a try.

Never one to balk at a challenge, Bush enrolled in a pharmacology class. If he passed, he'd consider applying to the Sinclair School of Nursing's Accelerated BSN program. Fifteen years after his first undergraduate experience, Bush finished the class just short of an A. He graduated with his nursing degree in 2012 and "fell in love" with acute care nursing.

"I got so much support from other nurses, from people who recognized in me things that I didn't know that I had," Bush said. "They took a chance on somebody and invested in me."

Years later, Bush has brought their investment full circle by serving his community as an elected official.

Bush first ran for Columbia City Council in 2023, losing by 58 votes. State politicians took notice despite the defeat and encouraged him to run for an open Missouri House seat. Bush won and has represented District 50 since January 2025.

Bush cites his School of Nursing training for his political career. Being a nurse taught him to focus on humanity in every interaction. He hopes more nurses will follow in his footsteps and apply those lessons to civic life.

"Nurses absolutely need to stand up and be counted," Bush said. "We can show people how it's done to make the future better."

### A purpose in public health

For Jennifer Maddox, BSN '93, her "why" is love. Nursing is her "what" and "how."

"I love to serve," Maddox said. "I like to help people. I like to help make things better for people."

After decades in other specialties, school nursing brought her back to community health — a passion she first discovered in MU undergraduate clinicals. She's now the director of Health Services for Columbia Public Schools ▾

(CPS), overseeing more than 60 nurses and health assistants caring for nearly 19,000 students in the district. Maddox also serves on the Sinclair School of Nursing's Alumni Advisory Council.

"I just feel so connected to our community being in school nursing," she said. "I believe God opened that opportunity up for me. He knows my purpose."

No one would believe the vast number of challenges school nurses help students and their families face, Maddox said. School buildings filled with students from a broad array of backgrounds and experiences provide opportunities for nurses to identify root causes of problems, manage chronic and acute conditions and provide holistic support to help students thrive.

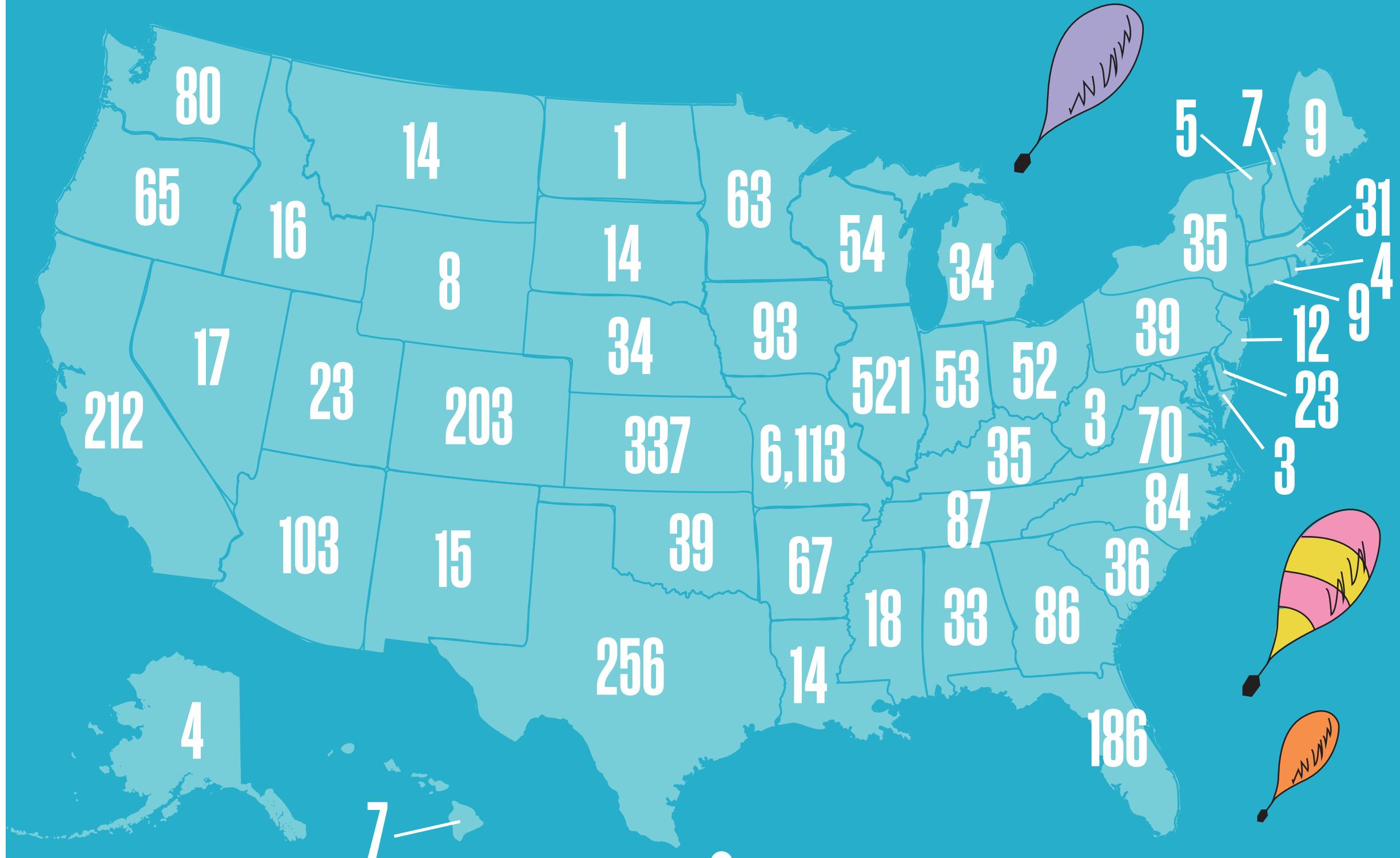
"We're connecting them with resources for clothing, for food, for health care," Maddox said. "We're making huge differences in lives."

Maddox continues to find purpose in supporting staff through resources and professional development. She plays an integral role in the SCHOLAR Clinic, a collaboration among CPS, Clarity Healthcare — a Federally Qualified Health Center — and the Sinclair School of Nursing. The clinic provides community health resources to school nurses and includes a Sinclair School of Nursing APRN who provides health care to CPS students in need.

"While (school nursing) may seem like a very narrow path, like a traditional clinical environment, I think that's sometimes a misconception," Maddox said. "The skills that nurses learn can really be applied to so many different fields and places."

She believes it's connecting with your passion that opens up incredible opportunities.

Maddox is the Missouri director for the National Association of School Nurses and serves on the national board, as well as several commissions and committees throughout the state — all dedicated to positive change for students. Once a year, Maddox visits Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to advocate for students and school nurses. ▶

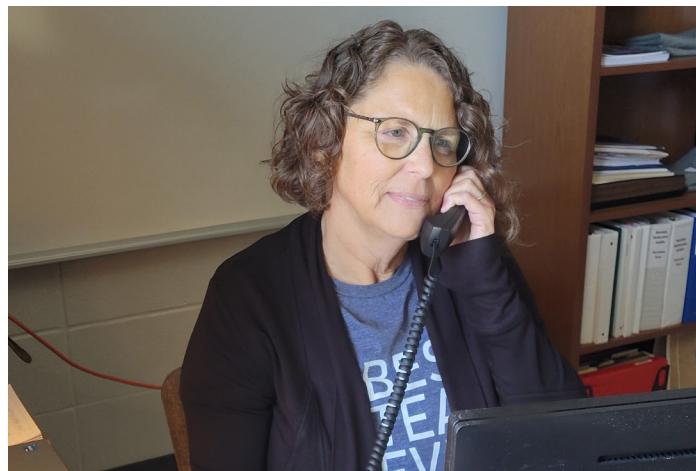


With more than 10,000 living nursing alumni worldwide, our graduates are making an impact in every corner of the globe. From rural clinics and urban health systems to schools, community health and emergency response, nurses bring skill and compassion wherever they serve.

## GLOBAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Beyond the U.S., our alumni extend their expertise across the globe. They are serving in places such as Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Thailand, Israel, Oman, Ghana and through the Armed Forces around the world.

\* Data is from the Mizzou Alumni Association's current registry and may not represent all nursing alumni.



Jennifer Maddox working in her office at CPS.

"That surprises me sometimes when I've sat in those rooms on the Hill in D.C., thinking, oh my goodness, I cannot believe this opportunity," Maddox said. "I am just so thankful."

#### **Globally growing a 'spirit of inquiry'**

In January 2026, Anne Sales, PhD, RN, FAAN, will travel the world as a Fullbright Global Scholar, teaching implementation science in South Africa, Zambia and Malaysia.

Over four decades as a nurse, Sales has constantly evolved. From working in community settings with an adult protective agency to serving as a family nurse practitioner running clinics for low-income patients, she has built wide-ranging clinical experience. Since 1996, when she began her research career as a health services researcher, Sales has spent nearly 30 years in academic and research roles. Now, as a professor at the Sinclair School of Nursing and global researcher, she continues to push the industry forward.

Schools like Mizzou excel at discovery research, she said, but these new evidence-based practices are rarely practiced in routine patient care.



Anne Sales (right) receiving 2024 Award for Excellence in Research from Jeri Doty, MS(N) '81.

"We are so often practicing and using approaches and knowledge that come from decades ago," Sales said. "That doesn't actually take into account the new innovations that we know can be helpful for patients."

To change this, Sales is pushing nurses and educators to think deeply about their practices and continue updating them. To provide the best patient care, it's essential to remain willing and open to learning continuously.

Nursing is broader than one may imagine, she stated. Nurses routinely take a uniquely holistic approach to patient assessment — examining emotional psychosocial, spiritual and physical functioning.

"The reality is, nurses work in pretty much every industry in this country and other countries," Sales said. "We have been at the forefront of developing graduate education in the health sciences for decades and that of course comes with a need to do research and to develop the science of what we do."

In many ways, they have similarities to engineers. Both disciplines are rooted in deep curiosity.

"It's a spirit of inquiry," Sales said. "It's trying to figure out why we face the problems that we face and figuring out what solutions there are."

#### **Forging a federal agency career**

Akara Ingram, BSN '01, thinks working as a nurse in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) is the "best kept secret."

In her sprawling career working in the USPHS, Ingram has served the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), Immigration Health Service Corp (IHSC), United States Marshall Service (USMS), the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the US Health and Human Service Office of the Assistant Secretary (OASH). Currently, she's working with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), in the HIV/AIDS bureau focusing on increasing the HIV/AIDS health care workforce. She has managed large teams and worked in various roles such as staff nurse, nurse manager, branch chief of medical services, chief nurse and project officer. Currently, in addition to working, she is pursuing her Doctor of Nursing Practice-Family Nurse Practitioner (DNP-FNP) degree.

The critical thinking, communication skills and grit Ingram learned in her nursing education sets her, and others like her, apart in federal agencies. "In the USPHS, a lot of nurses are leaders," Ingram said. "They look for the nurses because we have the ability to multitask and you know, we have the empathy. It's just something about us."

Even though her career trajectory naturally fits her personality, Ingram didn't have federal work in her sights until graduate school, when a peer suggested she explore it. "You'll be amazed at how a conversation can change the trajectory of your career, or even just your workday," Ingram said. "Do the networking, communicate and don't isolate yourself."

In every agency and role, Ingram is pulled toward those who are marginalized, shunned or on the periphery of society. As an experienced nurse working in BOP, she was initially scared. "But once I got in there, I realized that, you know, they're human. Just like everyone else, they need medical care," Ingram said. As a general rule working in that environment, Ingram realized you never ask why the patient had been convicted, just treat them like humans. "That allowed me to focus on patient care and be an advocate for the patient themselves."

Her commitment to serving others runs in the family. Raised by a single mother who worked as a nurse, Ingram and all her siblings chose careers in health care/public service, following in their mother's footsteps.

"We wanted something where we could make an impact so that people like us know that there are people that care," Ingram said. Growing up in North St. Louis (inner city) and facing racial discrimination made her determined to "go back and give back."

Once she obtains her DNP, she plans to work in HIV/AIDS field, with a focus on maternal/women's health care, hoping to fight the shortage of care and stigma for women at risk and living with the virus.

#### **Well-being for those who serve**

Sean Pridgeon, DNP '21, knows what it's like to serve under duress.

While pursuing his Doctor in Nursing Practice at Mizzou, Pridgeon was deployed to Afghanistan on a combat tour with the 932nd Forward Surgical Team. He treated soldiers while under enemy fire and maintained "life saving measures" in difficult environments. He was awarded the Combat Medic Badge, among other honors, for his service.

At the same time, his wife was caring for four kids at home, the youngest a newborn. With limited Wi-Fi and two hours of connection, the Pridgeons sent three "pretty good things" every day to focus on the positive.

That daily practice became part of Pridgeon's doctoral project, applying it to the second wave of COVID-19 and its impact on health care workers.



Akara Ingram, BSN '01

"It actually showed that it helps people reengage in their jobs the next day. It gave them a mental break and a pause and then helped them see the positive," he said.

That holistic care is central to Pridgeon's current role as the Sinclair School of Nursing's director of career well-being. It continues a career defined by workplace well-being. Pridgeon helped design institution-wide mental well-being practices at MU Health Care and worked as a master resilience trainer for over twelve years in the military.

"It's nice to really dig deep and find those specific phases in a nursing career that need more support and help," Pridgeon said. "I'm also really trying to find the right tools and skills for nurses to find those intrinsic interest areas so that they can build their own self-care skills."

Outside his 9 to 5, Pridgeon finds even more ways to regularly give back. He works for the Howard County Emergency Medical Service to maintain his acute care skills while continuing his military service as a Major and critical care nurse. This summer, he ran an urgent care serving more than 9,500 soldiers.

"Nothing's ever done in solitary," Pridgeon said. "So the ability to connect with people and build relationships and ensure that a sense of community is really important — that's near to my heart."

Across continents, from classrooms to clinics, capitals to combat zones, Mizzou nurses prove there's no limit to where their skills can take them. Whether advancing policy, shaping public health, driving research or caring for communities — nursing isn't just a career, it's a calling to make the world better.

*With the unwavering support of her family, friends and the Sinclair School of Nursing, Dylann Henley refused to let cancer stand in the way of her dream to become a pediatric nurse.*



## MIZZOU NURSING STUDENT'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE & HOPE

Written by Sara Dierich // Photo Abbie Lankitus

For Dylann Henley, spending the summer as an intern with the pediatric oncology nursing staff at University of Missouri Health Care was more than just a stepping stone. It was a heartfelt homecoming.

Just a few months earlier in February, Henley, a senior nursing student at Mizzou, had completed 2½ years of grueling treatment for a rare and aggressive form of pediatric cancer called T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The life-altering news came the day after submitting her resumé and application to the Sinclair School of Nursing.

"Everything shifted overnight," Henley recalled. "Before the diagnosis, I had explained away every symptom I had to something else because no 19-year-old ever thinks they have cancer."

The timing felt cruel.

As she was taking her first steps toward a future in nursing, Henley found herself on the other side of the hospital bed, navigating a whirlwind of IV drips, chemotherapy, lumbar punctures, radiation and high-powered steroids.

Now, she's come full circle. No longer the patient, Henley will soon be living out her dream, caring for young patients walking a path she knows all too well. After graduating from Mizzou in December — having missed only one semester during her treatment — she will return to the same pediatric oncology floor where she received treatment, but this time as a full-time nurse.

Henley's determination to continue her education and pursue her calling was strengthened by the unwavering

support of family, friends and the School of Nursing. Through a new Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative, she was paired with a student success coach who helped her manage the challenges of cancer treatment while staying on track to complete her nursing degree.

It's a true Tiger success story, one that began years earlier in the small Missouri town of California, where Henley was raised.

### When life shifted

Growing up, Henley was a vivacious and active child who loved the outdoors and spending time with friends. In high school, she played volleyball and exercised almost every day.

"I've never been the type of person to sit around," she said. "I like to be active."

Henley hit the ground running when she arrived as a freshman at Mizzou in fall 2021. She pledged a sorority and played intramural sand volleyball and indoor volleyball.

Henley had long ago set her sights on becoming a nurse. Shaped by her mother's ongoing battle with serious health issues, she became familiar with the world of health care and felt a strong calling to help others, especially children.

"I started babysitting early and found real joy in caring for others," she said. "I've always had a nurturing nature, a bit of a mother hen. When I put all those qualities together, nursing felt like the natural fit."

Henley's life at Mizzou was in full swing when everything changed on a Tuesday evening in late September 2022. For weeks before, the once energetic student had been battling unrelenting fatigue. Soon, troubling symptoms followed:

persistent body aches, unusual red spots scattered across her calves and frequent nosebleeds that were nearly impossible to stop. She was traveling to Jefferson City to meet her dad when another relentless nosebleed hit. Unable to get it under control, she ended up at the local emergency room, where her dad soon joined her. After clamping her nose and running blood tests, a doctor delivered the devastating news. "I think you have leukemia," he said.

Within hours, Henley was admitted to the pediatric oncology floor at MU Health Care. By the following day, doctors had identified the specific type of leukemia, and chemotherapy treatment began just 24 hours later. Committed to staying in school as long as possible, Henley completed the fall semester online and took the following spring off to focus on her treatment.

During that time, she endured excruciating bone pain from powerful steroids, suffered chemo-induced toxicity that triggered a stroke, and spent two weeks in rehabilitation learning to walk and talk again.

Henley lost her hair more than once, but never her drive.

"I'm the kind of person who always looks for the silver lining, even in the darkest moments," she said. "I just kept moving forward, day by day, week by week, month by month."

### Strength through support

When Henley returned to campus in fall 2023, the School of Nursing — along with her fellow students — rallied around her, offering steady support as she resumed her journey.

"I didn't want to put my studies on hold because I had cancer," she said. "I didn't want the cancer to define me. I was dealing with cancer; it wasn't my whole identity."

Eventually, Henley became one of the first students to join the Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative, a new program designed to champion aspiring nurses and give them the skills and resources to not only enter the profession but build lasting careers. Through the program, she was paired with Meredith Buchmeier, an assistant teaching professor and student success coach. The two quickly connected and began working together twice a week to develop strategies for managing Henley's time and strengthening her study skills. Later, they focused on helping Henley put her new knowledge into practice and sharpen her test-taking skills.

"Our initiatives are all individualized," Buchmeier, who is a primary care certified pediatric nurse practitioner with a Doctor of Nursing Practice, said. "It's much like nurses do with their patients. By individualizing care, we are bringing that same concept to our students."

For Henley, the connection with Buchmeier has been invaluable. "She immediately knew how to help me, and I often tell her, 'I don't know if I could do this without you,'" she said. "I can talk to her about anything, even my health, because she's a nurse and truly understands. It's been comforting to have a neutral person I can trust, someone who listens without judgment and is always in my corner."

For Buchmeier, her relationship with Henley has been a true two-way street. "That's why watching Dylann's resilience, both physically and mentally, has been so inspiring," she said. "She still shows up to class, meets with me twice a week, takes her exams and consistently meets her objectives to pass her courses. In this room, we've shared happy tears and sad tears. Through it all, the entire School of Nursing has been in her corner, celebrating not just her achievements but the remarkable person she is."

### Coming full circle

Henley's commitment to her education while battling cancer has deeply inspired her fellow nursing students, including Abby Shoot. Meeting Henley changed her perspective.

"I was so nervous about starting nursing school and overwhelmed by how difficult it was going to be," she said. "Then I met Dylann. Her strength and determination were incredibly inspiring. It reminded me that I wasn't alone in facing challenges and helped me put my own fears into perspective. Dylann's journey gave me the motivation to keep going, even when things felt impossible."

This summer, while interning on the pediatric oncology floor, Henley's own journey through treatment gave her a unique ability to connect with patients and their families.

"I tried to offer support by sharing how I felt during treatment, especially with the parents," she said. "Many of them didn't fully understand what their children are going through, so being able to connect with them and offer some peace of mind was really meaningful." Through everything she has faced, Henley has discovered a resilience within herself greater than she ever imagined. Now, she is stepping into the next chapter of her life, returning to the pediatric oncology floor, not as a patient or an intern, but as a professional nurse ready to make a difference.

"There were times I truly believed I was getting better," she said. "I'd catch a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel, only to get knocked down again. And again. And again. But each time, I got back up. I wasn't going to give up my dream of becoming a nurse just because I was sick. Giving up simply isn't in my vocabulary."



Meredith Buchmeier and Dylann Henley working in the skills and assessment lab.

# BE A CHAMPION OF NURSING SUCCESS!

## Nursing Student and Career Success Update

Launched in 2024, the Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative is providing programs and pathways to support healthy and sustainable careers for faculty, students and practicing nurses.

**Phase I (Fall 2024):** Our two success coaches, Christyl Barnes, BSN '16, MS(N) '22, and Meredith Buchmeier, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC., are driving measurable gains in academics and well-being through one-on-one coaching.

**Phase II (Spring 2025):** Sean Pridgeon, DNP '21, director of career well-being, expands the initiative to support newly licensed and early-career nurses with career coaching, skill development and practice-readiness.

**Leadership (Fall 2025):** Nelda Godfrey, BSN '77, PhD '99, joins the initiative as professor of professional practice and director of nursing career success, identity and innovation. A nationally recognized thought leader in nursing education, innovation and professional identity research, she will lead the development of programs that advance research and foster thriving, sustainable nursing careers.



Join us in expanding the Nursing Student and Career Success Initiative to build healthier, more sustainable careers for Mizzou Nursing students and practicing nurses. Make your gift today at [nursing.missouri.edu/give](https://nursing.missouri.edu/give) or contact **Whitney Harlan** at [harlanw@missouri.edu](mailto:harlanw@missouri.edu) to learn how you can get involved.



## Oh, The Places Student Nurses Serve!

Last year, our nursing students and faculty were making an impact around the globe. From exploring nursing ethics in Florence, Italy to building connections in Jinju, South Korea and Costa Rica, the journey has been nothing short of inspiring. Students also visited Ecuador and Camp Barnabas in Purdy, Mo., where they engaged in community-based clinical work. Wherever they go, one thing remains constant — the dedication to learning, serving and growing as future nurses.



Nursing students and faculty working, exploring and learning in Florence, Italy; Camp Barnabas; Jinju, South Korea; and Costa Rica.



## AROUND THE SCHOOL

Students and faculty at the annual MONSA conference.

### Student Nurses' Association Receives Outstanding Chapter Award

The annual Missouri Nursing Students' Association (MONSA) conference was held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024. Mizzou had a very strong showing with 34 members of the Student Nurses' Association (SNA) attending. They received the Outstanding Chapter Award for 2024. This is in recognition of Stellar status with the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA).

### Great Catch Lexie!

When Lexie Wehri noticed a patient's sudden change in mental status while serving as a patient observer in MU Health Care's Emergency Department, she immediately called for the nursing team. Her quick action allowed the charge nurse to respond within seconds and begin CPR when the patient went into cardiac arrest. For her swift recognition and response, Lexie received MUHC's Great Catch Award, honoring individuals who prevent harm and ensure patient safety.

Lexie developed her clinical skills through the Sinclair School of Nursing's Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP) program, funded by the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The program is designed to create a strong pipeline of future health care professionals by giving students hands-on experience early in their academic journey. It benefits pre-nursing students who want to strengthen their resumes with meaningful health care experience before applying to the clinical program. Offered year-round, the UAP



Lexie Wehri receiving her Great Catch with UM Health Care employees.



Faculty, staff and new PhD students at on-campus orientation.

## LESS STRESS, MORE CARE - A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP IN PRECEPTING

Written by Colin O'Brien // Photos by Justin Kelley

**Graduate nurses and advanced practice providers rely on preceptors for hands-on education. The Sinclair School of Nursing and MU Health Care have partnered to make it easier for students, and their mentors, to focus on what matters: Patient care.**

Kayla Francis, RN, a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the Sinclair School of Nursing, didn't need the added stress of finding a preceptor for her ER and urgent care clinical hours when she came to Columbia to start — and advance — her nursing career.

"Thankfully, I'd gotten my feet wet working in the ER, and if you know one person at Mizzou or MU Health Care, you know 20," Francis said. "Everyone knows someone, and that's how I found Morgan. And I'm grateful I did, because she is one of the best preceptors I could ever have, and taught me more than any textbook would ever be able to teach."

Morgan Goss, BSN '09, FNP '14, was in a situation similar to Francis when she moved to Columbia more than a decade ago to be part of the Sinclair School of Nursing's first DNP cohort. She found one preceptor who opened doors for her and went on to become the first nurse practitioner in the University Hospital emergency room.

"I try not to overload myself with preceptees, but I do as much as I can to help," Goss said. "Our training is so different than the medical model of a physician or PA (Physicians Assistant) that the preceptorship, especially in the ER, is awesome because of the

amount of experience you're getting and how you develop your bedside manner."

Preceptors play a pivotal role for DNP students who plan to become future nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse educators or nursing leaders. Students get one-on-one guidance about the clinical expectations of autonomous advanced nursing practice. This includes refining their skills of advanced assessment, diagnosis and evidence-based practice with real patients.

"It's really hard to change roles from a student to a provider, and I feel like the only and best way you're going to learn is to experience it," Francis said. "Clinical hours and the hands-on experiences are the best things that the School of Nursing offers, and that's the best way to transition from student to practice."

Francis and Goss's relationship is the model that the Sinclair School of Nursing and MU Health Care hope to provide to all graduate nurses and advanced practice providers, or APPs. In total there are 381 graduate nursing students in the fall of 2025, between the DNP, Master of Science in nursing and graduate certificate programs.

"Being closely involved with the hospitals at MU Health Care is important for our students, whether it's primary care, pediatrics, medical specialties, psych mental health or gerontology," said Miriam Butler, associate teaching professor who directs Mizzou Nursing's DNP and graduate Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) programs. "We do ask a lot of our preceptors, but they're so important in helping graduate nurses become independent and build the experience, confidence and knowledge they need."



Kayla Francis (left) with preceptor Morgan Goss.

Cathy Cartwright, DNP, and Michelle Seithel, PA, started new roles with MU Health Care in 2025. They help bridge the organization's structure with practicing APPs as well as students at the Sinclair School of Nursing to help them integrate, develop professionally and practice at their level of experience, licensure and certification.

"It's about making sure that both the system and APPs recognize that APPs are a valuable piece of MU Health Care," said Seithel, who precepted many students in her role leading APPs in emergency medicine.

In their previous roles, Seithel and Cartwright, BSN '73 — who joined MU Health Care from Children's Mercy in Kansas City — both developed programs to find and prepare preceptor candidates and standardize the educational outcomes of 90- to 270-hour rotations. "I used to think it was just, 'Follow me around and I'll show you the ropes,'" Cartwright said. "It needs to be an organized system, based on the adult learning principles and also the skills that you need to perform well in your role."

Students and preceptors work together to set learning goals and objectives for the rotation, but they're not on an island. Cartwright, Seithel and Butler are all part of the support system to help ensure graduate nurses aren't just checking a box for clinical hours but getting role-specific, real-world experience and that preceptors are prepared and comfortable in their role. "I think it shows that our organization is investing in advanced practice at MU Health Care and the Sinclair School of Nursing," Cartwright said. "I think that's a real positive for our advanced practice providers, to know that they are appreciated and that the organization is investing in them."

Francis was grateful she got to complete her entire emergency medicine rotation with Goss. Having the same preceptor helped her feel more comfortable trying new things as a student learning to become a provider because there was an established relationship of safety and trust.

For nurses like Butler, that teacher-student relationship also helps keep practicing APRNs at the top of their game and contributes to improved outcomes for patients. Working with MU Health Care to find and train preceptors and place graduate students with them gives everyone one less thing to worry about.

"That stress of finding preceptors is becoming increasingly difficult, and there are simply other things students should be spending their time on," Butler said. "The goal of this partnership is to relieve that stress by finding and training good preceptors without taking their valuable time away from patient care and teaching."

Being at the bedside or in clinic rooms is important to Goss and something she takes a lot of pride in. Sitting and talking with patients in terms they understand, for as long as it takes for them to both understand what's going on, is something she does many times a shift. Her personality and style translate well to precepting students.

"My patients come first, and my students come first," Goss said. "With students, it's mentoring. I'm not going to criticize you; it's about giving you confidence and resources. I want them to feel confident, do the best they can and never be afraid to ask questions."

By centralizing intake and placement of graduate nurses, training and supporting the preceptors they're placed with, and increasing the ways that APPs can find voices and leadership roles in health care, the Sinclair School of Nursing and MU Health Care are shooting for big goals.

One of them is to encourage DNP students like Francis to become preceptors themselves once they meet all the requirements.

"I was super fortunate with Morgan to get a relationship that lasted beyond the preceptor student semester," Francis said. "She truly loves her patients and has kept her compassion. After going through it as a student, I would absolutely jump at the opportunity to be a preceptor. Being one of those lights for students and future advanced practice providers, the way Morgan was for me, is something I want to do."

# MIZZOU NURSES for MIZZOU NURSES

The Sinclair School of Nursing is reaching out to our dedicated Mizzou Nursing alumni to help meet a growing need for clinical preceptors for our graduate students.

To those already serving as preceptors — **thank you.** Your commitment to mentoring the next generation of Mizzou Nurses makes a meaningful difference every day.

It's become increasingly difficult for students to find qualified, willing graduate clinical preceptors. Some even pay high fees for experiences that fall short of standards. To address this, we're building a stronger, more accessible network of experienced preceptors who understand Mizzou Nursing's rigor and the value of mentorship.

By opening your practice to a student, you help carry forward the school's proud legacy of academic excellence, ensuring that Mizzou Nurses continue to lead, teach and care for generations to come.

## WHY IT MATTERS

**Advance the Profession:** Help develop skilled, confident compassionate nurses ready to serve diverse communities.

**Elevate Mizzou Nursing:** Expand Mizzou's impact on health care across the nation and beyond.

**Bridge the Gap:** Turn classroom learning into hands-on, patient-centered care.

**Grow Professionally:** Enhance your leadership and teaching skills, with recognition and potential recertification credit.

## MENTORSHIP IN MOTION

When **Faith Cordle, BSN '02, MS(N) '07**, agreed to precept a Mizzou Nursing DNP student at her St. Luke's practice in Kansas City, where they both live, she didn't realize she'd be investing in her own team's future. During **Colleen Allen's (BSN '17, DNP '25)** clinical rotation, Cordle guided her through complex cases, saw her confidence grow and recognized the exceptional preparation Mizzou Nursing provides. By the time Allen completed her program to graduate, Cordle encouraged her to apply for an open position. Now, the two work side by side delivering a powerful example of "Mizzou Nurses for Mizzou Nurses" and how mentorship can come full circle.

Cordle and Allen's success demonstrates the impact of mentorship within the Mizzou Nursing community.

**Interested in becoming a preceptor?** Use the QR Code to fill out a simple inquiry form or contact **Miriam Butler** at **butlermd@missouri.edu** for questions.



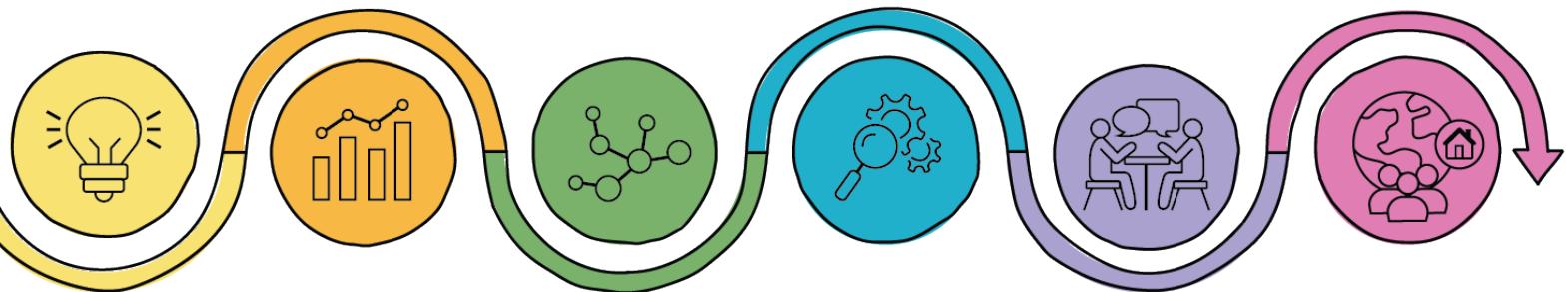
## FACULTY AWARDS



**Professor Anne Sales** has been selected to join the prestigious Fulbright Scholar Program and become part of the global network of scholars who create international partnerships with host universities through their research and teaching. She will travel in January to teach implementation science in South Africa, Zambia and Malaysia.



**Associate Professor Kimberly Powell** received the 2025 Provost Outstanding Junior Faculty Research and Creative Activity Award. This campus-wide honor recognizes faculty in the early phases of their career for their exceptional commitment to research and creative work.



## WHERE EVIDENCE MEETS IMPACT

Written by Dale Smith

Across popular culture and clinics nationwide, good nurses are known for their emotional intelligence. An important quality? Yes. But far from the whole story, says Lori Popejoy, dean of the Sinclair School of Nursing. "Nurses have been inadvertently diminished by the narrative of caring as the only function of nursing. We are educated in the sciences to have a broad understanding of what patients need. Nurses give care, and we do so in competent, evidence-based ways to foster good outcomes." The outcomes she seeks are not only for patients but also for communities and health systems. "The evidence guiding our work comes from research."

Popejoy is proud to lead the school at a time when professions and institutions alike are called upon to demonstrate their value to society and make the case for public support. "Nursing is the largest health care discipline," she says. "Even as America faces shortages of physicians and other providers, we are widely distributed and uniquely qualified to deliver health care to people wherever they are, whether in rural or urban areas, in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes or community settings."

Popejoy points to the work of faculty member Alisha Johnson, assistant professor of nursing whose research documents the contributions of the profession at the level of advanced practice nurses (APRNs). In a recent national study of a variety of health outcomes, Johnson and her collaborators found that states whose laws grant APRNs full practice authority were on average 16 to 18 places higher in the Commonwealth Health rankings than those whose laws limit their practice scope. The math is simple, Johnson says. With APRNs providing more services in full-practice states, patients have better access to care — care she has seen make the difference between well controlled diabetes or losing a limb. APRNs provide safe and effective care, yet only 27 states allow them to practice to the full extent of their training. Other states, including Missouri, require APRNs to collaborate with physicians, which limits where and how they practice.

The school will take a big step in 2026 by opening an APRN-run clinic in Holt's Summit in rural Callaway County. APRNs — nursing faculty and students — will treat patients in this underserved area. "We are collaborating with emergency physicians at Mizzou to provide support for the clinic according to Missouri statute," Popejoy says. Stay tuned for more news as the clinic develops. In the meantime, the school is conducting a wide range of research benefiting not only individual patients but also health systems and communities.

### Building trust through community partnership

Potter-Brinton Distinguished Professor of Nursing Maithe Enriquez, has always tapped into the knowledge and influence of local leaders and lay persons while building community programs for chronic diseases, including hypertension in the Dominican Republic and HIV in the Kansas City area.

Along the way, Enriquez has learned the risks of "talking at" patients. "Putting out pamphlets, posters and billboards with data just doesn't speak to everyone," she says. "But if people trust a public health professional, whether it be a nurse or physician or someone else, they will listen. I'm very community-oriented. I feel that's what works."

Her current research studies in Jackson and Cass counties deal with the epidemic of type II diabetes mellitus among under-resourced Hispanic people with low acculturation scores. For the past two years she has been on the ground building relationships with churches, schools and other organizations to give screenings. In a current study, bicultural nurses and community health workers (promotores) lead discussions with patients individually or in small groups to get their take on key questions. What are their priorities for optimal wellness (*viviendo bien*)?

What are top health needs and barriers to meeting them? How do these problems affect people and what can be done to help?

"People are telling us they'd like to have family-centered programs," Enriquez says. "It's not enough to hear from the doctor about eating healthy. When the patient goes home, they need certain foods, but other family members are eating differently. They want tools and strategies to meet their goals."

With discussion group information in hand, Enriquez works alongside a board of community leaders to chart a research program that deals with the issues. Her long game is to enlist the support of local, regional and state organizations to tackle the problem sustainably. Enriquez notes that it typically takes as much as 17 years for ideas to percolate from professional journals into widespread practice. But by working as partners with community members, she hopes people can receive those benefits in real time and that the work will translate to other groups.

#### **From crisis to clarity: preparing for the next epidemic**

"Nursing homes were ground zero for COVID-19," says Helen E. Nahm Endowed Chair and nursing Professor Amy Vogelsmeier, MS(N) '97, PhD '08. As the pandemic unfolded, nursing homes had to track and react to rapidly changing guidelines while developing strategies for visitor restrictions, isolation requirements, personal protective equipment, staffing and much more. The learning curve was steep and the stakes high. As of 2023, the death toll from COVID-19 among nursing home residents was more than 200,000.



Deidre Wipke-Tewis, Lori Popejoy and Amy Vogelsmeier at the Mizzou Alumni Associations Faculty Awards ceremony.

Vogelsmeier and Popejoy set out to explore how 24 diverse nursing homes across Missouri navigated a once-in-a-century pandemic. First they interviewed staff, leadership, residents and family members about how they responded to COVID-19's challenges. Nearly all the homes followed federal guidelines for things like detecting COVID-19, but differences showed up in other ways. Corporate homes benefitted from established networks for sharing information, staff and supplies. "Rural homes, on the other hand, were left to their own devices," Vogelsmeier says. "They had to connect to community agencies, local health departments and statewide resources. As an example, sometimes fire departments were getting personal protective equipment (PPE) but nursing homes weren't, so they worked out ways of sharing supplies."

Next, the team gathered standardized assessment data for residents at the 24 homes to learn how each facility's response to COVID-19 affected residents' clinical, functional and psychosocial outcomes. Then, they looked for relationships between the outcomes and nursing homes' practices to discover which approaches worked best. In the final step now underway, a national panel of experts is reviewing and recommending updates to current guidelines to help homes better respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

As the panel refines nearly a hundred recommendations on topics ranging from how homes acquire and deploy PPE to how they communicate with staff and residents, a few points already seem clear. Standalone nursing homes should form lasting relationships with other local homes and hospitals to be better positioned to support themselves (and

other facilities). The study also noted the need for multiagency collaboration regionally that not only could improve emergency response but also build in nursing homes as an integral part of the health care continuum.

#### **Advancing independence through connected innovation**

Promising results from an ongoing demonstration study project suggest that, with the right kinds of help, some older adults at high risk of entering a nursing home could instead maintain the quality of life and lower expenses of living in their own places. Age-friendly Sustainable Smart and Equitable Technologies for Aging in Place (ASSETs for AIP) combines technology and nursing care coordination to help older adults remain independent, Popejoy says.

Clients are Missourians aged 63 or older or adults who are physically disabled. A multidisciplinary team of a nurse, social worker and occupational therapist assesses what clients need to live independently. "There's a \$2,000 budget for home modifications or safety improvements. Typically, a handy worker installs items such as grab bars and ADA-compliant ramps," says Elizabeth Curtis, BSN '17, a nurse who coordinates the study.

The technology consists not only of smart watches but also movement sensors in key areas — bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living area, says informatics expert Blaine Reeder, associate professor of nursing. The instruments stream data about heart rate and clients' location in the home. The data arrives at Mizzou, where a clinical team monitors activity patterns looking for changes that may flag emerging health problems.

A participant who remains in the bathroom longer than usual may have fallen, or a heart-rate spike could point out the need to consult a physician, Curtis says. "Rather than direct care or case management, we do a lot of coaching, including connecting clients with services. And we follow up to see that they keep their doctors appointments," she says.

The study's technology is a low-cost, home-based version of technology that complements earlier research pioneered by nursing Curators' Professor Emerita Marilyn Rantz in a unique aging-in-place institutional setting called TigerPlace, Reeder says. The sensors ASSETs for AIP use cost \$50 each and work on open-source software. The whole setup totals just \$400 per home and is as reliable as anything on the market, he says.

For this population, success means maintaining independence, and the study has helped clients acquire help they need, in areas such as reaching weight loss goals, developing strategies to

communicate with health care providers, and home modifications for safety. Coupling that coaching with remote monitoring has allowed clients to continue living where and how they choose.

#### **Translating evidence into everyday care**

Nurses' unique roles and skills run throughout the school's research. "We are the glue," Popejoy says. "We are the providers who never go home, the ones who go to patients wherever they are — in homes or hospitals or communities — and walk with them on their journey. We listen to their fears and worries, translate their medical care and help them understand how to take the next step. Because we are such a large part of the workforce, we wind up carrying a big load."



Photo by Adobe Stock



Photo by Adobe Stock

**At the Sinclair School of Nursing, the Essig Undergraduate Nursing Research Mentorship is a thriving example of how hands-on research alongside a faculty mentor can ignite a passion in new nursing scientists shaping their academic trajectories and broadening the landscape of health care research.**



## BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE NURSING SCIENTISTS

Written by Anissa Lockett // Pictured above, Abby Roessler, Essig Fellow

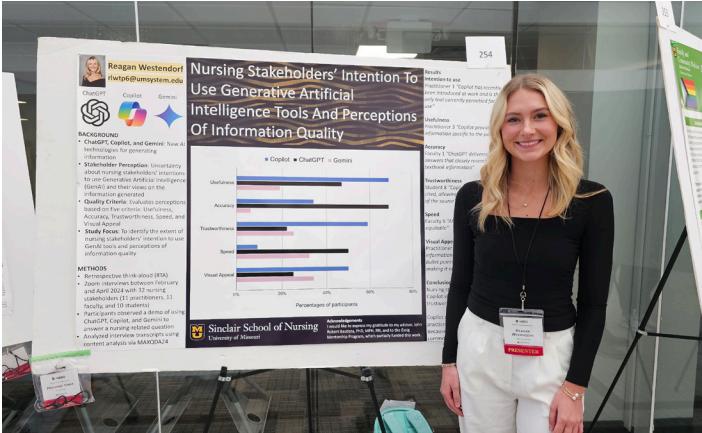
The Ann Crowe Essig Undergraduate Nursing Research Mentorship is a thriving research opportunity at the Sinclair School of Nursing. Established by Dr. LeRoy Essig and the Essig family, this program fosters undergraduate research engagement, encouraging students to contribute to impactful nursing research while preparing for their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). By providing hands-on research experience, the Essig Research Mentorship shapes the academic trajectories of students, known as Essig Fellows, strengthens their pathways to PhD nursing programs and enhances the broader landscape of health care research. This type of undergraduate research opportunity is a distinctive benefit of Mizzou's status as a research-intensive university, offering experiences not commonly available at all nursing schools.

### Empowering students through research and mentorship

The Essig Research Mentorship offers students an opportunity to participate in ongoing faculty-led research, developing critical thinking, analytical skills and scientific curiosity. Through structured mentorship, students gain first-hand experience in research methodologies, data collection and literature analysis, culminating in an oral or poster presentation at a campus research event or a regional research conference.

As a freshman, Abby Roessler's interest in research was sparked during a first semester pre-nursing class taught by Associate Teaching Professor LeeAnne Sherwin. As an Essig Fellow working with Assistant Professor Knoo Lee on his Remote Sensing for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) Specific Activities Identification in Older Adults study, Roessler is diving deep into hands-on research.

"I've learned so much through this experience already," she shared. "It is out-of-the-box thinking that will help everyday issues that could change the life of a patient living at home and the role of the caregiver." Her role involves scheduling participants and conducting interviews for her own research on caregiver daily activities, which will culminate in a poster



Essig Fellow Reagan Westendorf presenting at the 2024 Health Science Research Day.

Along the way, Lee has taught Roessler how to write an abstract and connected her with past Essig Fellows who have also offered guidance. The Essig Research Mentorship has broadened her perspective on nursing, even inspiring her to consider graduate school or teaching in the future.

"I have seen so many different ways a nurse can make an impact," Roessler reflected. The experience has been so meaningful that Roessler has encouraged her peers to get involved. "I have already recommended this program to several of my classmates, and I think eight are applying for next year."

LeeAnne Sherwin is the coordinator for both the undergraduate research and honors programs. She reflects on the program's impact and adds to Abby's perspective of the mentorship.

"This experience not only provides students with a solid foundation for their clinical studies but, more importantly, it underscores the significance of nursing research and its potential to positively transform the entire health care system."



Photos of Laura Remy with fellow students and Dean Judith Fitzgerald Miller from the 2012 Mizzou Nursing magazine.

### Strengthening nursing PhD pathways

Undergraduate research is a crucial steppingstone for students interested in pursuing doctoral education in nursing. Early exposure to research fosters a deep understanding of evidence-based practice and fuels a passion for scientific inquiry.

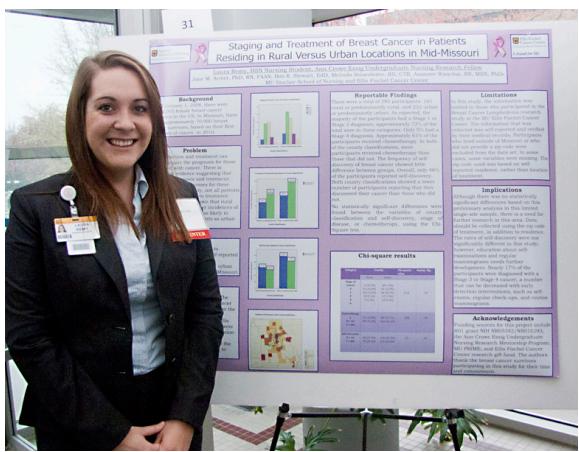
Deidre Wipke-Tewis, associate dean of research and PhD director, highlights the critical role of early research experiences.

"Engaging undergraduate students in research not only sharpens their critical thinking and problem-solving skills but also fosters a deep appreciation for the impact of nursing research. These formative experiences are essential in inspiring students to pursue PhD education, where they can drive innovation through research to advance evidence-based practice and improve patient outcomes and health care systems. Moreover, involving undergraduate students in faculty research creates a rich learning environment that mutually benefits both the students and faculty."

For Laura Remy-Martin, BSN '12, MPH '17, PhD '20, the journey from undergraduate Essig Fellow to award-winning nurse scientist represents a full circle moment in her career. What began in 2012 under the mentorship of Jane Armer, PhD, RN, FAAN, as a way to explore her natural curiosity has grown into a lifelong commitment to advancing health care through research.

After years of bedside work in the ICU and NICU, Remy-Martin pursued graduate education, ultimately earning her PhD in nursing and rising to a director of clinical research role in a national health care organization, where nurse scientists are highly valued. "That early exposure to research gave me the confidence to keep asking questions and to see the bigger picture beyond the bedside," she reflected. "Now, I love helping novice researchers learn to ask the right questions and always bring the patient experience to the forefront. Every single patient is having an experience we can make better."

In recognition of her leadership and impact, she received the 2025 Spirit of Martha Award from the Mizzou Alumni Association Griffiths Leadership Society, demonstrating how undergraduate research lays the foundation for meaningful contributions to health and policy.

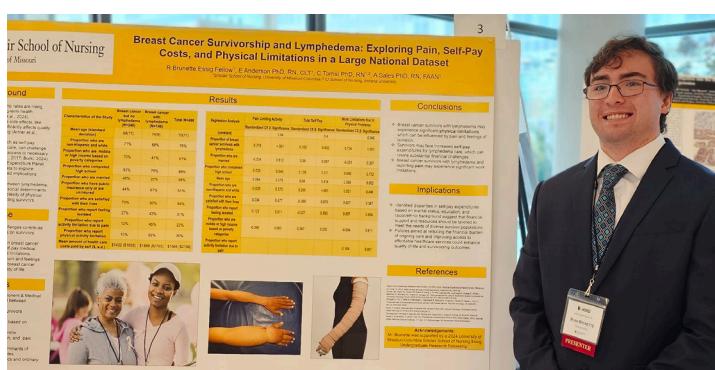


### Contributing to health care research and innovation

The impact of the Essig Research Mentorship extends beyond student development — it also enriches health care research and practice. Participants actively contribute to projects addressing real-world clinical challenges, enhancing patient care through evidence-based findings.

Ryan Burnette, a current eighth-semester student, shares the mentorship's impact on his education and future. "The Essig Fellowship has played a crucial role in preparing me for my future nursing career by allowing me to see firsthand how research informs nursing practice. The exposure to research methodologies, as well as the opportunity to work alongside experienced faculty members, has helped me build a solid foundation in evidence-based practice. I've also developed a greater understanding of how critical research is in advancing the profession and improving patient outcomes" Burnette said.

Burnette credits the program with enhancing his critical thinking and preparing him for a career in NICU or CTICU nursing, with the possibility of furthering his education. Lori Popejoy, dean and professor, underscores the importance of nursing research in advancing health care. "Nursing research is vital to improving patient outcomes and shaping the future of health care. Programs like the Essig Research Mentorship ensure that the next generation of nurses are not only skilled clinicians but also contributors to the scientific foundation of nursing practice."



Essig Fellow Ryan Burnette presenting at the 2024 Health Science Research Day.

## 2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS - NURSING ALUMNI ORGANIZATION (NAO)



Ann Crowe Essig on her graduation day from the School of Nursing in 1971.



Ann Crowe Essig and her husband, Dr. LeRoy Essig on Ann's graduation day.

### The legacy of Ann Crowe Essig lives on to help nursing students



precision and care, ensuring that cancer patients received the highest quality treatment in a compassionate environment.

In honor of Ann's passion for nursing and her commitment to patient care, Dr. LeRoy Essig, who completed his residency at MU School of Medicine, and their children have made lasting contributions to the Sinclair School of Nursing. In addition to establishing the Ann Crowe Essig

Undergraduate Nursing Research Mentorship, the Essig family has supported numerous initiatives that enhance nursing education and research.

In 2007, the family named the Ann Crowe Essig Nursing Auditorium, creating a space dedicated to student learning and professional development. The auditorium, which was located in the previous School of Nursing building, served as a tribute to Ann's belief in the power of education and its role in shaping future generations of nurses.

Their generosity also extended to clinical education with contributions to the school's simulation center, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in a controlled learning environment. The Essig Clinical Simulation Learning Center and advanced high-fidelity simulation equipment provided students with critical training tools to prepare them for complex patient care scenarios.

Through these contributions, the Essig family has ensured that Ann's legacy continues to impact nursing students, fostering their growth as researchers, clinicians and leaders in health care. Their support has strengthened nursing education at Mizzou, inspiring students to pursue excellence in patient care and scientific discovery.

### Annette Lueckenotte, BSN '72

#### Alumni Citation Of Merit

Annette Lueckenotte, BSN '72, exemplifies the highest standards of nursing excellence. With an illustrious career spanning nearly five decades, Lueckenotte has emerged as a national authority in gerontological nursing. Her groundbreaking publications, including *Gerontologic Nursing* and *Pocket Guide to Gerontologic Assessment*, have garnered multiple American Journal of Nursing Book of the Year awards, cementing her legacy as a leader in elder care. Through her work as a clinical nurse specialist and nurse practitioner, Lueckenotte has addressed the physical, mental and social complexities of aging with compassion, expertise and innovation, significantly advancing the nursing profession.

Lueckenotte's influence extends beyond direct care through her leadership in groundbreaking initiatives. As project supervisor for the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes, she championed efforts to enhance care for older adults, overseeing 17 advanced practice registered nurses across 16 nursing homes in St. Louis. Her work directly contributed to reducing avoidable hospitalizations, improving outcomes for thousands of residents. Lueckenotte's ability to navigate complex care systems while mentoring and coaching her team reflects her dedication to both the profession and the well-being of older adults. Her visionary approach has set new benchmarks for quality care in nursing homes. A passionate advocate for nursing education, Lueckenotte has shaped the next generation of nursing professionals through her roles as an assistant clinical professor and preceptor for graduate students. By integrating evidence-based practices into clinical education, she has influenced countless students



and practitioners, particularly in gerontological nursing. Her publications and mentorship have served as invaluable resources for graduate students and clinical nurse specialists, fostering their growth and inspiring excellence in elder care. Lueckenotte's commitment to lifelong learning has made an impact on the nursing profession and helped shape its future leaders.

Lueckenotte's commitment to nursing is evident in her extensive contributions to professional organizations, research and volunteer service. As a member of the Sinclair School of Nursing Alumni Organization, she has generously given her time and expertise to support the school's mission and foster connections among alumni. Her advocacy for evidence-based practice, mentorship, and community engagement demonstrates the core values of the Sinclair School of Nursing. Lueckenotte's work has touched the lives of countless individuals — nurses, health care professionals, older adults and their families alike — leaving a legacy of excellence and compassion in the field of nursing.

*Thanks to the solid foundation I received in nursing from this remarkable school, I gained the courage and confidence to keep aiming high. This preparation set the stage for a successful and fulfilling career. I am humbly honored by this recognition, but none of my achievements would have been possible without the guidance, encouragement and support from many individuals who believed in me and helped me along the way.*  
-Annette Lueckenotte



### Carole Schrumpf Dabbs, BSN '70

#### Humanitarian of the Year

Dr. Carole Schrumpf Dabbs, BSN '70, has made a lifelong commitment to serving vulnerable populations and advancing the field of nursing. A distinguished educator and leader, she has dedicated her career to equipping future nurses with the skills and compassion needed to provide quality care. From her early work at the Perry County Nursing Home,

where she ensured compliance with state standards, to her role as director of Allied Health at East Central College, where she developed pioneering programs like the Missouri LPN/ADN Bridge Course, Dabbs has consistently demonstrated her devotion to uplifting communities and nurturing the next generation of health care professionals.

Dabbs' impact extends far beyond the classroom. She volunteered at a group home for girls in Alabama, teaching crafts for a decade and fostering creativity and resilience among residents. Her work with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Shoals highlights her dedication to improving the lives of individuals with mental illness and supporting their families. In response to declining attendance at NAMI Shoals' educational

programs, Dabbs developed a PowerPoint presentation detailing the organization's services, programs and referral process. She delivered this presentation to personnel in home health agencies across the region, directly increasing outreach and awareness. Additionally, she created a comprehensive procedure manual to support the organization's operations. In recognition of these significant contributions, she was honored with the Volunteer of the Year Award from NAMI Shoals.

Her service also includes extensive church volunteer work, teaching and nurturing connections within her community. Dabbs' remarkable career is rooted in a passion for nursing education and innovation. She led the development of the first RN program at East Central College, celebrating the graduation of more than 700 students during its first 30 years. Her academic achievements, including her dissertation about integration of research findings into nursing curricula, and numerous accolades, such as the Outstanding Educator Award, underscore her contributions to the profession. ▶

In recognition of her contributions, Dabbs has received several prestigious awards. In 2015, she was honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Perryville High School in Perryville, Mo. Additionally, in 1986, she received an award from the Missouri Council of Associate Degree Nursing Programs in "recognition of her outstanding contributions to nursing education" and the Outstanding Educator Award from the Missouri State Association of Health Occupational Educators.

A proud alumna of the University of Missouri School of Nursing, Dabbs remains connected to her alma mater, reflecting on the foundation it provided for her exceptional career. Her achievements resonate with the school's mission to foster excellence and compassion in nursing.



### **Melissa Wilson, PhD '16**

#### **Alumni Of The Year**

Dr. Melissa Wilson, PhD '16, is a trailblazer in nursing. Currently serving as a nurse scientist at Mayo Clinic's Department of Nursing, her research experience spans a vast array of topics such as moral distress, acute pain management, the use of health technologies and the role of Advance Practice Registered Nurses. She was awarded a U.S. Patent and two invention disclosures for health care technology used in military health care systems. Her work has had a significant impact on health care delivery, particularly through her research to establish moral distress as an experience in military health care providers and the development of innovative technologies to support patients and providers in the transport of injured military members. These contributions, along with her extensive publications and leadership in nursing ethics, have earned her national and international recognition.

Wilson's dedication to education and mentorship represents her commitment to shaping the future of nursing. Having served as a chair of nursing, associate director and many other faculty roles in her years in nursing education, she led efforts to deliver accessible, high-quality academic programs, often to underserved areas of need. Her visionary leadership and



### **Jessica Hoehne, BSN '11, MS(N) '17, DNP '23**

#### **Alumni Achievement**

Dr. Jessica Hoehne BSN '11, MS(N) '17, DNP '23, represents the highest standards of nursing leadership and service, making her an ideal recipient of the Nursing Alumni Achievement Award. A three-time graduate of the University of Missouri's Sinclair School of Nursing, Hoehne has consistently demonstrated a commitment to advancing the nursing profession.

Her achievements as a clinical manager of the neuroscience service line at MU Health Care include spearheading a unit expansion and leading her teams to remarkable improvements in employee engagement, patient satisfaction and retention rates. Her leadership has not only enhanced operational success but also solidified the reputation of MU Health Care as a hub of innovative and compassionate care. She currently serves as the director of nursing with the Office of Professional

Through her work, she has not only transformed the lives of countless patients and families but also inspired students and colleagues to carry forward the values of care, knowledge and service.

In addition to her professional endeavors, Dabbs has made significant contributions to her church community, playing an instrumental role in establishing a Welcome Center, campus signage and a congregational-wide Evangelism Program.

Dabbs' dedication to service, education and advocacy exemplifies the true spirit of humanitarianism, leaving a legacy that continues to uplift individuals, communities and the nursing profession as a whole.

collaborative spirit have inspired students and colleagues, fostering a culture of excellence in both academic and clinical settings.

Her impact extends beyond her academic and research roles. She continues to mentor and guide others with compassion and professionalism through her service as a research mentor at Mayo Clinic, involvement in both professional and personal organizations and through service to her community.

Over the course of four years, Wilson, along with her husband and children, fostered 10 children — mostly teenagers — impacted by the opiate epidemic in their rural hometown. They have maintained many of these relationships even after the children were permanently placed elsewhere. She and her family continue to advocate for the needs of children in the system who have experienced disruption and trauma.

A proud School of Nursing alumna, Wilson remains deeply connected to her alma mater. Through her ongoing support and achievements, she has elevated the school's reputation and inspired generations of nurses. Her exemplary career embodies the values of leadership, innovation and integrity, making her a deserving honoree and a shining example for the nursing community.

Practice at MU Health Care, where she continues to advance nursing excellence and professional development.

Throughout her career, Hoehne has shown a dedication to mentoring and supporting the next generation of nurses. As an adjunct clinical instructor at the Sinclair School of Nursing, she cultivated a learning environment that encouraged her students to embrace evidence-based practices and clinical excellence. Her DNP project on formalizing a mentorship program for new graduate nurses has had far-reaching impact,

*I became a nurse because when I was 16, I was the patient. I had a nurse who made a personal connection with me. She took the time to explain to me who nurses are and what they do. That experience changed my life. I have often reflected on it over the years. As nurses, we shouldn't underestimate the impact we make on human connections.*  
-Jessica Hoehne

earning national recognition through multiple podium and poster presentations and a publication. This work underscores her ability to translate research into practice, strengthening both patient outcomes and professional development within the nursing community. Hoehne's engagement extends beyond her workplace and into the broader nursing profession. Her active involvement in Sigma Theta Tau's Alpha Iota Chapter, Missouri Nurses Association and other professional organizations demonstrates her commitment to promoting leadership and scholarship in nursing. Additionally, her participation in initiatives like the Activity and Mobility Project



### **Rebecca Graves**

#### **Honorary Alumni**

Rebecca Graves enhances nursing education and elevates the reputation of the Sinclair School of Nursing in her dedication and support of our students and faculty. As an educational services librarian at the J. Otto Lottes Health Sciences Library, she has contributed significantly through literature searches,

systematic reviews and instructional workshops that bolster nursing research and education. Her collaborative efforts, including partnerships with nursing faculty on critical projects such as best practices for managing COVID-19 in nursing homes, demonstrate her steadfast commitment to advancing nursing science.

Graves' influence extends beyond research support. Her engaging teaching style empowers countless nursing students, particularly those returning to academia for advanced degrees. By simplifying complex research and writing processes, she fosters confidence and capability among students navigating doctoral programs. Graves regularly presents to nursing classes at all levels and provides individualized guidance, ensuring that students and faculty alike thrive in their academic and professional pursuits.



### **Brian Neuner**

#### **Distinguished Friend of the School**

Brian Neuner is a proud 1988 graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism who has devoted his career to philanthropy and service. As chief development officer for Special Olympics Missouri, he champions inclusivity and community support. Inspired by his wife of 35 years, Candy Neuner, BSN '99, a dedicated nurse and advocate for children at MU Health Care, he has a deep appreciation for the impact of nursing and health care.

Neuner's passion for building meaningful relationships has been the driving force throughout his career — whether as a television sports director, business leader or nonprofit advocate. His ability to connect with individuals across diverse backgrounds has fueled his commitment to philanthropy, helping raise significant funds for causes in health care, education and community development.

While serving on the Dean's External Advisory Council from 2009 to 2013, he co-founded the Dean's Dinner with Richard Miller, an event designed to introduce influential community leaders to the school's mission and expand its reach. His leadership and advocacy have helped strengthen the school's visibility and support.

highlights her role as a leader in driving interdisciplinary improvements that enhance patient safety and quality of care.

Her dedication to community service, including mentoring bachelor, masters and doctorate level students, further emphasizes her commitment to making a difference in others' lives. With a career marked by leadership, education and service, Hoehne continues to uplift the profession and inspire those around her. Her accomplishments reflect the core values of the Sinclair School of Nursing and affirm the powerful role nurses play in transforming health care and communities.

Graves' professional achievements and honors further underscore her remarkable impact. From leading grant-funded initiatives to earning recognition for her contributions to evidence-based practice, she consistently demonstrates excellence and innovation. Her role in enhancing the "Cycle of Success" at the university exemplifies the vital connections she nurtures between libraries, faculty, and students, driving forward-thinking research and academic achievement.

Graves' meaningful support of the Sinclair School of Nursing and her dedication to the nursing profession make her a deserving recipient of the Honorary Alumni Award. Her contributions have left an indelible mark on the school, its students and the broader academic community.

*I find it rewarding to work with the students. I get to show them the resources and steps to find the information they need to complete their assignments. I also get to hear their passion, see the spark when ideas click, and to see the frustration drain away when they master an assignment - or simply get through it to the other side. I also have the great fortune to work with faculty who were once our students.*  
-Rebecca Graves



## **HELP US CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE IN NURSING**

Honor a deserving Mizzou Nursing Alumni for an NAO Alumni Award at [nursing.missouri.edu](http://nursing.missouri.edu) or scan the QR code.



### Golden Quill Honors Global Nursing Leader

Sinclair School of Nursing alumna Wanona "Winnie" Fritz, BSN '68, received the Golden Quill Award at this year's Jefferson Club Annual Dinner. A decorated U.S. Army nurse and pilot, Fritz has led health care initiatives in 24 countries and serves as chief operations officer and senior vice president at HCCA Management Co. in Nashville. Winnie's distinguished military career has earned numerous commendations, including the Bronze Star Medal. Mizzou and the Sinclair School of Nursing have also honored her with multiple awards recognizing her leadership and service.

### Honored for a Lifetime of Service

Donna Otto, BSN '72, MS(N) '81, was recognized with a formal resolution from the Missouri House of Representatives for her exceptional service to the nursing profession. Presented by Rep. Gregg Bush on May 15, the resolution honors Otto's decades of leadership, dedication and impact in advancing nursing across Missouri and beyond.

After serving as a faculty member for many years, Otto went on to serve the Sinclair School of Nursing as director of alumni relations and continued as the faculty advisor for the Student Nurses' Association, supporting and mentoring future nurses. She retired at the end of May, leaving a legacy of connection, mentorship and service.

### Honoring a Legacy of Leadership and Advocacy

The University of Missouri awarded Harriett Copher Haynes, BSN '63, an honorary doctorate, its highest form of recognition, honoring her exceptional service and impact on mental health and education. A distinguished psychologist, educator and advocate, Haynes earned her nursing degree from Mizzou before completing a master's in public health and a doctorate in counseling psychology at the University of Minnesota, where she served for more than 40 years.

As director of Counseling and Consulting Services for 15 of those years, she led initiatives supporting 40,000 students and advanced national mental health efforts through the Minnesota Psychological Association and the Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors, which named a mentoring award in her honor.



## GRIFFITHS LEADERSHIP SOCIETY AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to Sinclair School of Nursing alumni earning these prestigious awards from the Mizzou Alumni Association Griffiths Leadership Society. Each year, the society honors outstanding Mizzou women who exemplify service and leadership. These inspiring women continue to make a difference in their fields and communities. Join us in celebrating their achievements as proud Mizzou Nurses!



### SPIRIT OF MARTHA AWARD

**LAURA REMY-MARTIN, BSN '12, MPH '17, PhD '20**



### EMERGING LEADER AWARD

**LAUREN SMITH, BSN '14**

# 2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS BANQUET AWARDS CEREMONY REVIEW



### 2025 STUDENT AWARDS

7th Semester Student Award for Excellence — Ana Meyers  
8th Semester Student Award for Excellence — Kaylee Gay  
Accelerated Student Award for Excellence — Regina Froeliger  
RN-BSN Student Award for Excellence — Dominique Cartee  
MS(N) Student Award for Excellence — Sethariah Windsor  
DNP Student Award for Excellence — Evangelyn Arinze  
PhD Student Award for Excellence — Arthur Zacharjasz

### 2025 FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

Staff Award for Excellence — Kayla Klein  
Faculty Award for Excellence in Research — Alisha Johnson  
Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching — Nancy Birtley  
Betty Crim Faculty Enhancement Award — Kim Oeth

CHECK OUT ALL OF THE PHOTOS AT  
[flickr.com/photos/sinclartigers/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/sinclartigers/albums)



## 2026 SINCLAIR SCHOOL OF NURSING ANNUAL AWARDS AND ALUMNI WEEKEND

**AWARDS AND INDUCTION | FRIDAY, APRIL 24 | 5:30 P.M.  
ALUMNI REUNION | SATURDAY, APRIL 25 | 8:30 A.M. - 2 P.M.**

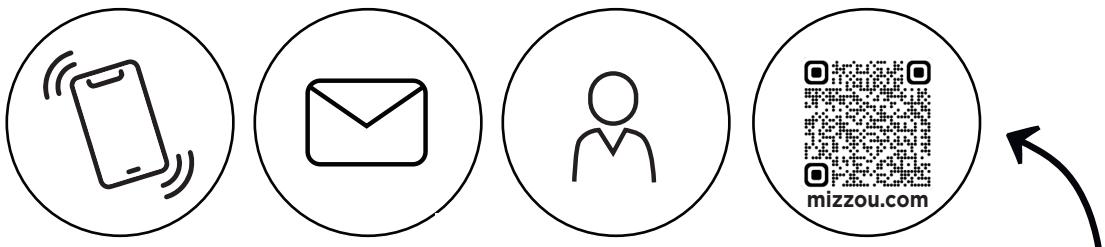
On Friday we will be honoring our 2026 alumni award winners, announcing our student, faculty and staff awards and inducting new annual and elevating Nightingale Gift Society members. Saturday will be a day to reconnect, reflect and explore at the alumni reunion.

Keep an eye out for registration opening in early 2026.

University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65211

# CALLING ALL ALUMNI!

**Time to update your info!**



Sinclair School of Nursing is asking all alumni to scan this QR code to update information in our system. **It's quick and easy!**