



OU leading nursing renaissance



Dr. Melissa Craft and OU student Romalace Jenkins serve at a community vaccination clinic.

As Covid-19 threatened nursing education in 2020, the collective minds at the University of Oklahoma Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing decided to use the historic event as a learning tool.

From collecting Covid-19 swabs to administering vaccinations, OU's College of Nursing found a way for students to not only learn but be a part of the solution throughout the pandemic.

"Ever since last fall I've been talking about the clinical renaissance we can be a part of in nursing," said Senior Associate Dean Melissa Craft, PhD, APRN-CNS, AOCN, FAAN. "After the last great plague in the Middle Ages, there was a renaissance. My point all along has been how best to positively use this experience for the betterment of patients and for us as nurses."

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*As featured in
Oklahoma's
Education Guide for
Nursing 2021 edition*



Introducing INTEGRIS Health University

*A Nursing Program offered
in partnership with Oklahoma
Christian University*



If you've ever considered being a nurse, you'll want to hear about this new program. INTEGRIS Health University powered by INTEGRIS Health and Oklahoma Christian University, is the result of an innovative academic partnership designed to increase the available pipeline of nurses.

There has been a nursing shortage in the United States, including Oklahoma, for

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The focus has not only been on students simply emerging from the pandemic but flourishing, armed with experience and a new set of skills.

From a nursing education standpoint, the pandemic has taught a number of lessons.

“Going back to Florence Nightingale, formalized nursing was birthed because of a war and nurses’ responses in stepping into that situation,” said Craft. “Florence Nightingale was a scientist, she was an advocate for social justice, a leader in healthcare management, and at the core, she was dedicated to individual flourishing.

“To me (what the pandemic) has taught us as a college is what we do as nurses is infinitely needed. What the pandemic has taught everyone is the knowledge and skill of nursing as scientists, as advocates, as leaders in healthcare management, and at their core, dedicated to human flourishing is incredibly essential in our

society.”

The pandemic not only validated to Craft that what is currently being done to prepare nurses for their profession needs to continue, but it also allowed introspection and an opportunity to revisit if the profession is doing everything it can as a science and advocate for social justice.

The pandemic also served to further highlight the underlying disparities in our healthcare system.

“As nurses, as nursing students, and as a college we can’t be blind to that,” Craft said. “We really have to look at it as an opportunity. Again it’s the renaissance which was all about going back into learning, wisdom, discovery and exploration.”

As in-person nursing education ground to a halt around the country, the OU College of Nursing sought out opportunities to engage students and help them learn during these unprecedented times.

One of those opportunities came out of the Swab Pods, where students staffed Covid-19 testing

stations in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

The students loved it, especially in a time where they were taken out of face-to-face classroom and the clinical learning settings.

“The core of what nurses do is they lean into situations,” Craft said. “It’s like firefighters run into a burning building, nurses run into taking care of people. When we started looking at (the swab pods) it was clinical, it was community and reaching out to where our community needs us. It was sort of a rethinking of what it does mean to do clinical work. It doesn’t all have to happen in an acute care setting. In fact, we need to recognize that “the majority of patients’ lives don’t occur in an acute-care setting.” Therefore we need to be where the patients are and our students need to learn where the patients are.

The university also leveraged its partnerships with OU Health as well as the Oklahoma City County Health Department and the Oklahoma City VA Health Care System to identify other student




Dr. Melissa Craft is helping lead the OU College of Nursing’s education renaissance.

learning opportunities.

“What we’ve done as a college is to look at every opportunity not to continue what we’ve always done but ascertain what the OU College of Nursing can do now to make a difference,” she said.

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INTEGRIS

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many years – long before the existence of COVID-19. One thing the pandemic has certainly shown us, is that nurses are the backbone of the medical profession and we desperately need more of them.

INTEGRIS Health University creates flexibility for candidates by allowing them to work in a hospital setting while receiving their necessary credits. It uses a transformational nursing education model that is moving away from traditional education to a more blended approach with hands-on learning and online instruction.

The Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) to Registered Nurse (RN) program is open to CNAs and non-CNAs alike, meaning you do not have to be a CNA

to participate. In fact, if a candidate is not already a CNA, INTEGRIS Health will pay for that candidate to become one through partnerships with several different vocational schools.

"INTEGRIS Health is eager to partner with academic institutions across the state to begin strategically transforming the future of nursing for Oklahoma," says Kerri Bayer, the chief nurse executive at INTEGRIS Health. "It is through intentional effort that we will begin establishing pathways into the most noble and trusted profession of nursing in a way that aligns with student needs of today."

She continues, "We are not only committed to growing the nursing workforce, but to ensuring life-long success for our nurses."

The program is intended for

both recent high school graduates and adults. Each student will perform delegated direct patient care activities to an assigned group of patients, under the supervision of a Registered Nurse.

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CAREERS IN NURSING

CALLED TO BE A NURSE: GERIATRICS IS LPN'S FORTE

by James Coburn - staff writer

Hearing a nursing home resident tell her they love her for the first time is what warms her heart the most as a nurse, Kayla Colter said.

"It's like we are the people they rely on from day-to-day. I didn't think I was making that much of an impact until one of them told me that they loved me," said Colter, LPN, at The Wilshire Skilled Nursing and Therapy, located in Oklahoma City.

Geriatric nursing wasn't Colter's first ambition in becoming a nurse. However, nursing homes hire LPNs more readily than a hospital will, Colter said. And she fell in love with working for the elderly.

"They tend to pull on your heart strings. And I think I really found the field of nursing that I want to be in," she said.

Colter is a recent nursing school graduate, having earned her LPN license in August after studying at Oklahoma City Community College.

She began serving at The Wilshire Skilled Nursing and Therapy on Sept. 1.

"I'm going for my RN," Colter said. OCCC offers a challenging curriculum, she continued. She chose OCCC because it offers one of the best programs in the state, she said. OCCC prepared her well for a nursing career with informative instructors, Colter said.

"I know a lot more information, I think than a nursing student that would go to a different college," she said.

Colter was grateful to find a nursing staff with a work ethic to serve when coming to

The Wilshire Skilled Nursing and Therapy. They work extremely hard and their actions demonstrate they care deeply for their patients, she mentioned.

"You can tell by the way they do things every day. They get them up to look nice, and they help them with their daily living activities. They do it with dignity."

The main thing a nurse needs to know when working in a skilled nursing and therapy center is that it is home for the residents. Nurses should be respectful and compassionate while having the professional knowledge needed to care for the residents, she said.

"We treat them the way you'd want your family to be treated," Colter said.

Unlike a hospital setting, nursing homes offer chances for

nurses to know their patients with more depth during the days, weeks, months, and years they share together. Bonding with the residents in a home-like setting has helped alleviate some of the worry they feel when not being able to see their families during the COVID-19 pandemic, Colter said.

"One of the important things is companionship. They don't really get to see their families. You can be there, and you get to listen to their concerns and spend time with them. You don't just go in there and get what you need done. You go in there and talk to them and do things for them. I know that sometimes I'll take extra time out of my day to do their nails and hair because they need that interaction and that socialization."

See COLTER Page 5



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COLTER

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Colter said it was when she had her first daughter that she felt inclined to pursue a nursing career.

"I was in (Mercy Hospital) and the nurses there were fantastic," she said. "They helped me tremendously. I was in a scary situation. I had to have an emergency C-section, and the nurses just really helped me through that, and I realized I wanted to do that for other people."

As a nurse, her history of having been a patient also helped her to relate more to the role of a patient. Nurses are everything, she said. They give out medications with a caring spirit, help people to walk, and in a way are similar to therapists by encouraging others, she said.

"They push you and let you talk about your feelings," she said.

Geriatric nursing is opposite the polar spectrum of pediatric care. And today, she says that geriatric nursing chose her.

"Like I said, once I got into it and got the experience — I fell in love with it," Colter said.



Kayla Colter, LPN, The Wilshire Skilled Nursing and Therapy in Oklahoma City, says seeing the resilience of residents at the nursing home shows they still have hope in life.

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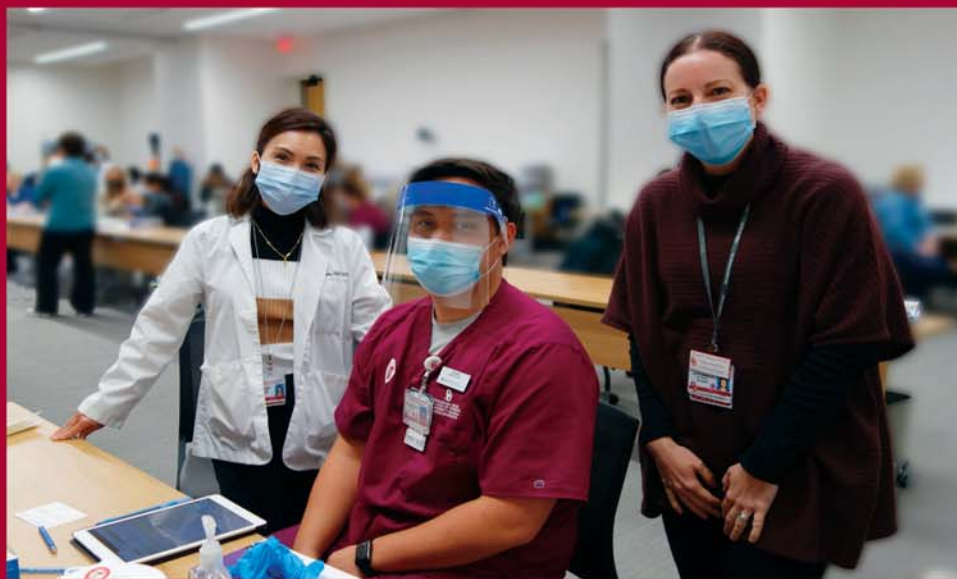
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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2021 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

SWOSU is One of Oklahoma's Best Universities

By any measure, Southwestern Oklahoma State University with campus locations in Weatherford and Sayre is considered by many to be the home of one of Oklahoma's best universities. SWOSU is known for its quality programs having 14 nationally accredited academic programs—most among the senior regional universities in Oklahoma.

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Get Ready for COVID-19 Vaccines: Insurance Coverage and Misinformation

By Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Glen Mulready

Thanks to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and all the front-line workers, Oklahoma has now entered Phase 4 of its vaccine distribution plan. With three COVID-19 vaccines available, all Oklahomans are now eligible for vaccination. As we're on track to get our "normal" back, I'd like to remind you that the cost of obtaining a vaccine will not be a barrier for Oklahomans, regardless of health insurance status.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, provides funding for the vaccine itself. It also requires most health insurance companies to cover qualifying coronavirus preventive services without imposing any cost-sharing requirements, such as a copay, coinsurance or deductible. If you are covered under Medicare or Medicaid, your vaccine will be paid for by the Medicare's trust fund. If you don't have insurance, your vaccine is still covered. Healthcare providers will get reimbursed through the Provider Relief Fund.

If you received an unexpected bill for a COVID-19 vaccine or qualifying

associated visit, you should contact the provider or your insurance company and alert them of the error. If you have issues with your health insurance company regarding a bill related to COVID-19, please file a complaint with the Oklahoma Insurance Department (OID) at www.oid.ok.gov/ or contact the Consumer Assistant at 800-522-0071. Also, here are some key takeaways to avoid fraud related to COVID-19 vaccines.

- You don't need to pay to get a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. Visit the OSDH's website to make your appointment. You can also ask your doctor or provider how to get the vaccine near where you live.

- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is free. Whether you have health insurance or not, the vaccines are always free. Providers can seek reimbursement from your insurance company, but there are no co-pays or cost-sharing. If you're asked to pay money, contact the OID at 800-522-0071.

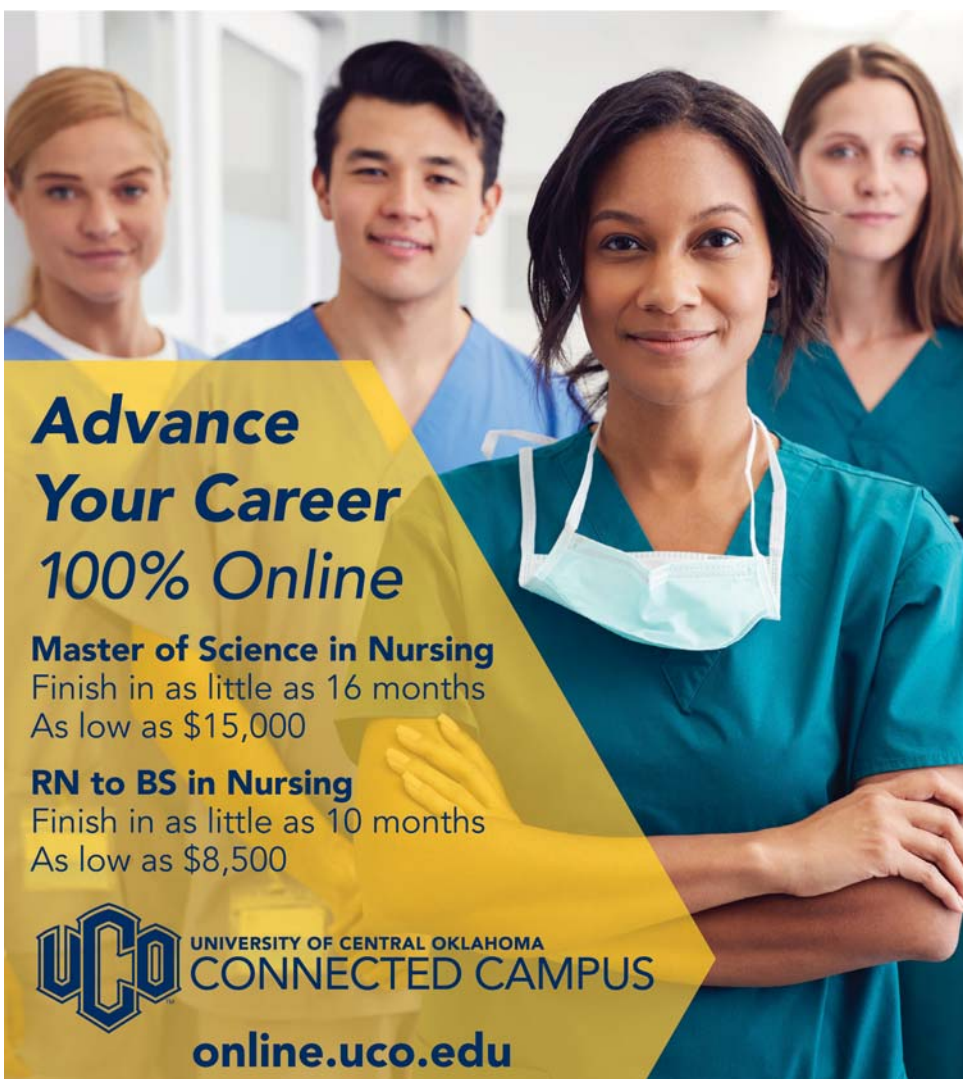
- You cannot buy a COVID-19 vaccine. Please do not fall for the ads that come via email or pop up on your social media feed offering early

access to a vaccine. The vaccine is available only at federal and state-approved locations.

- Vaccinations will not impact your life insurance benefits. Life insurance policies clearly spell out what might cause your insurer to deny a benefit. Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine would not void a policyholder's life insurance coverage. Contact your agent if you have questions or concerns about the details of your policy.

- Never give out your personal financial information. No one from a vaccine distribution site, state agency, healthcare provider's office, insurance company or Medicare will contact you to ask for your Social Security, credit card or bank account number to get the vaccine.

For more insurance information, please contact the Oklahoma Insurance Department at 1-800-522-0071 or visit our website at www.oid.ok.gov.



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SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

Cases	444,863
*Total Cumulative Negative Specimens to Date	3,498,331
*Total Cumulative Number of Specimens to Date	3,912,328
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facility Hospitalizations	215
Other Types of Facilities Hospitalizations	12
Provisional Death Count (CDC/NCHS)	8,124

- As of this advisory, there are 444,863 (273 new today) cases of COVID-19 in Oklahoma.
- 294 is today's 7-day rolling average for the number of new cases reported.
- Today's Provisional Death Count (CDC/NCHS): 8,124
- Additional hospitalization data can be found in the

Hospital Tiers report, published evenings Monday through Friday.

- Register online to receive a notification when you're eligible to schedule a COVID-19 vaccine appointment at vaccinate.oklahoma.gov, or locate other vaccine opportunities at vaccinefinder.org.
- For more information, visit <https://oklahoma.gov/covid19.html>.

*The total includes laboratory information provided to OSDH at the time of the report. As a result, counts are subject to change. Total counts may not reflect unique individuals.

***The purpose of publishing aggregated statistical COVID-19 data through the OSDH Dashboard, the Executive Order Report, and the Weekly Epidemiology and Surveillance Report is to support the needs of the general public in receiving important and necessary information regarding the state of the health and safety of the citizens of Oklahoma. These resources may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be used in any way that would determine the identity of any reported cases.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. *As of 2021-04-16 at 7:00 a.m.



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Life worth hearing: Ears of Oklahoma can help

by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Hearing loss can be so gradual until it becomes a problem with age, said Dr. Jeni Merrick-Baker, a clinical audiologist and owner of Ears of Oklahoma, located in Oklahoma City.

Ears of Oklahoma treats a range of hearing disorders among patients older than 18.

"Everybody typically starts losing their hearing in their 40s, but we don't notice it at first," Baker said. "If there ever is a sudden hearing loss and you just wake up one day and the hearing is gone in one ear, then that's an issue that you have to see an ear specialist or otologist within 24 hours to try to get that hearing back."

Most of her clients come to Baker for problems such as ringing in their ears, otherwise known as tinnitus. Tinnitus affects about 15-20 percent of people, according to the Mayo Clinic. It is especially common in older adults.

"It's more and more common every day," Baker said. "We're just seeing it so much more especially in the baby boom generation, due most likely to some loud noise and concerts."

Baker begins her diagnosis after clearing wax from the ear canal. A comprehensive hearing test is done to learn the type of hearing loss a patient is experiencing and the best method of treatment. Hearing aids may be fitted when needed.

Family members will notice the speaker volume going up. Typically, a spouse will encourage their loved one to visit Ears of Oklahoma after noticing their husband or wife is having trouble hearing conversation at a restaurant or a place with a competing background noise. Older adults might complain that they have difficulty in hearing their grandchildren speak.

"That's always a sign that they know there's some loss there, just because of the range the kids voices typically fall in," Baker said.

Recent advances in technology has made it easier for audiologists to restore more lifestyles with improved hearing.

Hearing aids are receptive to Bluetooth now. Clients wearing one can receive a phone call directly in their ears without holding the phone next to their ear. Bluetooth

technology can be sent directly to the hearing aid as well.

The brain is wired to hear in stereo to process hearing. Sound is filtered for clarity before it ever reaches the eardrum.

"So basically, if the spouse is with them watching the TV, they can set the volume wherever they want," Baker said.

An app designed for tinnitus helps to minimize ringing in the ears.

Additionally, Bluetooth technology enables the use of a bi-cross hearing aid. Sound is transferred to the deaf ear from the healthy hear.

"It gives people back the location of sound," she said.

A rewarding part of Baker's profession is hearing patients tell her that their life is better now after going to Ears of Oklahoma.

"They can hear in a very difficult situation — for instance in a noisy restaurant," she said.

Research indicates that even a mild hearing loss may double the risk of dementia, Baker continued.

"A moderate to severe hearing loss triples it. And if it's a true, severe hearing loss, you're five times more likely to develop dementia early."

People get their life back with restored hearing. They are no longer nervous about not saying the right thing in a conversation.

Baker looks forward to the end of the pandemic. Technology allows her to enter an office, assisted living or home to test and provide hearing aids in the comfort of home.

"That's something that's real exciting and I can't wait for that to start happening," she said.

Twenty years ago, Baker began her practice in Ardmore. She continues to have the clinic there. Baker had been with the Otologic Medical Clinic at the Hough Ear Institute for several years and decided to open her second independent practice of her own in Oklahoma City. She branched off in November to the Ears of Oklahoma location at 3400 NW 56th St., Oklahoma City.

Patients come to see Baker from many parts of the state. It's nice to have a practice in Ardmore, she said.

"I'm one of the very few in



Dr. Jeni Merrick-Baker finds fulfillment in helping Oklahomans to hear again at her clinic, Ears of Oklahoma.

southern Oklahoma," she said.

Baker recommends well fitting earplugs to protect hearing during loud concerts or when exposed to loud industrial noise. Persons working in conditions of excessive industrial noise should have proper hearing protection, she advised.

Helping others to hear better is a passion

Baker has had since childhood. She had a friend growing up who had a hearing loss.

"When we'd go swimming, she had to take her hearing aids out

and she couldn't hear anything," she said. "Ever since then I've had a passion to try to help people. It's miserable not to hear birds and hear the things we take for granted every day of our life. So, to give that back to a person, and to watch them hear for the first time — things they haven't heard — we both cry. When I put in hearing aids for the first time it's very, very rewarding." For more information visit www.earsofoklahoma.com or call 405-673-1327.



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