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Compassion Inspires Nursing LPN Shares Her Love

Read Quilimaco's story on page 2

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Jennifer Quilimaco, LPN

Golden Age Nursing Facility

2019 Nursing School Graduate of Platt College

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Jennifer Quilimaco, LPN, feels she's done something good each day after going home from work at Golden Age Nursing Facility in Guthrie.

"Every day that I'm here I interact with so many different people. I learn so many different stories from the residents, the coworkers, everybody, with different histories." Quilimaco said. "And I feel like I've learned so much about life from the workers and residents."

As is the case with many nurses, Quilimaco has always been a caregiver since an early age. They care for a brother or sister then have their own children. She felt loved as an only child.

Quilimaco was busy raising her children when a Companion Hospice

nurse set an example of the power and compassion of nursing.

"I watched her interact with a family in the final moments of a person's life," Quilimaco said. "She educated them by the way she talked to them. Everything about it - that's why I really wanted to be a nurse."

Quilimaco is a 2019 nursing school graduate of Platt College in Oklahoma City. She began her career working in another nursing home when her sister-in-law invited her to join the team. Quilimaco was hooked and fell in love with long-term care.

"I've been doing it ever since," said Quilimaco, who had been a CNA at Golden Age Nursing Facility beginning in 2001.

She has also worked for

Companion Hospice as a home health aide. She moved to Texas for a while after she became a nurse. She immediately felt at home at Golden Age when moving back to her hometown of Guthrie.

"It's helping people, being there for people," she said. "I want to be there for people when they need it the most."

Various losses in life and independence can come with aging. Quilimaco said being an LPN allows her to make the geriatric environment the best that it can be. She lets seniors know they have choices in life at Golden Age as she introduces them to their new home. Residents decide when they want to go to bed and wake up.

"A lot of people like our menu here because we have an actual menu everybody can order from," she continued.

The nursing staff is welcoming, calm, caring, and patient, Quilimaco said. Golden Age Nursing Facility encourages the staff with teamwork. And it works, Quilimaco said.

"They are always very encouraging with scholarship programs. And like I said, working for this company I went from CNA, CMA, home health aide to LPN," she continued.

Quilimaco is seriously considering going back to school to become a registered nurse. Golden Age is always taking steps to maintain a safe, loving environment. How to maintain excellence is a standard topic at in-service meetings among the staff.

"It's always educational to what we do every day," she added. "There are refreshers to what we learned in school and building on top of that. We do our tests."

Moments come that touch her heart among family members and residents, especially when family members have said, "You know, we don't know what we would do without you. We appreciate you."

It's wonderful for a nurse to hear kind words of gratitude for helping others in life, Quilimaco said.

Today is a good time to become a nurse, Quilimaco would tell anyone considering a thoughtful profession. She tells many of the nurse aides she works with that they need to go to nursing school. In fact, her daughter plans for a nursing career.

"You see these CNAs that are so compassionate - so caring," Quilimaco said. "They're always

Continued next page

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Application Contact: Langston University, Human Resources, PO Box 1205, Langston, OK 73050, luhumanresources@langston.edu

For more information contact Dr. Teresa Hunter at 405.466.3425 or emrobinson@langston.edu



Jennifer Quilimaco, LPN, helps residents at Golden Age Nursing Facility feel at home and celebrate independence.

QUILIMACO

Continued from Page 2

encouraging everybody.

Nursing has deepened her understanding of life, its seasons and the daily fabric that enriches daily living.

Responsibility is a key factor in nursing and to succeed in helping others, she said.

"In all of those roles you're caring. You're a caretaker, stepping into people's lives by helping them where they need help," Quilimaco said. "You're there for them whenever they need somebody to be there."

In her daily life she has felt compelled to help other people she

sees in public. So far, there hasn't been an emergency in public that she has responded to. But she is prepared.

"I find that people will walk up to me and ask me questions, not necessarily health related but 'Can you help me find this?' or 'Can you help me reach this?'"

More often, she responds when her grandchildren run to her with a minor injury from play.

She often shares her leisure time with her grandchildren, two in Guthrie and one living in Stillwater. Her family loves to be at the lake.

For more information about Golden Age Nursing Facility:
<https://goldenageguthrie.com>.

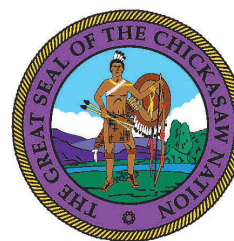
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OCU Nursing Professor Continues Education Growth

story by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Teaching is both a profession and a passion for Joseph Gracy Amalraj, MSN, RN, CNE, who serves as Clinical Assistant Professor at the Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing for the traditional undergraduate program.

Her clinical practice area includes Pediatric ICU and Medical-surgical units. She is also a certified Midwife in India.

She has been a nursing educator since 2012, teaching in both didactic and clinical settings for traditional undergraduate BSN students.

"I always wanted to be an educator, and both my parents were teachers," she said. "But I have had great role models, too. Dr. Lois Salmeron, EDD, RN, BSN, MAT, MS, CNE, ANEF, is one of them. She's our Dean Emeritus. Her leadership style really motivated me. I believe not everyone is a born leader or educator. The more we learn, the more we experience, the more we allow ourselves to be inspired makes us a great leader. I am who I am today because I allowed these great leaders to inspire me."

Joseph Gracy goes by her second name of Gracy.

"Revealing the sex of the fetus is illegal in India to prevent selective abortion of female fetuses," she said. "My parents prayed to Saint Joseph, that if I'm a boy, they would name me Joseph. And then I ended up being a girl, but they still named me Joseph."

Gracy is currently pursuing her PhD in Nursing at OCU.

"I wanted to do something more," she said. "My goal at that time was not just to achieve a terminal degree, but to grow personally and professionally. I have loved every course I have taken, and this program has prepared me to be a better educator and a leader"

Gracy credits her husband Regin with his support of her pursuing her PhD.

"Regin is a great support with all my endeavors," she said. "He is always there. He was the one

who initially started motivating me to pursue my PhD."

Gracy started her nursing career in India, working in a pediatric ICU before deciding to come to the United States.

"I had this urge to move forward to become an educator," she said. "At the same time, in India, nursing did not receive the respect it deserved. The nursing profession was often looked down upon. That gave me an uneasy feeling that I didn't know whether I wanted to work in a place where my work was not appreciated."

Gracy talked with her sister Mercy who is an RN in Ardmore about her situation.

"I used to talk about this with my sister, and she shared how nursing is the most trusted profession in the United States," she said. "That really intrigued my interest and that's why I moved from India to the United States."

Gracy began the process of finding a school in the U.S. to attend.

"I took my NCLEX exam, I took my English exam, I did all the groundwork I needed to do, and then I applied for several universities in the United States," she said. "OCU really stood out because they were quick to respond to my application and I arrived at OCU in less than 3 months."

Gracy earned her BSN from Meenakshi College of Nursing, India in 2007 before earning MSN in Education from OCU in 2011.

She arrived at OCU on a tight budget.

"I couldn't afford on-campus housing," she said. "I did an on-campus job. I made about \$400 a month in 2011. I shared a single bedroom apartment with my friends. I lived off with very minimal money. But I felt so supported by the KSN community both emotionally and financially. That's what kept me at KSN."

After graduating from KSN in December 2011, Gracy had to figure out her next move.

"At that time, I was already practicing as an RN at OU Children's Medical Surgical floor. As per Dr. Salmeron's recommendation I applied for an



Joseph Gracy Amalraj, MSN, RN, CNE, serves as Clinical Assistant Professor at the Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing for the traditional undergraduate program.

open position as a clinical instructor at KSN," she said. "When I was hired and was welcomed once again to this KSN community it felt really good."

Gracy recently took up the role of Student Success Coordinator at KSN.

"I just took up this role of the Student Success Coordinator," she said. "Most of the people who seek support are minority students and international students. I meet with all the students during orientation. I get to know them. I equip them with the basic tools like time management skills, study strategies, note-taking skills, and other needed skills to be successful in a nursing program. My educational preparation and personal experiences as an international student allow me to guide my students more effectively and offer them the unique support they need to succeed"

For more information about KSN visit

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NURSE TALK



Where would you go if you could pick any time in history to visit?

"I would probably go back to Texas in 2005. I had all my family together."



Debbie Butts, CNA

"I would go back to the 1950s. I like the classic style, the different kinds and how fast they went."



Amanda Robbins, CNA

"I would want to be in Charleston SC the early (antebellum) era. The clothes and the mannerisms of people were so different."



Tera Fulton, CNA



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Children's Health Foundation Celebrates Gift from Walmart #3430 for Preschool Autism Program

Children's Health Foundation is pleased to announce a \$1000 gift from Walmart #3403 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to support the Early Foundations program for children with autism. Early Foundations is a program of the Oklahoma Autism Center that provides services designed to each child's unique needs to prepare children with autism to enter pre-K with their same-aged peers. CHF celebrates Walmart's generous partnership to sustain this essential program.

Oklahoma is currently facing a significant shortage of certified autism specialists, and families often face extended wait times or long-distance travel to have their children assessed and treated. To increase access and begin services as soon as possible, Early Foundations is open to any child with a developmental delay. The program is free of charge, has no income requirements, and does not require a diagnosis. Providing services as soon as a delay is identified improves long-term outcomes for children.

Early Foundations uses

evidence-based interventions to serve children 18 months to age five. Children with autism often struggle to communicate and interact with peers. At Early Foundations, students learn these skills in an age-appropriate, early-learning environment. Goals include learning to communicate wants and needs and interacting with same-aged peers.

Children's Health Foundation Executive Director Kathy McCracken says, "We are very grateful for the ongoing support of Walmart and Sam's Clubs to ensure that critical programs like Early Foundations continue. With the support of Walmart #3403, children with autism in Oklahoma will have access to life-changing services as soon as possible. We are incredibly grateful for this gift that will help prepare children with autism to enter pre-K."



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<https://www.chfkids.com>.

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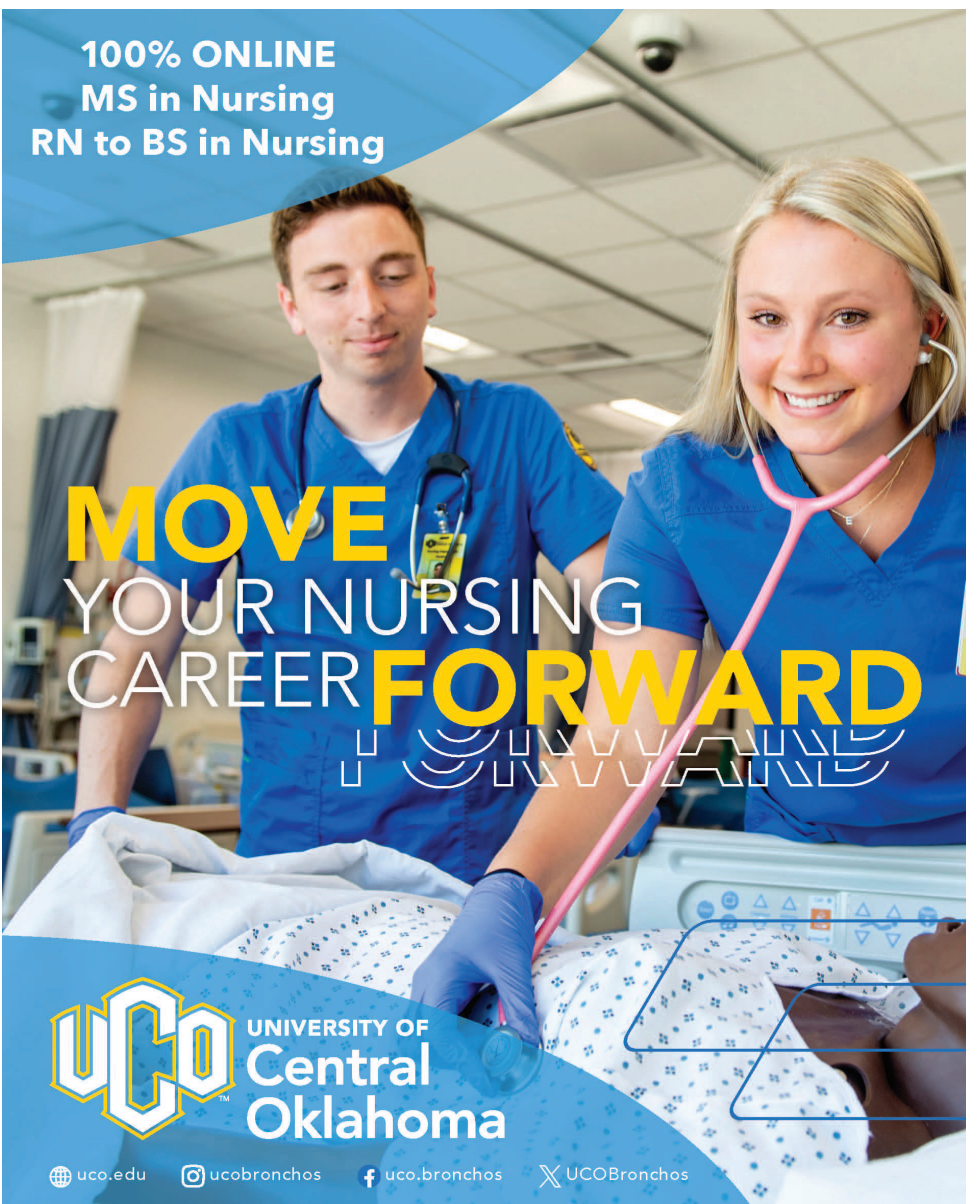
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A common desire among nursing students is to help others.

A common desire among nursing students is to help others.

"I chose to pursue a career in nursing because of my innate desire to assist others in any way possible," said Kassidy Brinlee, a Redlands nursing student and a student ambassador. "Witnessing my grandmother's battle with dementia deeply impacted me and highlighted the importance of helping others facing similar challenges."

Redlands Community College in El Reno, Okla., gives these students the start toward a successful and fulfilling career in the health care field where they impact the lives of patients and families every day. With a 100% job placement rate, Redlands offers a two-year degree program that prepares graduates to successfully take the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) for licensure as a registered nurse and to enter the workforce immediately.

"The benefit of earning an associate degree in nursing at Redlands is that graduates are well-prepared for the licensure exam that will allow them to begin working quickly," said Dr. Jalelah Abdul-Raheem, director of Redlands' Nursing Program. "Once they have completed this stage, they are able to focus on their career as a registered nurse or continue their education at a university to earn a bachelor's of nursing degree."

Redlands has two nursing program options: the traditional RN program and a track for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Students who are

enrolled in the LPN-to-RN cohort earn articulation credits in the first semester, allowing them to graduate in three semesters instead of four. This helps get them out of the classroom and into the community where they can do the most good.

Hollye Edmonds has taken a different path to the nursing field. After spending 15 years as a pre-k teacher, Edmonds decided to pursue a new career that still allows her to help others.

Returning to school can be daunting, but Edmonds has found a supportive environment at Redlands. "From the beginning, I was offered help and guidance from enrolling in courses to securing financial aid when needed and every area in between. Redlands has made the process of being a student easy and has mapped out clear pathways to success and supports their students on their journey."

Redlands is a solid, affordable choice for students because of the scholarships available as well as the personal attention and opportunities it provides. The college's partnerships with several area health facilities provide students with challenging, hands-on experience during their clinical rotations.

"Fortunately, our location just outside of Oklahoma City gives our students the opportunity to serve in both rural and urban areas, exposing them to the different types of nursing care available and helping them figure out what is the best fit for them" Abdul-Raheem said.

After spending a decade in pre-hospital health care, Jeremy Pool was ready to expand his experience with a greater focus on patient care. He had previously earned an associate degree from Redlands as well as other medical certifications, so he wanted to complete the college's nursing program.

"I find the staff very helpful and down to earth



Redlands Community College nursing students gain valuable experience in the campus' simulation lab.

and my college credits transferred seamlessly here," Pool said. "The faculty goes above and beyond to make sure you have the tools and resources to succeed in the program. They are with you every step of the way to answer questions, address problems or concerns, and assist with test taking strategies and note taking."

With a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant from Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI) Part A to support outreach and retention efforts and additional funding to update campus simulation labs, the Redlands Nursing Program is providing a high-quality learning experience led by dedicated and well-trained faculty.

"At Redlands, everyone is friendly, and the faculty is excited to be part of students' lives," said Dr. Abdul-Raheem. "We are committed to helping our nursing students succeed, and our faculty and staff are dedicated to supporting them throughout their time in the program."

Pool agreed, saying "I feel the faculty I work with daily make an impact on my success in their own way. Professor Newell makes lectures and test prepping always engaging and interesting, while Danaee, my success coach, keeps me accountable of my work and gives me great advice on how to approach my test taking and time organization."

The five-year cooperative grant is designed for Native American and low-income students and is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the NASNTI program.

Visit <https://redlandsc.edu/nursing-program> for more information and to apply for the program and scholarships. The scholarship application is due May 31.

PC Schools Donate more Than \$100,000 to OMRF

Putnam City Schools officials recently presented the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation with \$106,000 to support cancer research at the Oklahoma City nonprofit.

The donation represents the past two years of fundraisers benefitting OMRF. Since 1975, the district's contributions to OMRF have totaled nearly \$4 million.

The district's annual cancer drive just wrapped up its 49th year. It included philanthropy weeks at all three high schools, carnivals, bake sales, schoolwide donation challenges and a district-wide Cancer Classic 5K and Fun Run.

"Putnam City Schools is proud of our long-standing partnership with OMRF," said Dr. Fred Rhodes, the district's superintendent. "What started with one teacher in the 1970s has grown to our entire community and our 27 schools coming together each year to raise funds for medical research in a variety of fun and memorable ways. I am even more proud of the growth into a two-way partnership with our students benefiting from Junior Scientist Day

and the Fleming Scholars Program."

Putnam City High School teacher Lois Thomas started the drive in 1975 in response to the cancer-related deaths of four colleagues and the diagnosis of the district's superintendent. Thomas organized a change drive like the ones she had participated in as a child to combat polio. "She really did think, 'If everybody gave pennies, look how much money that would be,'" said her daughter, Carolyn Churchill.

Since then, the millions of dollars raised by students, teachers and staff have paid for research and supplies while also establishing an endowed chair in cancer research at OMRF.

To thank the district for its support, OMRF has hosted the Putnam City Junior Scientist Program since 1979. Through this program, middle school and high school teachers choose students to spend a day learning about biomedical science in OMRF labs.

Separately, 30 students from the Putnam City district have served summer internships in OMRF labs through the foundation's Sir



Dr. Dick Balenseifen, athletic director for Putnam City schools, presents checks representing two years of fundraisers to Katherine Jackson, OMRF's donor relations coordinator, on June 17, 2024.

Alexander Fleming Scholar Program. Currently, Victoria Nwankwo, a 2024 PC North grad, is studying and working with OMRF physician-

scientist Hal Scofield, M.D.

With long-time support from Putnam City, cancer research at

Continued on next page

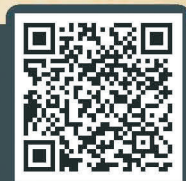


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SCAN ME

OMRF

Continued from Page 10

OMRF has led to an experimental drug now undergoing clinical trials at the OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center and 12 other sites around the U.S. to treat patients with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer. The drug also has shown promise in diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), a fast-growing pediatric cancer that starts in the brain stem.

"As OMRF celebrates 77 years, I'm grateful for the work that has

been done, the lessons that have been learned, and the lives that have been saved through our work together," Rhodes said.

OMRF scientist Linda Thompson, Ph.D., who holds the Putnam City Schools Distinguished Chair in Cancer Research, said she feels honored by the district's support. "You couldn't ask for more generous, more dedicated partners than the students, teachers and administrators of Putnam City Schools. Their commitment to cancer research is making a difference."



OMRF scientist Audrey Cleuren, Ph.D., explains the finer points of extracting DNA from strawberries to fifth-graders Henrietta Robinson, left, and Zunaira Guffer, during the foundation's annual Junior Scientist Days event on March 26, 2024. The annual event is one way OMRF thanks the district for its nearly 50 years of support

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INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center Welcomes OKC Mayor David Holt

Earlier this year when INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center achieved Pathway to Excellence re-designation for the third time from the American National Nurses Credentialing Center, Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt was invited to tour the hospital. On Thursday, June 26, he visited the facility for the first time and learned about some of the vital care and services provided to patients.

"I'm so glad I had this opportunity," Holt said, "because I was kind of overwhelmed by the community focused, patient focused ethos here and getting to meet people who are obviously so passionate about this city, passionate about South OKC and passionate about their patients."

Phil Harrop, the new chief hospital executive at INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center, and Kara Rother, chief nursing officer, welcomed Mayor Holt and his Chief of Staff, Steve Hill. They



toured three care areas - Jim Thorpe Rehab, the Emergency Department and the Oncology unit.

Harrop said, "While touring the emergency department, we discussed the complex needs of the patients we serve, the fantastic residency program we offer as well as how busy it is in terms of sheer numbers." He added, "Our medical staff and caregivers were gracious in sharing about their departments, the unique needs of our patients, as well as some heartwarming stories of ways in which our team goes the extra mile.

"This is a group of people who really view themselves as a family," said Holt. "There's a lot of continuity here - a lot of stability. People really love this community, their patients and each other."



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New HSC College of Nursing Extends Application Deadline

Students can now apply by July 15 for fall semester

The University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth's new College of Nursing has moved its fall application deadline to July 15 to give more nurses time to join the inaugural class.

Students can become part of the College of Nursing by applying for either the Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN) program or the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) in Nursing Practice Innovation. Fall classes for both programs start Aug. 19.

"We hope students will take advantage of this additional time to complete their application and join us this fall," said Cindy Weston, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE, FAANP, FAAN, founding dean of the college. "We're even offering nursing scholarships and awards that may cover up to 100% of out-of-pocket tuition costs for our first nursing students to show our commitment to affordable education."

The RN to BSN is for registered nurses with an associate degree whose next step is to earn a BSN.



Students can earn their degree in two, three or four semesters after completing 30 credit hours. Coursework will be delivered primarily online with some clinical experiences provided at HSC's on-campus Regional Simulation Center.

The MSN in Nursing Practice Innovation is for nursing professionals with a BSN who want to continue and expand their education. It will incorporate five, 16-week semesters and condensed 12-week summer semesters. A part-time option also is available, extending the program to seven semesters. In addition, students will have the flexibility to choose one of nine specialized elective tracks.

Interested students should submit their application through the NursingCAS application service by 10:59 p.m. CST July 15. Supplemental items, such as transcripts and letters of recommendation, should be uploaded by July 29.

For more information about HSC's College of Nursing or to apply, visit <https://unthsc.edu/nursing>.

Northwestern Division of Business Launches Master of Business and Health Care Administration Online Degree Program Pending HLC Approval

Northwestern Oklahoma State University is preparing to offer a fully online MBA program pending HLC approval.

A 33-credit hour fully online Master of Business Administration degree program has been developed in the Division of Business at Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

Within the program are two areas of concentration: a management option and a health care administration option. Students are able to enroll in graduate studies immediately and may be admitted to the program for fall once final Higher Learning Commission approval takes place.

"I am excited about the MBA program, and I know my faculty are as well," Dr. Garret Lahr, chair of the Northwestern Division of Business and assistant professor of business, said. "I believe the program will provide Northwestern with a valuable master's degree. The MBA degree can help students who wish to continue their education and be more prepared

to start and advance their careers."

Dr. Leslie Collins, chair of the Charles Morton Share Trust Division of Nursing and assistant professor of nursing, said the nursing division's practice partners shared with

the university a need for a program to help nurses who are serving in leadership roles to expand their education in the business arena.

"We know the MBA program will meet an area of need for the communities we serve," Collins said. "The health care administration option is an ideal option for those interested in expanding on their education to help serve the clients of our communities. This program will meet that need and is unique in the fact that it is set to serve those with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. We are proud of this new offering and know that it will help to further the mission of



Northwestern."

Dr. James Bell, Northwestern vice president for academic affairs, applauded the work of the MBA committee.

"This program will provide advanced educational opportunities for healthcare administrators in the region, as well as an advanced degree for business students more generally," Bell said. "Its implementation subsequent

to HLC approval will represent the culmination of extensive planning and dedicated effort by the committee."

Lahr is grateful for the support of the Northwestern administration throughout this process.

"I would like to thank the administration for its continued support of the program," Lahr said. "I would also like to thank my faculty and graduate studies personnel for their support and work in helping me bring the program to life."

Additional details about the MBA program at Northwestern may be found at <https://nwsu.edu/graduate-studies/mba>.

For more information on the Northwestern Division of Business, visit <https://nwsu.edu/school-of-professional-studies/business> or contact Lahr at galahr@nwsu.edu or (580) 327-8510. For more information about the Northwestern Graduate Studies program, visit <https://nwsu.edu/graduate-studies> or contact Dr. Shawn Holliday, associate dean of graduate studies, at spholliday@nwsu.edu or (580) 327-8589.

Milestone Celebrated for New Cancer Center in Norman

OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center at Norman Regional will Bring Research-driven Cancer Care to More Oklahomans

OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center and Norman Regional Health System recently celebrated a Topping Out Ceremony for the new cancer care facility on the Norman Regional HealthPlex campus, marking a significant milestone in the construction project and offering the community a first look at the new building.

Project and construction teams, along with leaders from OU Health, the University of Oklahoma and Norman Regional, gathered to mark the completion of the exterior structure. As the exterior receives its finishing touches, the focus shifts to the interior construction phase of the 50,000 square-foot building. The center's opening in summer 2025 will bring the highest level of cancer care to Norman and south central Oklahoma.

In January 2023, OU Health and Norman Regional announced plans to build a new cancer center at I-35 and Tecumseh Road. Located at the Norman Regional HealthPlex, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center at Norman Regional will provide residents of the south metro and south central Oklahoma increased access to patient-centered, research-driven,



multidisciplinary cancer care, leveraging the expertise of Stephenson Cancer Center, Oklahoma's only National Cancer Institute-Designated Cancer Center.

"When you are able to remain in your community to receive care, the impact is even more pronounced," said OU Health President and CEO Richard P. Lofgren, M.D., MPH. "As the flagship academic health system, we have a responsibility to offer life-saving specialty and sub-specialty care to every Oklahoman, no matter where they live. No Oklahoman should have to leave the state to get the care they need."

Although the state's cancer incidence overall is below the national average, Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation for cancer-related deaths with nearly 23,000 new cases diagnosed annually. More than 2,000 people are diagnosed with cancer in Cleveland County and south central Oklahoma each year.

"This day marks an exciting milestone in our commitment to bring world-class, research-driven cancer care to even more Oklahomans," said OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. "As part of Oklahoma's flagship academic health system, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center's expansion to Norman delivers the most advanced cancer care and life-saving clinical trials to the people of south central Oklahoma, ensuring access to cutting-edge treatment close to their homes and support systems."



The comprehensive services will include state-of-the-art medical oncology and radiation oncology services under one roof. The facility will double the capacity for infusion services, ensuring timely and efficient patient care, and it will house dedicated spaces for research coordinators and nurses to engage with patients about clinical trials, assessing eligibility and offering innovative treatment options. Additionally, it extends the reach of Stephenson Cancer

Center's clinical trials. Some trials may even allow patients to receive treatment closer to home.

"Norman Regional is proud to partner with OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center to bring enhanced cancer care to our community," said President and CEO of Norman Regional Health System Richie Splitt. "This center will be located on our expanded campus just steps away from award-winning emergency care, leading-edge

Continued on next page

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Continued from Page 14

surgical services, an ambulatory care center and many other amenities at Norman Regional. Our campus will offer a healing place for people facing cancer. We're honored to bring them the care they need closer to home."

Norman Regional has been providing cancer care to the community since 1989 and looks forward to continuing this legacy with OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center.

Beyond medical treatments, the center will offer wrap-around services such as diet and nutrition counseling, social work support, and genetic counseling. These services exemplify the type of care model available to the Stephenson Cancer Center Network, emphasizing personalized patient well-being.

The facility will also house a new Computed Tomography (CT) Simulator and linear accelerator (TrueBeam) for precise radiation therapy as well as PET-CT imaging technologies to enhance

diagnostic capabilities.

"Stephenson Cancer Center's patient-centered care model aims to eliminate the barriers to accessing top-tier cancer care across the state," said Robert Mannel, M.D., OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center Director. "The facility will offer advanced diagnostic imaging services, improving detection and monitoring of treatment results. Patients also benefit from access to clinical trials for various cancer types and stages, all close to home. This commitment to Norman and south central Oklahoma is crucial in our mission to serve all Oklahomans."

In addition to the partnership with Norman Regional, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center announced its expansion to the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa campus earlier this year. Expanding the scope and reach of an NCI-Designated Cancer Center will drive the University of Oklahoma's goal to achieve the prestigious NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center status by 2028.

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Oklahoma Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Community Receive National Award for Improving Quality of Care

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) has named twelve Oklahoma nursing homes and one assisted living community as 2024 Bronze - Commitment to Quality Award recipients.

The awards program recognizes organizations that meet progressively rigorous standards of performance to improve the lives of residents and staff in long term and post-acute care.

"The recognition of these facilities is a testament to their commitment to quality," said Mark Parkinson, AHCA/NCAL President and CEO. "Their initial step on this journey is setting an inspiring benchmark for others in our profession. We celebrate their dedication and look forward to their continued pursuit of excellence as they strive for Gold."

Care Providers Oklahoma President and CEO Steven Buck

said the recognition was especially significant given the challenging workforce and funding landscape in the state.

"The number of Oklahoma honorees on this list demonstrates that our skilled nursing and long term staff are succeeding at delivering excellent care even in really difficult conditions," said Buck. "The national recognition is nice; but it's important to remember that the real life implications of this are that some of Oklahoma's most vulnerable residents have a high quality of life in a loving and caring environment because of the passionate, hardworking staff at these homes."

The AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program has three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Providers begin the quality improvement process at the Bronze

level, where they assess their organization's mission, vision, and key factors that lead to success. Trained examiners review each application to determine if the center has met the demands of the criteria. Bronze recipients can now move on to the Silver Quality Award.

"This achievement reflects each provider's dedication to continuous improvement," said Cathy Bergland, AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Board Chair. "It is an honor to recognize their hard work and commitment to enhancing the quality of care and service as they continue this rewarding journey."

The Association will announce the 2024 Silver Awards at the end of June, and Gold Awards in August.

Oklahoma's Bronze Award recipients are:

- Accel at Crystal Park, Oklahoma City

- Bradford Village Healthcare Center, Edmond
- Brookwood Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Oklahoma City
- Country Gardens Assisted Living Community*, Muskogee
- Grace Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Norman
- McMahon-Tomlinson Nursing Center, Lawton
- River Oaks Skilled Nursing & Therapy, El Reno
- River Valley Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Clinton
- Senior Village Healthcare Center, Blanchard
- The Wilshire Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Oklahoma City
- Western Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Buffalo
- Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Oklahoma City
- Woodward Skilled Nursing & Therapy, Woodward

A list of all 2024 Bronze recipients is available on the AHCA/NCAL Quality Award

<https://www.ahcancal.org/Quality/National-Quality-Award-Program/Pages/QualityAwardRecipients.aspx>.

OU College of Pharmacy Names New Dean

The University of Oklahoma announced today the appointment of Melissa Medina, Ed.D., as dean of the OU College of Pharmacy, pending approval from the OU Board of Regents. Medina will begin the new role on June 16.

Medina, who has been serving as interim dean of the College of Pharmacy since last September, was selected after a national search.

"With her breadth of experience as a superb researcher, award-winning educator and collaborative leader, Dr. Melissa Medina is poised to provide the innovative leadership needed to ensure the College of Pharmacy's continued excellence," said OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. "Her deep understanding of the university's goals, state workforce needs and health outcomes make her the ideal candidate to step into this role. We look forward to the remarkable impact she will continue to have on the college and larger community."

Medina joined the OU College of Pharmacy faculty in 2000 and currently serves as a professor and associate dean for assessment and evaluation. In those roles, she teaches in the college's Clinical Communication Course and directs teaching certificate programs and workshops for faculty, residents, and graduate and professional students within the college, across campus, nationally and internationally. She also leads the College of Pharmacy's co-curriculum program, as well as the Residency Teaching Certificate Programs for first- and second-year residents.

She is active in the Faculty Leadership Program for OU Health Sciences, providing workshops and peer evaluations for her colleagues in all seven colleges on campus. She is also the director of the Preparing Future Faculty Program, which prepares senior-level graduate students for faculty careers in academia.

Medina has been active as a researcher, serving as an author or co-author for nearly 100 peer-reviewed journal publications, most focusing on pharmacy student learning and health professional education. She recently worked to secure a \$1.5 million grant from the Inasmuch Foundation to focus on student success and workforce development. She is also associate editor for the American Journal of Pharmacy Education and serves as a journal article reviewer for several other pharmacy publications.

Medina is a member of multiple professional organizations, including



the American Pharmacists Association, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American Education Research Association and

Continued on next page

ECU set to break ground for new STEM Center/School of Nursing

East Central University will host a groundbreaking ceremony for its new STEM Center/School of Nursing building on June 25 at 9 a.m. The event will take place north of the Physical and Environmental Science Center, located at the corner of N. Francis Ave. & E. 9th St.

"We are thrilled to mark this significant milestone for East Central University alongside our community members," said ECU President Wendell Godwin. "This state-of-the-art STEM Center/School of Nursing facility will provide crucial support to our healthcare systems both locally and regionally."

The new facility will house a simulation center and more than 25 hands-on learning labs and STEM classrooms equipped with the latest technology, among many more features.

The construction of this new building and expansion of the nursing program is expected to generate a 400% increase in nursing graduates from ECU. Historically, 84% of nursing graduates stay in Oklahoma five years after graduation and 75% of students are accepted into medical school.

The average pass rate for the ECU School of Nursing on the registered nurses NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) is 97%, while the national average is 82%.

This expansion will allow ECU to recruit a number of new staff and faculty as well as more than 200 new nursing students to the university. "We invite everyone to join us in celebrating this historic occasion," continued Godwin.

The new facility will serve to reaffirm ECU's commitment to educating students and to transforming students' lives for generations to come.



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Continued from Page 16

American Psychological Association.

Over the past two decades, Medina has won two of the four highest honors in pharmacy education: the 2023 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Lyman Award for Publication of the Year in the American Journal of Pharmacy Education, and the Robert K. Chalmers National Distinguished Pharmacy Educator of the Year Award from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. She has received eight other national pharmacy education awards and 12 OU teaching awards, including a David Ross Boyd Professorship, a Presidential Professorship, an OU Health Sciences Regents' Award for Superior Teaching and the OU College of Pharmacy Teacher of the Year Award.

"Over the past 24 years, Dr. Medina has provided exceptional leadership in the OU College of Pharmacy, and her dedication

to excellence in pharmacy education is invaluable," said Gary Raskob, Ph.D., senior vice president and provost of OU Health Sciences. "We are pleased that she will be serving as the 14th dean of the College of Pharmacy and know that she will continue elevating the college and the discipline of pharmacy in the years to come."

Prior to joining the OU College of Pharmacy, Medina was an instructor in the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education in New Jersey. She earned both her master of education degree and her doctor of education degree from Rutgers University Graduate School of Education.

For more information about University of OU Health Sciences visit <https://www.ouhsc.edu/>



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2024 ANA Membership Assembly Passes Recommendations to Address Critical Issues in Nursing Practice

Removing Stigma in Seeking Mental Health Care and Improving Veterans' Health Care Access of Top Concern

Today, the representatives of the American Nurses Association (ANA) Membership Assembly, the official governing and voting body of ANA, recommended actions to address specific challenges to nurses' practice and work environments. Removing cultural and organizational barriers as well as updating policies associated with seeking mental health care which promote stigma among nurses was one of the main concerns addressed. Others included creating improved standards of care for the unique needs of a growing veteran population and discussion involving revisions to the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements (the Code).



Removing Barriers for Nurses in Seeking Mental Health Care

A recent study published in ANA's scholarly journal, *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing (OJIN)*, reveals nurses indicate a support system within their practice environment is a key reason influencing intent to stay within their current role. It also reinforces that more mental health support and resources are needed to improve nurse retention. The ANA Membership Assembly voted on the following recommendations to remove barriers that prohibit nurses from receiving appropriate mental health and well-being support:

- Reduce mental health-related stigma in health care settings at all levels.
- Accelerate changes to mental health reporting requirements and normalize the process for nurses to seek help for workplace-related stresses.
- Encourage employers to foster an organizational culture that prioritizes health worker well-being, normalizes open communication about mental health challenges, supports prevention and promotes care-seeking as a sign of strength.
- ANA will work in collaboration with the NCSBN to update and revise the guidelines and best practices for the Alternative to Discipline programs.

Improving Health Care Access for Veterans

Veterans come with a unique set of challenges and social determinants associated with active military service such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), toxic chemical and airborne exposures, and higher rates of substance abuse disorders among other challenges. For that reason, ANA membership delegates voted on the following recommendations:

- Considers the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCA) as a supplement to care delivery by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), not a replacement for that care. ANA shall advocate for policies that ensure a seamless care system between the VHA and VCCA.
- Work to improve nursing knowledge relating to the unique healthcare needs of the veterans population and their families.
- Continues efforts to remove all restrictions to nursing practice within VHA and allow all nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training to meet the health access needs of all veterans and improve timeliness of care.

Representatives also provided feedback and insights on the upcoming revisions to the Code, which is currently open for public comment through July 31, 2024. The revised Code is scheduled to launch in January 2025.

ANA has an ethical obligation to take every action to ensure the professional success and personal well-being of nurses. It will ceaselessly continue to advocate and work on behalf of the nation's more than 5 million registered nurses.

Learn more about ANA's Membership Assembly by visiting

<https://www.nursingworld.org/ana/leadership-and-governance/membership-assembly>



OPSU's College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing Honors Top Students

Oklahoma Panhandle State University's College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing (COASN) has had a remarkable year, marked by national achievements and strengthened regional partnerships. The recent Annual Awards Ceremony highlighted these accomplishments, celebrating its students' and faculty's dedication and talent. The ceremony's highlight was the presentation of the Dean's Servant Heart Award, awarded to student Natalie Nordmann for her outstanding service and commitment to the community.

Ms. Nordmann demonstrated exceptional leadership and compassion this past year by coordinating OPSU's donations to the Texas Panhandle fire victims.

Nordmann's hard work and dedication made it possible for OPSU to donate several thousands of dollars worth of much-needed supplies to fire victims. Nordmann's initiative not only brought relief to many in need but also exemplified the spirit of service and generosity that defines the OPSU community.

Dean Tracy Kincannon praised Nordmann's efforts, stating, "This year, we decided to give the first-ever Servant Heart Award to showcase an amazing young lady that every Aggie will be proud of. Natalie Nordmann exemplifies what it means to be an Aggie."

In addition to Nordmann's recognition, the OPSU Show Team celebrated their exceptional performance in their inaugural year. The team, comprised of 16 members from Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, and Canada, achieved national champion status by winning the overall Hampshire ewe division at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, CO. The team, including ten first-time and six continuing students, set a goal to recruit ten new members for the upcoming year and is well on meeting this objective.

The banquet also honored students with departmental awards for outstanding academic performance in their respective programs. Team awards were given to students who excelled in their extracurricular activities throughout the year.

"Dean Kincannon and the entire faculty and staff have worked so hard this last year, devoting their time to promoting agricultural excellence regionally and nationally. Their achievements showcase the talent within our programs and highlight our commitment to serving and partnering with our community. I could not be more proud of their hard work and the positive impact they have made," said Dr. Julie Dinger, University President.



Murray State Plans Nursing Education Center in Ardmore

By Lincoln Revill - KTEN \ abc Ardmore



Southern Oklahoma Nursing Education Center
Ardmore, OK

Murray State College officials have plans to turn a vacant lot into a new medical education facility.

The 57,000 square foot Southern Oklahoma Nursing Education Center, or SONEC, is expected to cost more than \$25 million.

The new two-story facility in Ardmore will house classrooms, simulation labs, and faculty offices for 35 new Murray State jobs.

"It will be a place where you can get any level of nursing education," said MSC President Dr. Tim Faltyn. "It makes Ardmore the hub for that educational enterprise."

The college has already received a \$5 million grant from the Southern Oklahoma Memorial Foundation, and is hoping to raise rest of the money needed for construction of the building.



"This is a large commitment for our foundation," said SOMF president Mary Kate Wilson. "However, we are a hospital-convergent foundation, and so it was important and resonated with our trustees and their pleas to be able to provide the support."

With more classrooms,

simulated training and room for MSC partners to come and teach, the SONEC facility will help nursing students at all stages of growth, at any time.

"They can move out into the workforce for a little while; they can come back; everything counts... they're guaranteed access," Faltyn said.

SONEC graduates will also help address the growing nationwide shortage of nurses.

"Students do tend to stay where they go to school and where they live, so having this opportunity here in this local community definitely will benefit the nursing shortage here," said Mercy Ardmore chief nursing officer Katie Finder.

"When you take an excellent program and you give them the facility they need, the sky's the limit," Faltyn said. "We're not just creating nurses; we're adding jobs and being a productive part of our community."

For more information about MSC's nursing program visit <https://mscok.edu/academics>.



Eastern Students Donate to Local Nursing Home

Members of the Eastern Oklahoma State College President's Leadership Class collected and donated more than \$600 in supplies to the Latimer Nursing Home on Wednesday.

Class members took donations throughout the spring semester, citing a desire to give back to the community. Donation efforts focused on collecting essential items, including personal hygiene products and lap blankets, to enhance the residents' quality of life. Monetary donations were accepted, as well.

"Our goal for our 2024 President's Leadership Class project was to positively impact our community," said Jacy Browne, PLC member. "What better way than to provide needed items to Latimer Nursing Home?"

PLC recently completed its first year, with eight members in the inaugural class. Browne,



Eastern Oklahoma State College President's Leadership Class member Jacy Browne (fourth from left), along with Dr. Kyle Foster, Eastern Vice President of Student Affairs, Candace Raney, Eastern Executive Assistant to the President, and Dr. Janet Wansick, Eastern President, present Latimer Nursing Home representative Holly Wilson with donated items collected by the PLC

from Wilburton, Oklahoma, GERALYN HANEY, from Stuart, Meabrey Wallace, from Allen, Dristan Harber, from Wilburton, Braelyn Blasengame, from Stuart, Trenyce Noah, from Battiest, Caden Goodson, from Tushka, and Hailey Baker, from Wilburton, were members of the first class.

For more information about MSC's nursing program visit <https://mscok.edu/academics>.

SADIE BRIDGES OF CASC AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS CHANCELLOR GLEN D. JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP IN LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Carl Albert State College (CASC) is proud to announce that Sadie Bridges, an outstanding student leader, has been awarded the inaugural Chancellor Glen D. Johnson Scholarship in Leadership and Public Service. This prestigious scholarship, named after the esteemed Chancellor Emeritus Glen D. Johnson, celebrates students who demonstrate exceptional leadership qualities and a strong commitment to public service.

Chancellor Allison D. Garrett of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education expressed her congratulations, stating, "The State Regents are proud to recognize exceptional students with the Chancellor Glen D. Johnson Scholarship in Leadership and Public Service. Each recipient is an inspirational leader with a clear commitment to serving others and making a difference in their communities.

We wish them well in their academic and career pursuits."

The scholarship was established to honor Chancellor Emeritus Glen D. Johnson's notable career and contributions to higher education in Oklahoma. Reflecting on the award, Chancellor Emeritus Johnson said, "It was my privilege to represent Oklahoma at the state and national level as chancellor of the state system of higher education from 2007 until 2021. Public service has always been my life's goal, and I am deeply honored to recognize the first cohort of students to receive this scholarship, which celebrates their dedication to civic engagement, advocacy and leadership."

Sadie Bridges, a distinguished student at CASC, has consistently shown a passion for public service and leadership through her involvement in various campus and community

initiatives. Her dedication to making a positive impact has earned her this significant recognition, which will support her continuing academic journey and public service endeavors.

President of CASC, Dr. Jay Falkner, expressed pride in Sadie's achievement, noting, "Sadie Bridges exemplifies the core values of our institution through her leadership and commitment to serving others. This scholarship is a well-deserved acknowledgment of her hard work and dedication. Sadie is a former Scholars Program student and is in her second year of the CASC Nursing Program. We are confident that she will continue to excel and make significant contributions to her community and beyond."

The Chancellor Glen D. Johnson Scholarship in Leadership and Public Service aims to support and encourage students who are actively



Sadie Bridges, CASC Nursing Program second year student.

involved in public service and leadership roles, helping them to achieve their educational and professional goals.

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

Ranger Pride *Northwestern grows healers*

Leslie Collins, DNP, MS, RN still remembers the conversation with her Northwestern Oklahoma State University mentor.

"They said you educate every day and I think you could make a difference in students' lives," Collins recalls.

From there, she took a job in her alma mater's nursing program skills lab. Thirteen years later, she's chair of Northwestern Oklahoma State's Charles Morton Share Trust Division of Nursing.

And she couldn't be more proud of the impact her faculty has on students.

"I love it because of our ability to make a difference, to be one-on-one with the student and really help them," Collins said. "I stay here because of the faculty and our administration. Our administration's support is like no other."

"It was a starting point for me and I love being that starting point for students."

Northwestern Oklahoma State University is a public regional university that has received national acclaim for its combination of

a high quality academic program and affordability. While Northwestern primarily serves the vast geographical area of northwest Oklahoma and the Panhandle, its students come from more than 40 states and 20 countries.

Northwestern offers a bachelor's of science in nursing, an **online RN-to-BSN program**, as well as a hybrid BSN-to-DNP program.

Collins matriculated from Northwestern not only debt-free but with a solid nursing foundation forged by instructors who poured into her.

"I think it makes all the difference in the world, specifically when it comes to nursing," Collins said of the personalized instruction she received. "It's something we do at Northwestern across our degrees and programs and it makes a difference in the student. It makes them know they are more than a number. It's about their education and what they need."

"We find more and more students need to know the way they learn so they can continue to be lifelong learners, far past their graduation. That's so important for nursing and we can work with them one on one to help them be more successful. Caring

is a component that is threaded throughout our program, we feel it is important for students to be caring in nature and to learn resiliency in this process. We hope this, and have seen in the past, will translate into what type of nurse they become."

Collins said many Northwestern students go on to practice in rural settings, but others go on to larger facilities.

There's a common thread in the employer feedback Collins receives.

"They speak on how well-prepared our graduates are," Collins said. "Also, they speak about how professional they are, how caring they are and how they work well with the teams. Not only are they a good nurse, prepared and ready for patient care but they're also good team members and ready to make a difference in the nursing world."

Collins said the university is looking at expanding its offering to help meet existing needs throughout

healthcare, in whatever setting that may be.

"I feel like we do a really good job of ensuring students put patients and their families first and we also include how to have self care as a nurse and how important that is," Collins said. "For so long, it's been all about the patient and the client and it should continue to be, but we also have to remember we have to care for ourselves as well."

For more information about Northwestern Oklahoma State University, visit <https://www.nwsu.edu/school-of-professional-studies/nursing>.



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