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Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing

2019-2020 Annual Report



MISSION

In the Spirit of Christ and example of Saint Francis of Assisi, the mission of OSF College of Health Sciences is to offer health science education programs in an environment that encourages and supports open inquiry and advances in scholarship, while preparing exceptional and compassionate caregivers and health care professionals to practice in diverse and ever changing health care environments.

VISION

Embracing our Catholic heritage and teachings, the OSF College of Health Sciences will be a leader in health science education and the academic institution of choice.

VALUES

JUSTICE: Respect the personal worth and dignity of every student and person served regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender or religion.

COMPASSION: Provide a response encompassing the greatest care and love to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of students and the communities and populations we serve.

INTEGRITY: Uphold Catholic ethical principles, Catholic social teachings, and professional codes and ethical standards in education and practice.

TEAMWORK: Collaborate with each other, with members of the healthcare team, and with those served to deliver comprehensive, integrated and quality health care education.

TRUST: Communicate openly and honestly to foster trusting relationships among ourselves, our students and with those served.

STEWARDSHIP: Manage responsibly the fiscal, physical, technologic, and human resources of the College.

LEADERSHIP: Provide leadership in health care education and in the communities served.

STUDENT AND MISSION PARTNER

WELL-BEING: Demonstrate concern for the physical, spiritual, emotional and economic well-being of students and Mission Partners.

SUPPORTIVE LEARNING

AND WORK ENVIRONMENT: Create and sustain high quality learning and work environments which focus on comprehensive, integrated and innovative opportunities for learning, growth, development and desired outcomes.

TEACHING/MENTORING: Provide a learning-centered educational environment that focuses on excellence and fosters development in mind, body and spirit to prepare learners of the College to grow personally and professionally in their chosen roles and become health care leaders in their communities.

SCHOLARSHIP/RESEARCH: Cultivate a spirit of inquiry that leads to the development and dissemination of new knowledge and a lifelong commitment to learning.

SERVICE/PRACTICE: Apply knowledge, skills, and attributes of the chosen health science discipline in service to others utilizing evidence-based practices.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of the greatest joys I have is the opportunity to reflect upon the successes that have happened in the academic year. Like many of you, each day seems to have more to do than time to do it, each week my “to do” list gets longer, and each monthly meeting agenda seems more challenging than the week before. But at the end of the year, I look back and find one positive success after another. The 2019-2020 academic year will be cemented in my mind for years to come, but the greatest memory is how we triumphed. Within the pages of this report, you will see the wonderful stories of our challenges, accomplishments and successes. As usual, we have staff who journey ahead doing their best work to keep student and operational support humming whether it was in the office or working from home. We had faculty who maintained quality in their teaching whether it occurred between August and March 15 or following the massive and urgent change on March 17 to exclusively technology-enhanced teaching and clinical experiences. We also had students who embraced the full academic year and just kept learning – whether it was in the traditional class and clinical locations or from their home.

Along the journey, our successes included launching new programs such as the Acute Care Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner, post-graduate psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, and BSN-DNP Leader. Faculty teaching in the undergraduate program have been participating in development sessions related to strategies to teach students differently for the NCLEX-RN exam format which becomes effective in the near future. Due to student interest, faculty teaching in the graduate programs have been exploring the option of offering courses in a shorter time frame without compromising our history of positive student outcomes. As you read a bit further in the report, you will see that our fall 2019 and spring 2020 enrollments remained steady and we were able to celebrate the graduation of 200 students. Teaching and service remain high priorities of the college but you will also notice an increase on faculty scholarship this year.

I hope that you enjoy reading this Annual Report. I look forward to having another amazing academic year!

Sandie Soldwisch, PhD, APRN, ANP-BC



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Graduate Program has had another successful year. Our total enrollment is 155 graduate students; 18 of those are earning doctoral degrees and 137 are MSN and post graduate certificate students.

We continue to recruit nurses seeking to further their careers with an advanced role in nursing. Dr. Kelly Cone led the initiative for our first Virtual Open House. Many have asked what a Virtual Open House is and “what it looks like.” On our website, prospective students clicked on a banner link, which opened to the dates and times the Virtual Open Houses were offered. Next, the participants had a link connecting them to a video conferencing system allowing them to join the live Open House event. They could see and talk to graduate program faculty and other prospective students. The topics discussed were personalized to the needs of the participant based on their likely major and their questions. We had two to three times as many open house participants as we do when we have had open houses on campus.

Dr. Cone also worked with the Marketing Department to create professional-looking videos for each of our educational options, which can be viewed on the website (sfmcccon.edu). No one could have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Virtual Open House and explanatory videos were exceedingly timely during this period when social distancing limited our face-to-face options for meeting with prospective students. The final part of our recruiting effort centers on our new recruiter, Annie Schmitt, a former graduate of our program. Her knowledge of the College, and her enthusiastic approach to recruiting are enticing. The future of the Graduate Program looks bright.

The pandemic allowed the Graduate Program faculty, who always have taught exclusively online, to showcase their aptitude with online education. Undergraduate faculty, many of whom had limited experience teaching exclusively online, were aided by the expertise of the Graduate Program faculty for use of the video conferencing system and other online teaching modalities, which the graduate faculty shared willingly and abundantly.

The students in the Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner option will start their first clinical experiences this fall. Support from the nurses in the ICUs, who are willing to precept the students has been overwhelming and heartwarming. The interest in this program continues to be strong.

Best Nursing Programs ranked our Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Program as the 14th best program in the country for 2020. Programs are rated based on quality and student access. Dr. Laura Bowers, Lead Faculty for this program, is responsible for the excellent theoretical and clinical education provided to the students.

The Graduate Program continues to seek ways to enhance learning for our students and to make the MSN and doctoral programs even better. We look forward to a successful academic year.

Sincerely,



Kimberly A. Mitchell, PhD, RN, CNE



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

The Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing baccalaureate program has had another eventful year. I continue to note much academic promise in our baccalaureate students. The College provides many learning opportunities such as access to outstanding clinical sites, student volunteer opportunities, education abroad, and student governance opportunities, which allow students to grow and succeed. In addition, the College employs exceptional faculty and outstanding staff members who are devoted to promoting the students' academic and personal growth.

Our NCLEX RN pass rate continues to be over the state and national average. Multiple strategies are implemented to prepare students for the NCLEX RN licensure exam post-graduation. An NCLEX RN review course is embedded into the last semester of the baccalaureate curriculum. The review course ensures that all students are well prepared to take the licensure exam. In addition, all levels of the baccalaureate curriculum adhere to a test policy, which requires students to achieve a test score average of at least 77% to pass the core courses. This ensures that students have sufficient subject matter knowledge and test-taking skills to advance from one level of the curriculum to the next and to successfully complete the NCLEX RN licensure exam. Also, the number of alternative format test questions in each level of the curriculum is prescribed and rigorous. These questions help the students prepare for the type of questions and critical thinking necessary to pass the NCLEX RN exam. In addition, faculty are preparing for the upcoming changes to the NCLEX-RN called NCLEX Next Gen. Students will hear more about these changes as we approach the 2023 implementation date.

Student enrollment numbers are monitored closely each semester. OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center is the Level 1 trauma center in the region and includes OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois. Our students benefit from a diverse patient population and expert clinical faculty, and these factors continue to drive our students' preference for choosing Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the challenges we have and are still facing related to COVID-19. Our faculty, staff and students converted to all virtual classes and clinical over spring break mid-March. The magnitude of this change is hard to fathom if one is not involved in academia and nursing. Kudos to the faculty, staff and students for their dedication, hard work and creativity in providing the education and learning the material. It was impressive to see our academic community pull together and succeed in such challenging circumstances.

We have been blessed this year with the addition of new faculty members: Margaret Fortner, MSN, RN; Erin Havron, MSN, RN; Jordan Herring, MSN, RN, CNP; and Victoria Schick, MSN, RN. This highly qualified group will foster learning and growth in our BSN students in the classroom and clinical arenas.

This has been a great year filled with growth, opportunities and challenges. I am blessed to serve Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, the faculty and staff, and students. I look forward to another successful academic year.

Respectfully,



Suzanne C. Brown, PhD, DNP, RN



WHEN COVID-19 CAME

Administrators, faculty and students share how their lives changed for the pandemic Administrative response

Administrative Response

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic created unprecedented challenges for Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing and virtually every other academic institution across the country, but with quick thinking, ingenuity, teamwork and perseverance, the College has met those challenges head on.

“Of course it was a health emergency, but it also created an education emergency,” said College President Dr. Sandie Soldwisch of the global pandemic that struck in mid-March. “We needed to be able to keep our students safe and their faculty and staff safe, while still delivering a high-quality program.”

Among the biggest challenges were switching completely to online learning when schools were ordered to close and converting on-site clinical classes to virtual simulations when health care facilities began barring students for safety concerns.

The College had just gone on spring break when the global pandemic became a national emergency in the United States. Dr. Soldwisch and her leadership team spent many hours reviewing all the various guidelines being issued to schools and universities, as well as monitoring the status of continuing clinical education at hospitals and agencies, making sure faculty had the support they needed and communicating all the changes to the students so they could plan for at-home learning.

“There were 100 balls in the air, and we needed to make sure they went up and came down in a pretty synchronous manner,” Dr. Soldwisch said. “And this all was done within a week.”

The College extended spring break by one week for the students while faculty and staff buckled down to create virtual learning for classes, clinicals and labs.

“To turn a patient-facing clinical class to a virtual experience is something that would normally take months and months,” said Dr. Sue Brown, dean of the Undergraduate Program. “Our faculty did it in a week.”

Faculty creatively sought technology resources needed to allow for virtual learning, with many companies generously granting extended trials throughout the semester, Dr. Brown added. Among new resources used were lockdown browsers and video monitors to maintain the integrity of testing from home.

“Faculty created (clinical simulations) with case studies through their own experiences and things they had used in the past. There were some bumps in the road, but everybody navigated it,” Dr. Brown said. “We’re very proud of our faculty.”

Kevin Stephens, assistant dean of Support Services, said he was impressed that nobody seemed to panic in the face of such monumental changes. “We were able to make a lot of changes in a hurry, and everybody had a good attitude about it,” he said.

The biggest challenge for the graduate program was the inability of some students to get into health care facilities to complete their 500 required hours of direct patient care, said Dr. Kim Mitchell, dean of the Graduate Program.

“As a College, we made a temporary adjustment to our incomplete policy since the clinical sites weren’t available,” she said. “So we had people who needed to take an incomplete, but I think almost everyone has finished now.”

Because theory classes in the graduate program have historically been taught online anyway, graduate faculty were able to help some undergraduate instructors learn the technology.

“The graduate faculty stepped up to help anyone who needed it. It was quite impressive,” Dr. Mitchell said.

While students were understandably stressed by all the necessary changes at school on top of changes they were likely experiencing at home and work due to the pandemic, the College worked hard to maintain support services by adding online access to counseling, the library and the Academic Development Center.

“Their learning seems to have been sustained, and they exited the programs meeting all of the traditional outcomes,” Dr. Soldwisch said of the students. “That is an amazing feat.”

She added, “The faculty, staff and students were absolutely amazing. Everyone was committed to and sustained the ability to keep that high-quality education in place in a becoming way for students. That makes me really proud.”

And while many aspects of the pandemic remain uncertain, Dr. Soldwisch is confident that the College is prepared. “We know what worked and what didn’t, and we’ve taken time to analyze those things and make changes where we could,” she said. “So I think we are ready for whatever comes ahead.”

Faculty Response

Spring break 2020 was anything but restful for Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing faculty, but they rose to the challenge created by an unprecedented global pandemic.

“It was a really stressful time,” said Jordan Herring, MSN, RN, CPN, an assistant professor in the undergraduate program, about the need to make classes virtual after Gov. JB Pritzker ordered all schools to close in mid-March due to the COVID-19 crisis.

“Trying to get everything online, as well as trying to make sure that everything was good for the students so they were understanding what they were learning, was very difficult,” Herring said. “But I feel like everybody worked so well together, and that made the stress level a little less.”

Faculty members were given academic freedom to determine how best to teach their classes, whether that be lecturing in real time online or uploading virtual lectures the students could watch on their time.

“Students, as well as teachers, were trying to juggle many different things, so we had to be very flexible and communicate often with them,” Herring added. “We got positive feedback from the students, so it was really nice to hear that at the end of the semester.”

To address issues related to testing from home, Herring and other instructors set time limits and sometimes used a lockdown browser to keep students from clicking out of the test screen.

“It put a lot of accountability on the students to make sure they were following policy,” Herring said. “I think this whole experience has taught our students about flexibility and professionalism.”

Graduate Professor Theresa Hoadley, PhD, RN, TNS, and her colleagues brainstormed ways to create virtual learning that had the same rigor as in previous semesters so students could pass their boards.

“For the clinical part, each one of us took a week and basically wrote a case study,” she said. Students had a day to prepare before meeting with the instructors virtually to discuss and defend their approach to treating the patient.

For an Emergency Department elective she teaches, Hoadley created five case studies dealing with different forms of COVID-19.

“The students found it interesting, because this is something none of us has ever seen or dealt with before,” she said.

Hoadley also got creative when it came to teaching and evaluating head-to-toe trauma assessment online. “We used stuffed animals they had in their house and, in some cases, we used their children,” she said.

Hoadley plans to continue making videos of her lectures, even as some classes have returned to in-person learning. “It will help our students enhance all the different types of learning. And also, if we do have a resurgence, we can carry on even better than before,” she said.

Leigh Ann Bonney, PhD, CCRN, RN, an associate professor in the graduate program, said graduate faculty made it a priority to listen to the students and be flexible in supporting them while maintaining the rigor of the program.

“It was a balancing act to meet them where they are and make sure we were caring for them, as well as educating them,” she said. “Because the students we are teaching are at the bedside and are on the frontline of COVID-19. So it was a very challenging and stressful time for them, which is why we had to be flexible with due dates and giving extensions.”

The students were good about sharing their experiences, and faculty worked with their individual situations. “But I never had anybody slack off or take advantage,” Bonney said. “I think they rose to the challenge and met it beautifully.”

She also believes the College handled the situation with ease and grace. “As a nurse, you have to be adaptable and flexible because things change minute to minute,” she said. “So this has definitely been a life lesson that can help the students in their profession, as well as in life in general.”

Student Response

Students at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing were understandably anxious when the College was forced by to pivot to remote learning during Spring Break 2020 because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, but it didn't stop their dedication to learning or their goal to become high-quality nurses.

"The College had to adapt very quickly, and I feel like they did it effectively," said Jenna Ehnle, an undergrad on target to graduate in December. "Our teachers had to put in a lot of time and hours to get lectures and tests online."

Recorded lectures for theory classes went well, and implementation of a lockdown browser helped encourage integrity while taking tests, Ehnle said.

"The biggest struggle for me was not being able to be on the floor for clinicals," she added. "We did a lot of case studies that required critical thinking, which was good. It was hard not being able to do the hands-on skills, but they did everything they could to still ensure that we were learning and getting experience with different diagnoses."

Ehnle also appreciated that her professors responded promptly to questions by email or phone and she credited the College with working on her behalf to ensure she could still do a summer internship in general pediatrics at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center. "It was only six weeks instead of 10, but I still got a lot of hands-on experience in practicing my nursing skills, so I feel more confident going into my last semester," she said.

Ehnle believes the whole pandemic experience will eventually help her in her career. "Having to be resilient and adapting to change like we did is an important skill to have in nursing. Navigating online classes also taught me time management and prioritization, which will carry over into my nursing career," Ehnle said.

Fellow undergrad Caleb Miller, who also expects to graduate in December, said the changes were stressful at first. "It was hard to navigate for the first week or two, but once I got it down, I was fine for the rest of the semester," he said.

"I think the College did an awesome job in figuring a way through the pandemic to keep us learning," Miller added. "They also kept giving us updates to let us know what the plan was going forward, and I appreciated that."

Miller said he valued the simulated case studies professors created when in-person clinicals were canceled.

"I felt we got a deeper and broader knowledge of certain disease processes, lab values and why certain medications are being given for that disease process," he said.

In addition, Miller, who also works and has a family, said he felt supported by his professors during a time when his wife's grandfather was at their home on hospice care.

"One of my clinical professors was very understanding of my situation and gave me extra time if I needed it to submit clinical work," he said. "She also checked in on me to see how I was doing and how my family was doing."

Graduate student Alex Sherbeyn, BSN, RN, who expects to graduate in December, said his professors were understanding of his situation working full-time as a quality and safety manager for the medical center.

"I had a lot of things coming at me from work, and the instructors I had during the spring semester when COVID really hit were very accommodating and understanding," Sherbeyn said. "It really helped and it made me feel supported. They knew what was going on, and they wanted us to succeed."

Sherbeyn even shared some of the words of encouragement and stress management tips that the College regularly sent to students with his work team. "Certain members of my team reached out and said the words that came from my school really helped them, and it was nice to hear that," he said.

"From a graduate student perspective and my position within OSF, I feel the College responded appropriately," Sherbeyn added. "This was something new to everyone and something we really haven't experienced in our lifetime. I think they did everything they could, given the situation."

STUDENTS BOLSTERED BY EMERGENCY GRANTS

On April 10, 2020, Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing assured students a process was being put into place to facilitate decisions related to the Emergency Financial Aid Grants (named Emergency Student Relief Funding for COVID-19). This funding is available to assist students with expenses related to COVID-19 campus disruption. An Emergency Financial Aid Grants task force was convened to determine eligibility criteria for awarding these funds. The task force solicited input through informal surveys of students requesting information about the impact of the COVID-19 on them and their student role. Students reported items such as:

- need to purchase new technology
- need to rent or purchase electronic educational resources or other learning packages
- disruption of study due to a need to provide childcare and eldercare (related to closure of these facilities)
- unreliable internet access which necessitated travel to a more reliable source or purchase of better internet providers
- loss of income which strained the ability to cover the costs of housing, utilities and food

The task force reviewed the survey data, a peer college survey, and shared information from other benchmark colleges. Based on this review, the task force determined the need for this financial relief crossed the full spectrum of enrolled students. Therefore, the criteria for eligibility for this fund would be:

- Enrollment at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing during the Spring 2020 semester
- Eligibility for participation in Title IV funding

Final award amounts would be based on the number of eligible students. The total available student portion of funds would be divided by the total number of eligible students.

On June 9, 2020, Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing received, via the Department of Education Grant's Management System, the institutional minimum student allocation for the Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students. As of September 8, 2020, a total of \$159,178 has been awarded in the form of Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Student to 272 eligible students.

VIRTUAL GRADUATION SPRING 2020

The College faculty and staff wanted the Spring 2020 graduating students to have a memorable graduation experience. Their objectives for the virtual graduation were to personalize it, capture some of the most meaningful aspects of the in-person graduation, and emphasize our Catholic roots.

To personalize the event, each student was asked to submit a photo of himself or herself in graduation regalia. Prior to the virtual graduation event, a copy of the graduation program and a delicate praying hands pin were mailed to the students. In addition, the students were sent the link for the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony began with an opening prayer. Sister Judith Ann Duvall, OSF, Chairperson of the Board of OSF HealthCare, gave an inspiring "from the heart" graduation address.

Father Dennis Spohrer, assistant chaplain, OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center, conducted a blessing of the hands, which he began with a moving prayer. Father concluded the ceremony with a blessing of the graduates.

One hundred people logged in to celebrate this momentous occasion.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Joe Welch



Working as an emergency department nurse for five years and serving in the Illinois Army National Guard, Joe Welch knew he wanted to be a provider, so he enrolled in the FNP program at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing.

“I really have enjoyed nursing. As a nurse, you’re always critically thinking and always being challenged. But I wanted to evolve and become a better me, so the next step for me was to become a practitioner,” Joe said.

After enrolling in the FNP program in 2016, Joe left the emergency department to work as a registered nurse at the VA Clinic in Peoria and joined the Illinois Air National Guard as a critical care nurse when he finished his enlistment with the Illinois Army National Guard.

Working, serving in the military, raising a family and going to school was challenging but doable for an organized nurse like Joe, but then the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in March.

“Clinicals were canceled, and I got activated on March 16,” Joe said. “I was the officer in charge of a COVID-19 testing site in Chicago in Harwood Heights.”

During his deployment, the father of two worked hard to keep up with his online coursework.

“It was challenging because it was everybody’s first time dealing with this type of pandemic. So I was working long hours, getting phone calls at all times of night and dealing with lower-ranking enlisted men or

officers under me,” he said. “I really had to focus on my mission, but I also had to focus on my school work so I could continue to move forward.”

During Joe’s time leading the COVID-19 testing site, his crew collected just under 35,000 testing swabs before he returned home on May 31.

As for the College, Joe said, “Everyone was very helpful and understanding and appreciative of what I was doing, which really helped. They also allowed us to do simulated clinicals, so there were some opportunities for me to do that.”

He was able to temporarily push back a few big papers and assignments while deployed but kept up with tests as best he could to avoid falling too far behind.

“Now I have to do 256 hours of clinicals in my final semester,” said Joe, who plans to take some time off work to complete those hours.

Joe went into a medical career hoping to make a positive impact on people within the community and to take care of those that need it most, and he’s looking forward to taking on the role of nurse practitioner when he finishes his degree in December.

He advises future nurses to “continue to learn and grow and challenge yourself. It’s a lot of work for sure, but it’s very rewarding.”

Joe and his wife, Brittany, a neonatal nurse practitioner who earned her master’s degree at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, have a 4-year-old son and a 2-year-old daughter.

SISTER M. LUDGERA AWARDS

Fall Recipient: Emily Bess, MSN, APRN, FNP-C



For Emily Bess, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, winning the Sister M. Ludgera Award in Fall 2019 was a testament to her father, who had tragically died unexpectedly while she was in graduate school.

“My father, Tom McClain, taught me what it was to work hard, care deeply for your family and friends and above all, love the Lord,” said Emily, a family nurse practitioner at St. Margaret’s Hospital in Spring Valley.

Emily’s nomination credited her with being the only student to ever score a perfect 100 on a head-to-toe assessment and praised her for being a leader and role model.

To master the assessment, Emily said, “I studied a lot and practiced endlessly. My poor kids probably know all the cranial nerves from me practicing on them, and they’re only 8 and 6.”

As a child, Emily was inspired by her mother’s best friend, Jen Goad, a nurse who lived down the street. “I was one of 10 children, so Jen was always offering-much needed medical advice to a brother or sister of mine,” she said. “Seeing how she deeply loved and cared for those around her and how much people trusted her judgment and knowledge laid an early foundation for who I wanted to become years later.”

Upon receiving the award, Emily recalled learning about Sister M. Ludgera’s life and her selflessness. “It is truly an honor to be named a recipient of this award alongside those that have come before me. As a recipient of this award, I can only hope to be an example of her selfless servitude to all of my future patients,” she said.

Spring Recipient: Desi Walker, MSN, RN, RNC-MNN



Dizzaray “Desi” Walker, MSN, RN, RNC-MNN, was both surprised and humbled to receive the Spring 2020 Sister M. Ludgera Award.

“You think you’re doing one thing, and God has a completely different plan for you,” she said. “You think you’re there to learn for yourself, and really you’re touching the lives of other people you may not even know.”

Desi’s award nomination lauded her for being an exceptional student, as well as a natural leader and role model for her peers. Desi finished her required practicum hours early but elected to continue working with her preceptors.

“I thought it would help me to get that extra experience because I had such good mentors and good leadership, and I also thought it would help them, too, because all things in health care change continuously and COVID-19 happened right about that time,” Desi said. “Being able to help them transition to that online format and just being a part of all that was very exciting.”

A southern Illinois native, Desi started her nursing career in 2014 when she earned her undergraduate nursing degree from the College after working for about 20 years in a funeral home. “I had two passions: teaching and nursing,” she said.

Desi has been able to combine her passions by working first as a medical-surgical nurse at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center, then transitioning to become a clinical educator and now a clinical education scholar in the professional development center.

“I just love nursing and education, and I think any way you can help someone and help them achieve their goals, it’s just so beautiful,” she said.



SISTER M. LUDGERA

The award is named in honor of Sister Mary Ludgera, RN, PhD, who led the transformation of the School of Nursing to the College of Nursing. Born in Germany in 1927, she came to the United States and earned her diploma from the Saint Francis Hospital School of Nursing in 1956. Over the next 20 years, she worked in a number of nursing roles at different hospitals and also got involved in nursing education.

In 1976, she was named director of the School of Nursing. From 1983–86, Sister Ludgera and her faculty initiated the transition from a general nursing program to one that offered a BSN. The first class of baccalaureate students graduated in 1988. Graduate programs would follow, and the College grew in stature. Sister Ludgera led the College for 27 years, before her death during a trip to Germany in 2004.

The Sister M. Ludgera Award is presented to a graduate of the College’s master’s program who has demonstrated outstanding nursing practice, caring patient interactions, problem-solving abilities or outstanding teaching abilities.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dana McVicker, RN, MSN



Whether teaching patients how to care for themselves or teaching students how to care for others, Dana McVicker, RN, MSN, has always had a passion for assisting others and educating them.

Dana earned her nursing degrees at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing and joined the College as a faculty member in 2018 after working

for nine years as a registered nurse and three years as a clinical educator at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center.

Her interest in nursing grew from a natural fascination with health care. “The body’s ability to adapt has always been a fascinating thing to me and how it’s able to compensate when it’s stressed,” said Dana, a lifelong athlete who grew up in Macomb. “And with nursing, there are many types of practice environments you could enter to really apply the concepts that you’ve learned.”

As a nurse, Dana enjoyed patient interaction the most. “Especially being able to promote self-health with patients so they can maintain their own health to prevent disease and really become their own advocates,” she said.

Later, as a clinical educator on the cardiothoracic floor, she helped guide recently graduated nurses entering the profession in the transition from classroom to clinical setting, which inspired her to go back to school for her MSN in nursing education.

Dana was happy to then return to the College as faculty, teaching pathophysiology in the undergraduate program and clinicals on the floor she previously worked on.

“We have a wonderful setting at the College,” she said. “You have the ability to be at a Level 1 trauma center, and I don’t think every place has that. Having those resources and the level of knowledge that the staff has overall is a big factor in educating our students.”

Dana helped restructure the pathophysiology course with promotion of active learning and an online approach that became even more valuable during the pandemic.

“We restructured with the use of technology, using a lot of different applications where they can draw their answers or submit videos of their answers,” she said.

In one online project, students choose their own adventure. “We ask a question about a patient and provide them limited details, and they tell us the next step they would take. There’s a QR code we generated that they can scan to pull up more patient information. It was kind of fun just developing those different things to really try to engage them and maintain that level of interest,” Dana said.

Helping students learn to see the big picture when caring for patients and watching their confidence grow as they progress through the program are two things she loves about teaching.

“I enjoy seeing the difference in what they know from the starting point to later on when they get to their clinical experience. Also, a lot of them are just really seeking out wanting to care for people. They have a very kind nature. I think that’s another thing that really promoted me to go into the profession,” she said.

When Dana isn’t teaching, she enjoys outdoor activities with her family, including her 4-year-old and 17-year-old children.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Bev Reynolds, RN, EdD, CNE



Bev Reynolds, RN, EdD, CNE, recently retired as a professor at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing after a stellar career in both nursing and teaching.

“I was called to be a nurse and then I was called to teach nurses. So I feel like I’ve had a dual-pronged career and have loved both parts of it,” Dr. Reynolds said.

She graduated from the College in 1975 with a diploma in nursing and in 1989 with a BSN. She later earned her MSN from the University of Illinois at Chicago and her Doctor of Education from Illinois State University.

Dr. Reynolds knew from a very young age what her life’s work would be.

“I’ve wanted to be a nurse since I was 7 years old,” she said. “It was something I always felt like I was meant to do, and I never wavered from that.”

Her first exposure to the College came in high school when her mother, who was hospitalized at the time for cancer treatment, asked a student nurse to give her a tour of the nursing school.

“The College has such a special culture. It is definitely a family-type atmosphere. I really felt like I was part of something,” Dr. Reynolds recalled.

She began her nursing career on the coronary care unit at Saint Francis Medical Center in 1975 and went on to serve in many other capacities, including emergency room nursing and as an administrative nursing supervisor.

“I have had so many incredible opportunities and experiences. The highlights, I would say, would be the diversity in nursing practice that I’ve had the chance to experience firsthand,” Dr. Reynolds said.

While practicing as a nurse, she began to see the benefit of teaching others, serving as a preceptor and then as a clinical educator, which led to becoming a professor. Dr. Reynolds has been instrumental in helping to implement several innovative changes at the College, including introduction of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). She also helped start a peer teaching program that has grown into the Academic Development Center, and she led the implementation of Adobe Connect in the College’s online classes.

“These things really were instruments of change and progress that showed me, as well as our students, just how progressive we are for such a small school. We are on the cutting edge,” Dr. Reynolds said.

She advises new students to recognize that nursing is a way of life. “The nurse’s role is so incredibly important. It’s like we’re the cogs in the wheel that keep things going. It’s only the nurse who looks at every single aspect of the patient and addresses their needs. That’s a huge responsibility. You really have to be devoted to it,” she said.

In retirement, Dr. Reynolds and her husband, Bob, plan to enjoy more time visiting their two adult children and their grandchildren. “I’m kind of excited to see what the future brings. I’m looking forward to whatever comes next,” she said.

RECOGNITIONS

RegisteredNursing.org

RegisteredNursing.org ranked Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing among the best in Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP) Master's Degree Programs. The college is ranked number two in the nation.

Rankings are figured on a point system based on several different criteria, including graduation rates, acceptance rates, and ratio of tenured instructional faculty.

"We have offered the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Master's Program for 11 years now, and are proud of the graduates who have gone on to work at some of the best medical centers in the country, including OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois in Peoria," said Kim Mitchell, Dean Graduate Program, Saint Francis College of Nursing. "We are honored to be recognized by RegisteredNursing.org. It validates the quality of the graduate nursing programs we offer and supports our tradition of excellence in nursing education."

OnlineU

OnlineU ranked Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing as the 12th most affordable online nurse practitioner program for 2020.

RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Miller, T. (2021). Nutrition. In P.A. Perry, A.G. Potter, P.A. Stockert, & A.M. Hall (Ed.), *Fundamentals of Nursing* (10th ed., pp. TBD). Mosby.

Miller, T. (2021). Enteral Nutrition. In P.A. Perry, A.G. Potter, W. Ostendorf, & N. Laplante (Ed.), *Clinical Nursing Skills & Techniques* (10th ed., pp. TBD). Mosby.

Wright-Boon, C.J. (2021). Oxygen therapy. In A. Perry, P. Potter, W. Ostendorf, & N. Laplante (Ed.), *Clinical Nursing Skills & Techniques* (10th ed., pp. TBD). Mosby.

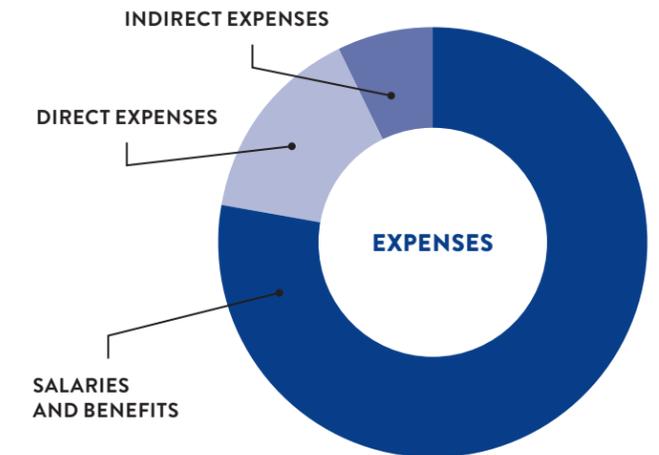
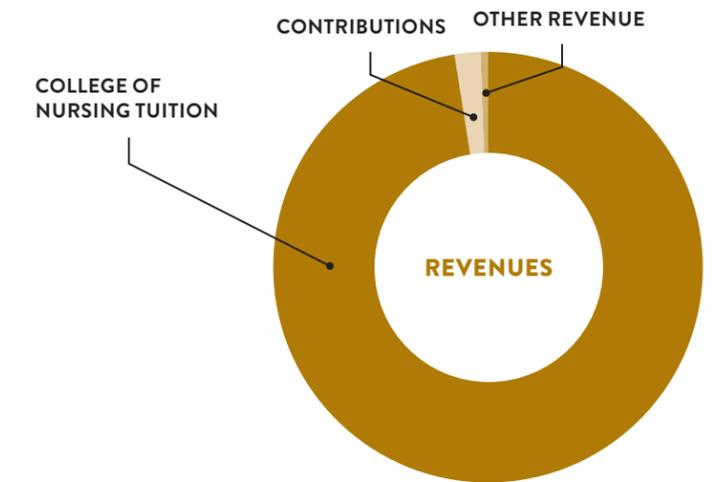
Wright-Boon, C.J. (2021). Airway management. In A. Perry, P. Potter, W. Ostendorf, & N. Laplante (Ed.), *Clinical Nursing Skills & Techniques* (10th ed., pp. TBD). Mosby.

SCHOLARSHIPS

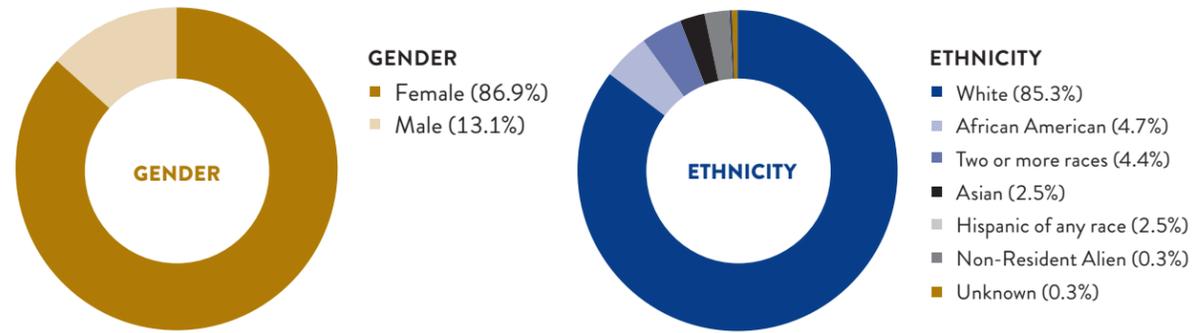
For 2019/2020, the College of Nursing awarded \$39,546 in scholarships to 19 graduate students and \$138,438 in scholarships to 66 undergraduate students.

FINANCIALS

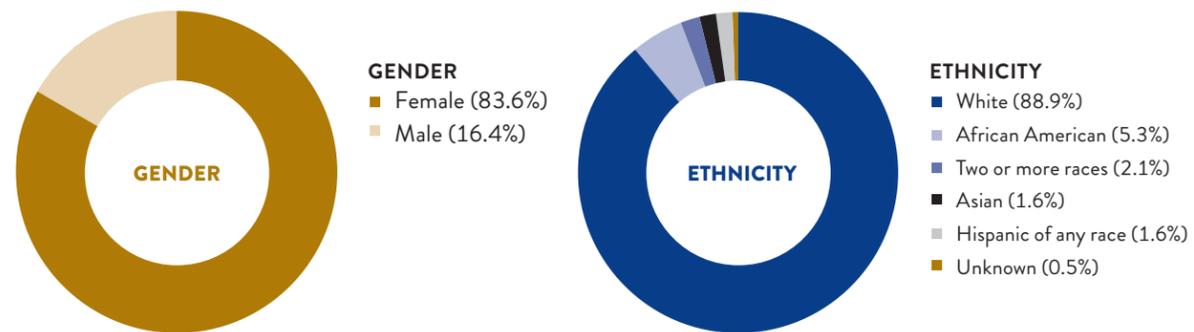
REVENUES	
Total revenue <i>(including federal support)</i>	\$7,846,943
EXPENSES	
Salaries and benefits	\$6,047,524
Direct expenses <i>(e.g. maintenance, marketing, equipment)</i>	\$1,154,890
Indirect expenses <i>(e.g., rent and utilities)</i>	\$644,529
Total net income	\$0



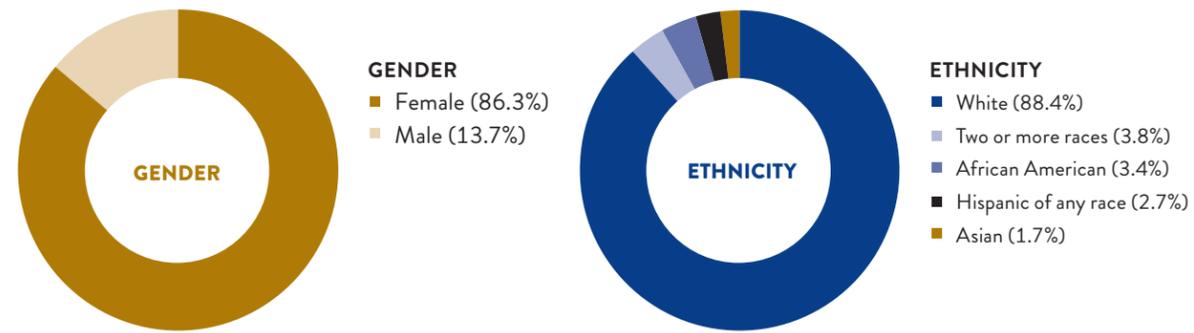
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT DATA – FALL 2019



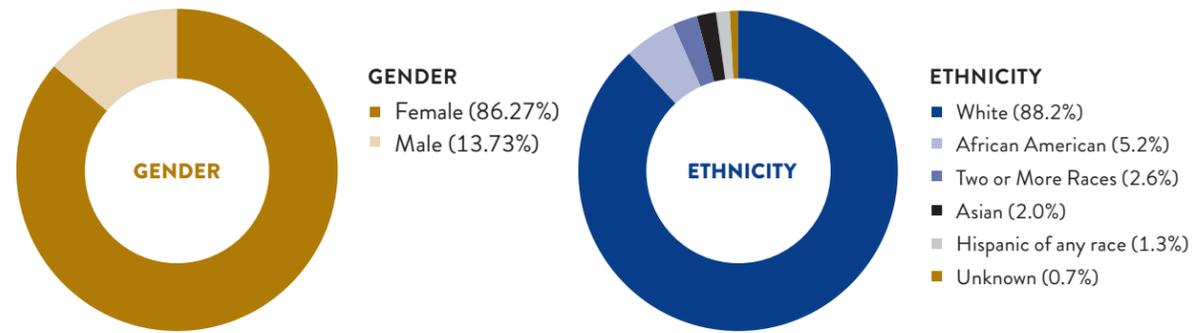
GRADUATE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT DATA – FALL 2019



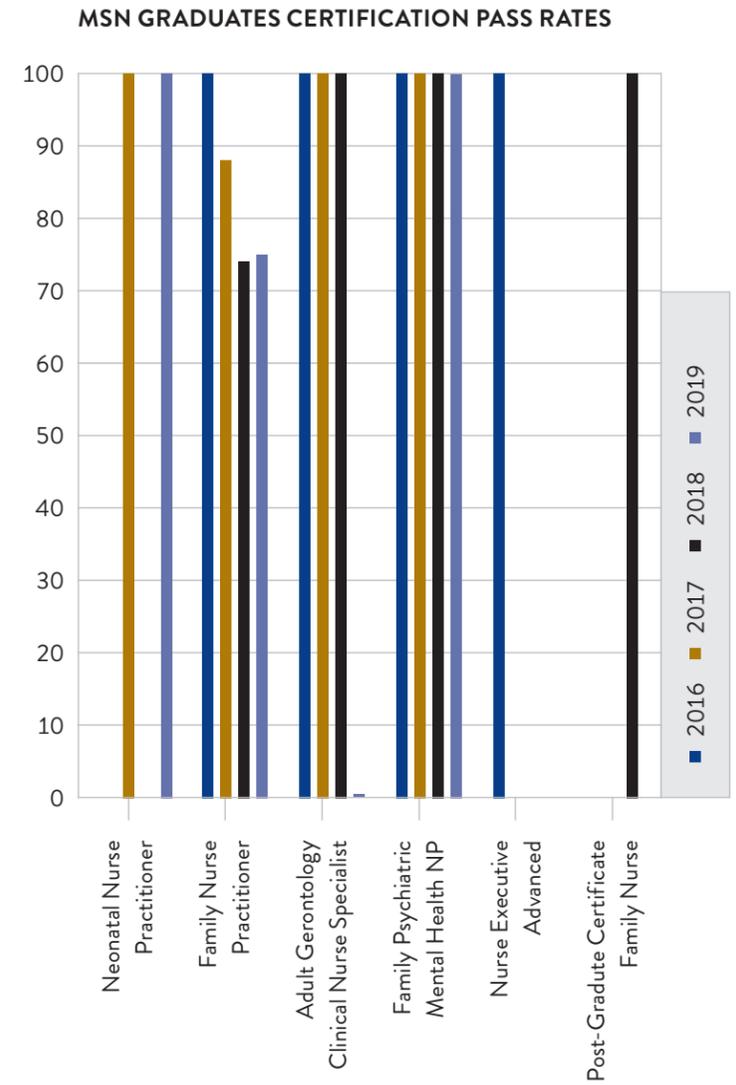
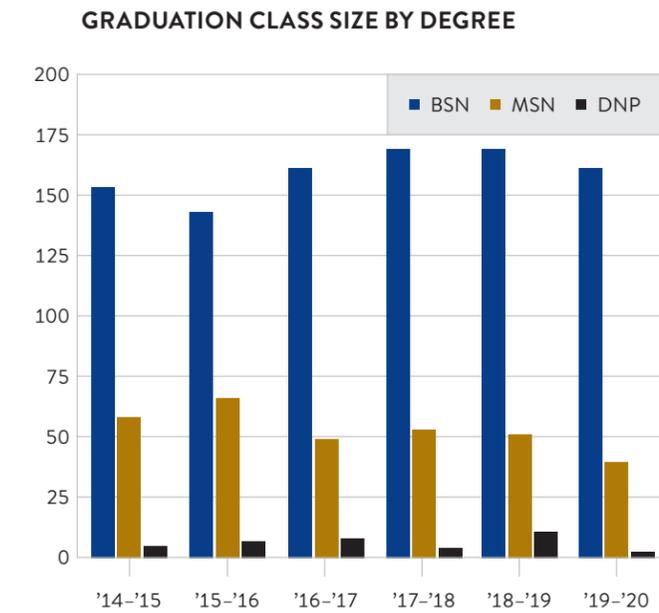
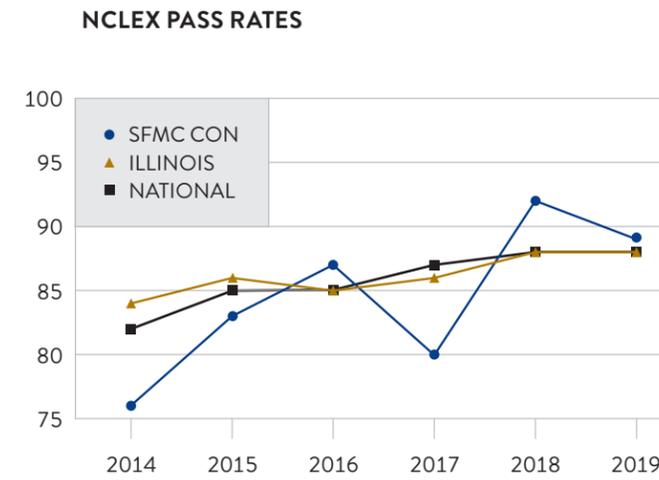
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT DATA – SPRING 2020



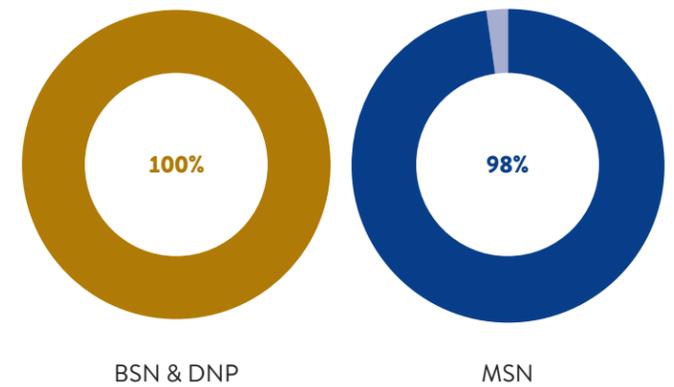
GRADUATE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT DATA – SPRING 2020



STATISTICS



JOB PLACEMENT WITHIN ONE YEAR DECEMBER 2018 - MAY 2019



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