

Director' Welcome



One of the many personal philosophies I live by is "The only thing constant in life is change." Many changes are occurring at Chatham and in the nursing department, several of which you will read about in this newsletter. The most noteworthy for the department is the retirement of Dr. Diane Hunker from full-time faculty. I have had the honor of working with Dr. Hunker for over 15 years. During that time, I have been educated, challenged, and encouraged to learn and grow as a professional educator, academic advisor, and scholar. I am humbled and excited to assume the role of Interim Program Director and Department Chair for Nursing. I look forward to leading the nursing department through changes and challenges; extending the high-quality education we offer.

I am also excited to work with the amazing faculty and staff of the nursing department in this capacity. I am continuously impressed by the people associated with the department. This hard-working, dedicated,

knowledgeable group of individuals live the mission of providing quality education and improving health care through advancing nurses and nursing. I am proud to be a part of this team!

I am also looking forward to working with students on a wider scale. Chatham nursing students are inspirational in their dedication to exceptional patient care and advancing health. My daily goal is to provide students with the best evidence-based education I can.

Another goal of mine is to always be approachable. If you ever have questions or ideas for the nursing department, please contact me. I would love to hear from you!

As I close, I would like to wish Dr. Hunker every happiness as she moves forward to her next life adventures. Thank you for your efforts, guidance, and friendship. Our department will not be the same without you.

Best regards,
Julie Slade, Ph.D., DNP, RN, CNE
*Interim Director of Nursing Programs and
Department Chair, Associate Professor of Nursing*



Message from the Editor

The Chatham University nursing programs are pleased to share this edition of InTouch, a 2024-2025 Year in Review. This issue provides an overview of student and faculty accomplishments, alumni achievements, and various activities that occurred over the last academic year amidst our new challenges and changes as we transition to new program leadership. This newsletter was developed through collaborative writing with nursing program faculty serving as contributing authors.

Enjoy!
Dr. Emily Hopkins

From the Dean



The academic year 2024-2025 proved to be another challenging yet highly productive year for the nursing department. Thanks to the efforts of many, including Brandy Gershon, the College of Health Science's

Partnership Administrator, we have been able to optimize and strengthen our processes with Pathways to Nursing and the general education courses we provide to the UPMC Schools of Nursing. Additionally, our partnership with UPMC has resulted in many students enrolling in our RN-BSN and MSN programs. DNP students continue to innovate the profession while learning the process for high quality evidence-based practice projects. We look forward to continued success while we add more highly educated and professional nurse leaders into the community.

This year, the Chatham nursing faculty have continued to design, implement and evaluate significant changes to the programs responding to the call for competency-based education and new degree Essentials for Nursing Education published by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. I applaud their continued academic efforts, particularly while they continue to serve the department, the University, the profession, and their patients.

I am pleased to work with Dr. Julie Slade, as the new Interim Program Director and Department Chair of Nursing. I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Diane Hunker for her significant efforts to the University, college, and department over the past 18 years. I wish her continued success, health, and happiness during her retirement. She will be missed!



Chatham University and Nursing Department Recent Transitions

●●● Both Chatham University and the nursing department have experienced changes in leadership over the summer of 2025. Dr. Rhonda Phillips, Chatham's 20th President, parted ways with the University in May to become St. Mary's College of Maryland's eighth president. **Dr. Lisa Lambert**, prior interim Provost and longtime Chatham faculty, has been named interim President. **Dr. Matthew Redinger**, who joined Chatham this past year from Montana where he was a Provost at the University of Providence, was named the interim Provost. With Dean Salvador Bondoc still at the helm of the College of Health Sciences (CHS), we expect minimal impact from these University transitions, especially given the long-standing tenure at the University by President Lambert.

Dr. Diane Hunker stepped down from the Program Director of Nursing on June 30, 2025, after 13 years in the role (and is subsequently retiring). **Dr. Julie Slade**, previous Assistant Program Director, was named interim Program Director by Dean Bondoc. **Dr. Ashley Singh**, who began her role in department leadership last year by being named the DNP Program Coordinator, was named Assistant Program Director. She will remain in a dual administrative post.

Dr. Lora Walter has decided to also step down from her leadership role and focus on teaching. She served as the undergraduate RN-BSN and Pathways to Nursing Program Coordinator for 12 years. **Dr. Anna Vioral**, new to Chatham in the last academic year, has been named the new RN-BSN Program Coordinator. **Dr. Emily Hopkins**

will remain the MSN Program Coordinator. Dr. Hopkins also serves as Chatham's IRB Chair, a very significant role for the University.

Finally, we have also experienced some changes to our department's administrative staff. **Georgina McClellan**, previous Nursing Program Assistant, has been promoted to Office Coordinator for the College of Health Sciences, reporting directly to the Dean. **Raquel Lemelle** started as the Nursing Program Assistant in June. **Cathy Natalia** will remain nursing's Practice Experience Coordinator; however, she will now report directly to the Dean as she will support other CHS programs as well.

Congratulations to everyone for these well-deserved promotions!

NEW FACULTY

Dr. Anna Vioral Joins Chatham as Assistant Professor of Nursing and RN-BSN Program Coordinator



●●● Chatham University welcomed Anna Vioral, Ph.D, MEd, RN, OCN, BMTCN as a full-time faculty member in January 2025. Dr. Vioral brings over three decades of oncology clinical experience and two decades of nursing adjunct faculty experience to the University's nursing programs.

Dr. Vioral began her nursing journey as a candy striper at the age of 14 and found her oncology passion with over 3,000 hours on the oncology unit over the next 5 years. She then pursued her undergraduate BSN at Albright college (1989) and worked clinically in acute care oncology nursing. After 10 years, she found her second passion in nursing education and pursued both her MSN in Education at Duquesne University in 2004 and an MS of Adult Education with a Certificate of Distance Education at Penn State University World Campus in 2008. During that time, Dr. Vioral continued to work in oncology

both clinically and as an oncology education specialist. She also broadened her nursing education passion as adjunct faculty in several onsite and online nursing programs for over two decades, including Chatham University for the last 10 years.

In 2014 Dr. Vioral completed her Ph.D. in Nursing Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her areas of scholarship include oncology education related to competency-based education, accreditation standards and program development, certification, and leadership. She is an active leader including Board Positions within the Oncology Nursing Society and Certification Corporation as well as a consultant for the American Society of Clinical Oncology. She has also authored several book chapters, and published research in oncology education and healthcare leadership as well as over 25 peer reviewed publications.

In her spare time, she enjoys her four children ages 19-29, her dogs (boxers), long distance running, skiing, and traveling.



Dr. Diane Hunker to Retire from Chatham University after 18 years



◆◆◆ Diane Hunker, Ph.D., MBA, RN began her nursing career as a staff nurse in maternal-infant health at a local Pittsburgh hospital. While working in the position, Dr. Hunker completed her Masters in Business Administration, which supported her transition into other roles including healthcare informatics

consulting, project management, account management, and finance. After 11 years, Dr. Hunker wanted to explore combining her clinical roots with her interest in teaching and mentoring and decided to complete her Ph.D. in Nursing, at the University of Pittsburgh. Equipped with her experience and doctorate, Dr. Hunker pivoted into academics, joining Chatham University's nursing department in August 2007.

As a new faculty, she quickly learned through “on the job” training and was an integral part of the launch of the online Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at Chatham in 2007. Dr. Hunker was appointed the first DNP Program Coordinator and stayed in that role for over 13 years. Having had many years of experience in leadership, Dr. Hunker was named the inaugural Assistant Program Director in 2012. A year later she was asked to be the Program Director for the department. In 2018, Dr. Hunker was promoted to full professor status. Under Dr. Hunker's leadership, Chatham has graduated over 1,100 DNP graduates and hosted over 35 DNP on-campus residencies.

Over the past 18 years, Dr. Hunker has made significant contributions to the nursing programs and Chatham University in general. At the department level, Dr. Hunker participated in or lead the department through four Commission on Collegiate Nursing accreditation reviews, including the most recent in 2019 which

achieved the awarding of a full ten-year renewal. In addition, Dr. Hunker led the department through the development of several new academic offerings and major programmatic revisions. Most notably, Dr. Hunker worked with others in the University to welcome four cohorts of MSN students from Shanghai, China. Over the course of four years, 49 nurses from China lived and learned on Chatham's campus while completing their MSN degrees. Further, Dr. Hunker was part of the team that founded Chatham's virtual Nursing Honor Society in 2014, which was later inducted as the Chi Zeta Chapter into Sigma Theta Tau International.

At the university level, Dr. Hunker provided service to the Institutional Review Board, the Faculty Review Committee, the University Committee, the Faculty Tenure/Contracts Work Group, the Shared Governance Subcommittee, the Academic Advisory Task Force, and the Continuing Education Governing Council. She served as a Middle States Commission on Higher Education Work Group Co-chair and as the Chair for the last Dean of College of Health Sciences search.

Through the years, under Dr. Hunker's leadership, the department has hired 11 nursing faculty and several staff members. Dr. Hunker has taught over 20 different online courses across the nursing programs. She has completed over 30 manuscripts focused on graduate and online nursing education, graduate student writing development, and maternal-infant health, and served as a peer reviewer for over a dozen journals.

Dr. Hunker's best memories while at Chatham include personal interactions with students. The many on campus DNP student Residencies were always special. She stated, “being able to meet students from all over the country in person was always the highlight of the academic year”. In the “early years”, she had the opportunity to teach MSN

students onsite at UPMC Shadyside Hospital every other week and found that hybrid model to be really rewarding. She also enjoyed mentoring, leading, and supporting the nursing faculty and staff and appreciates their collegiality and efforts. Other memorable times include having office space at Coolidge Hall on the Shadyside campus, traveling to China to set up the Shanghai partnership, and the many department retreats and celebrations over the years. She is grateful for the friendships she has made both in and outside of the department and plans to remain on faculty as an adjunct. During her retirement she plans to travel, spend time with family and friends, and hopefully find ample ways to give back to the community and grow in all ways possible.



Nursing faculty and staff celebrate with Dr. Hunker upon her retirement.

Chatham University and the nursing department will be forever grateful for Dr. Hunker's efforts and inspiration. The department certainly won't be the same without her. We wish Dr. Hunker the best in her retirement.



FACULTY NEWS & UPDATES

NEW STAFF

Brandy Gershon Returns to Chatham



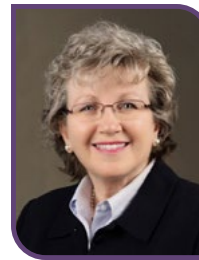
●●● Brandy Gershon returned to Chatham in August 2024 to serve as the new Partnerships Administrator for the College of Health Sciences after stepping away from the University in late 2021 as the Director of Undergraduate Admissions. Brandy notes that returning felt like a welcome home since “Chatham has been a huge part of my life for the last ten years. Returning was easy; I stepped back into a community that I know well. Although my position has changed, I am still dedicated to seeing our students and the University thrive.” In her current role, Brandy oversees the UPMC Partnership, Pathways to Nursing program, and other areas within the College of Health Sciences.

While completing her Ed.D. at Duquesne University, Brandy received the Horton Coe Southworth Educational Leadership Award and Scholarship. This is a commemorative award to honor the late Dr. Horton Coe Southworth, who was a scholar in residence at the Duquesne University School of Education as well as one of the original developers of Duquesne’s Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program. The award is given to a student in the program for demonstrating vision, altruism, collaboration, and a commitment to social justice. The award recipient is voted on by professors in the program and members of each doctoral cohort. Brandy stated that, “I was surprised and humbled when the award was announced. I have amazing professors and colleagues, and I am honored that they recognize my ability to lead and be a change maker.”

Dr. Gershon is a true asset to the College of Health Sciences as she brings experience, knowledge, and talent to the department. The nursing programs look forward to working with Brandy for many years to come.

ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Jackie Donaldson, MSN, RN



●●● Jackie (Jacqueline) Donaldson, MSN, RN, has been a nurse for more than 40 years. Jackie began her nursing career after receiving her Diploma from the Pittsburgh Hospital School of Nursing which was run by the Sisters of Charity. She then completed her BSN and MSN with a concentration in education at the University of Pittsburgh. During her BSN program, Jackie worked as a research nurse alongside Dr. Thomas Starzl who, at the time, was the world’s leading expert on organ transplants.

Since 2017, Jackie has taught as adjunct faculty in Chatham’s RN to BSN program. In addition to teaching Chatham, Jackie also works as a substitute school nurse for the Mars School District. Two to three times a year, she also teaches NCLEX review courses at local Pittsburgh nursing programs. Jackie describes nursing as an “incredible profession” and one that allows nurses to do some many different things.

Jackie is passionate about educating nurses, discussed how impressed she is by the caliber of the current students and their career aspirations as they further their education. She also stated she learns so much from her students and is impressed by their creativity when completing non-traditional writing assignments (e.g., posters, presentations).

Outside of work, Jackie enjoys spending quality time with her five granddaughters who live nearby, gardening, reading fiction and current events, and taking walks with her puppy.

Congratulations and Farewell



●●● The nursing department is sad to say goodbye to **Dr. Lorri Birkholz**. Dr. Birkholz is a valued full-time faculty member at Chatham with primary teaching responsibilities in the DNP Program. At the end of the summer 2025 semester, Dr. Birkholz left for a fully remote faculty position that closely aligns with her DNP-focused online teaching. Dr. Birkholz is grateful for the many students she had the opportunity to work with during her five years at Chatham and the colleagues she had the privilege to work alongside. She will continue to be guided by her favorite quote “Do not be afraid of change. Be afraid of not changing.” Good luck in your future endeavors, Dr. Birkholz!



RECENT FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

PUBLICATIONS

Beil-Hildebrand, M. B., Sari, F. K., Kutschar, P., & **Birkholz, L.** (2024). What keeps you up at night? Moral distress in nurse leaders in the USA, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. *Leadership in Health Services*, 37(3), 377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/LHS-09-2023-0075>

Hernandez, A.S., **Hunker, D.F.** (2024). Interactive nursing education to promote exclusive breast feeding. *Journal of Doctoral Nursing Practice*, 17(3), 163-168. <http://doi:10.1891/JDNP-2023-0020>

Hopkins, E. & Dieterich, R. (2025). Scoping review of breastfeeding practices and for infant with an upper lip tie. *Journal of Perinatal Education*. <http://doi:10.1891/JPE-2023-0027>

Singh, A., Hunker, D. F., & Avidan, M. (2025). Nursing culture within higher education: A Snapshot. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000001365. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000001365>

Slade, J. & Walter, L. (2024). RAFTing to an Engaging Assignment. *The Teaching Professor*. <https://www.teachingprofessor.com/topics/preparing-to-teach/assignments/rafting-to-an-engaging-assignment/>

From the Dean, continued

An exciting upcoming event is the celebration of 30 years of Chatham health sciences! This milestone will be celebrated during the Homecoming Weekend in early October. Alumni will be invited to take part in the events co-hosted by the College of Health Sciences that include a celebration of alumni accomplishments and continuing education activities.

Finally, to the students and alumni who continue to promote health and provide care in our communities—thank you! You have my sincere gratitude. We look forward to hearing from you and learning how you advance nursing excellence in all that you do!

Salvador Bondoc

Dean, College of Health Sciences

PODIUM AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Birkholz, L., Martin, M., Barnum, B., Breslin, B., & Kalevor, S. (2024, September 18-21). *The good, the bad, and the ugly: Artificial intelligence and its impact on the nursing profession*. American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, St. Louis, MO.

Doas, M. (2024). *Creating emotional awareness in order to increase emotional competence*. Podium Presentation. UPMC Mercy Education Day, Pittsburgh, PA.

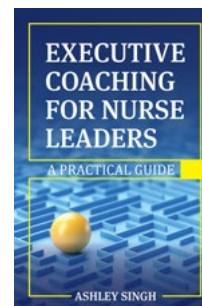
Doas, M. (2025). *Cultivating emotional competence in order to promote mutually respectful interactions*. Podium Presentation. UPMC Mercy Lunch and Learn Series, Pittsburgh, PA.

Doas, M. (2025). *Is emotional competence a viable component in the post-pandemic work environment?* Virtual Podium Presentation. Global Summit on Nursing Education & Healthcare

Orgon Stamper, T. (2024, June 20). *Primary palliative care in heart failure and when to refer to a specialist* [Conference Presentation]. American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) National Conference. San Diego, CA.

Singh, A. (June 9-11, 2025). *Transformational leadership: Insights for leaders and educators* [Virtual presentation]. AACN NTI, Virtual. <https://www.aacn.org/conferences-and-events/events-calendar/national-events/event-sessions/national-teaching-institute---2022/rex538/transformational-leadership-past-present-and-future>

BOOKS



Chatham's on **Ashley Singh**, Ph.D., DNP, RN, EBP-C, CEC, BCC, assistant professor of nursing, published her book, *Executive Coaching for Nurse Leaders: A Practical Guide* with Cognella Academic Publishing in June 2025. We are so proud, Dr. Singh!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

PATHWAYS TO NURSING

Adversity, Resilience, and Success



●●● Hannah Laskowski is no stranger to adversity. Being from humble beginnings and deeply affected by her mother's addiction to alcohol, she was facing the reality of difficulties with financing college. As a senior at St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Natrona Heights, Hannah came to Chatham for an admissions event by herself. She knew that scholarships and education would be her only way out of poverty and into a better life. It was in high school that she met her long-term boyfriend's mother, Jessica Jones-Szalla '97, a Chatham alumna. There was an instant bond, and she became Hannah's mentor and mother figure. With her encouragement, Hannah looked at Chatham more closely.

Driven to succeed given her family circumstances, Hannah chose to pursue Chatham's Pathways to Nursing (PTN) program. The PTN program was appealing given her financial struggles since it permitted her to enter the workforce after her junior year. While in the PTN program, Hannah worked as a patient care technician at UPMC St. Margaret's Hospital and as an Anatomy & Physiology tutor. Since passing the NCLEX exam, she is ready for this next chapter in her life and has accepted a position at AHN West Penn Hospital on the post-surgical floor with specialization in Gynecology-Oncology. She picked this unit because of her perceived camaraderie among the nurses which indicated that they truly care for each other and look out for one another. In a time where hospitals can be hectic and overwhelming, the group of nurses welcomed and included her. Therefore, she felt that it would be a supportive environment for growth. Hannah aspires to specialize in wound care as part of her 5-year plan and hopes to be mentored by the unit's wound care nurse.

Hannah credits her success to Mrs. Szalla and her hard-working single father. However, her amazing resilience and collegiate success highlights an important lesson for us all- that support can change lives and the importance of identifying and surrounding ourselves with mentors. Hannah looks forward to completing the RN to BSN portion of the PTN program and joining her mentor as a proud Chatham alumna.

MSN

Creating Change through Education



●●● Current MSN student Kimberly Lee, the Stroke Coordinator at the UPMC Stroke Institute at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital, is putting her education to immediate use. "The MSN coursework has significantly impacted the content of education I produce in my current role. I am utilizing new techniques in stroke education delivery to multidisciplinary groups, nursing staff, and the community."

Kim was apprehensive about returning to formal education after working in nursing for 32 years. She selected Chatham's MSN program based on the University's rich history of academic excellence, and alignment of the MSN program goals and outcomes with her personal and professional values.

Thus far, Kim has felt that attending the program has been one of the best professional decisions she has made. In the program, Kim appreciates the rigorous and comprehensive academic foundation that has accelerated her curiosity for integrating technologic ingenuity and nursing education. As Kim looks to the future, she is confident in the benefits of the coursework of the MSN program to professionally advance as a nurse educator.

Kim would tell future potential MSN nurse educator students that the program is dedicated to preparing students for the continuum of healthcare advancements, equipping graduate students to become scholarly leaders in cultivating generations of professional nurses who meet the global needs of healthcare. "The program is life-changing and a holistic upgrade for personal and professional development, making it worthwhile to undertake the challenge and pursue a master's degree in nursing education."

DNP Alumna Elected to North Carolina Board of Nursing



●●● LaDonna Thomas, DNP '15, ANP-C, VA-CM, FFMRCIS, FCN, is a facility lead nurse practitioner at Durham, NC Veterans Administration Health Care System and served as the 2024 Chairperson of the North Carolina (NC) State Board of Nursing. Unlike other Boards of Nursing members in the nation, NC is the only state to elect board members by its licensed nurses. Dr. Thomas was honored to be re-elected for another four-year term.

Dr. Thomas published two books within the past year. The first was *Letters from Logan: Born at 23 Weeks- The First 10 years- Proof that Miracles Happen* which was co-authored by her now 14-year-old son who was born early weighing 1 pound 5 ounces. Written from Logan's perspective, the book inspires parents of premature infants to capture their child's successes and milestones. Proceeds from book sales are partly donated to Logan's non-profit organization providing free coats to needy individuals at Christmastime.

The second book, *Charlotte's Trip to the NC Board of Nursing*, depicts a curious 5-year-old who wants to become a nurse. The story presents the rich

history of the first Board of Nursing in the nation founded in 1903. The name, Charlotte, honors the author's mother along with her father who inspired Dr. Thomas as a child to become a nurse. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing featured LaDonna Thomas and her book on their Facebook website earlier this year. Both books are available on Amazon.

After Dr. Thomas completed the Inaugural Duke-Johnson & Johnson Nursing Fellow Cohort (2014), a nurse educator at her VA worksite recommended Chatham's DNP program. Her DNP project focused on improving caregiver's knowledge of available

support resources for veterans. Since graduating from Chatham in 2015, she continues to influence others and make a difference. Several Durham VA nurses have followed her example to achieve a Chatham DNP. LaDonna has served as preceptor for DNP students and is part of Duke University's clinical faculty.

In the community, she has presented keynotes at nursing school events and is excited to participate in the Annual African American Festival of Raleigh during Labor Day weekend 2025. Dr. Thomas will read her recent book to children during the stage festivities and may inspire more future nurses!



Sigma Theta Tau International
Honor Society of Nursing®
Chi Zeta Chapter

Chi Zeta Chapter Update

●●● Chatham University has successfully maintained its Chi Zeta chapter in the Sigma Honor Society of Nursing for eleven years. Chi Zeta is the 508th chapter of Sigma; currently there are over 600 chapters. These chapters are located at institutions of higher education and with healthcare partners. Sigma has over 100,000 active members. During the past academic year, Chatham hosted a Virtual Founder's Day event. The educational event focused on Tools for a Healthy Work Environment and Nursing Self Care. Presenters for this event were Tara Stamper, DNP, RN, CRNP and Sui Unzelman, DNP, RN.

Chi Zeta continues to focus on Sigma's key initiatives which include Reflection, Respect, and Responsiveness. Reflection includes communicating a caring culture. Respect

includes cultivating cultural humility. Responsiveness includes championing contemporary practice.

●●● Chi Zeta provides many opportunities for membership involvement in leadership, scholarship, and community service. If you are a member of Sigma but not part of Chatham University's Chi Zeta chapter, please consider joining our current membership by contacting Sigma Membership Services at memserv@sigmanursing.org or 888-634-8174. If you are a current member and are interested in joining the leadership succession committee or education committee, please contact the Chi Zeta Chapter President Dr. Michelle Doas at mdoas@chatham.edu.

BSN-TO-DNP

Opeyemi Blessing, DNP '22



●●● Opeyemi Blessing, a graduate of the BSN to DNP Executive Leadership program, has been in the nursing profession since 2016. She started her career as a medical-surgical nurse at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, New York. Since then, Opeyemi has engaged in numerous professional and scholarly endeavors and is the recipient of numerous honors and awards. She has held various leadership positions before entering her current role as associate director of nursing excellence and research at New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. She also serves as a mentor at Thomas Edison University. Opeyemi completed the MSN Leadership portion of the BSN to DNP program at Chatham in 2022. The degree is an online, 53-credit offering that prepares nursing professionals for an executive leadership role. We caught up with Opeyemi recently to get her viewpoints on the degree.

Q: Why were you interested in the BSN to DNP program?

A: I was drawn to the BSN to DNP Executive Leadership program at Chatham University because it aligns with my passion for advancing nursing practice and driving system-level change. As a nurse leader, I recognized the need for a degree that not only enhances clinical expertise but also sharpens strategic, operational, and leadership skills. The program offered the tools to lead innovation, influence policy, and contribute to the transformation of healthcare delivery. I was also impressed by the opportunity to earn both an MSN and a DNP degree through a single, cohesive program which created a proper foundation to support my leadership journey.

Q: How do you think the Leadership focus of the BSN to DNP degree has further prepared you to meet your professional goals?

A: The MSN Leadership courses provided a strong foundation in organizational leadership, quality improvement, and evidence-based decision-making. It deepened

my understanding of healthcare systems, financial stewardship, and team dynamics, equipping me to lead multidisciplinary teams and champion professional development initiatives across a healthcare organization. These experiences directly support my long-term career goal as well!

Q: What would you say to potential applicants and Chatham BSN alumni who were considering the BSN to DNP program?

A: I would encourage them to take the leap and enroll! The BSN to DNP program at Chatham is an investment in both personal and professional growth. It offers the flexibility to continue working while learning, and the curriculum is designed to elevate your influence and impact as a nurse leader. Whether your goal is to improve patient outcomes or lead organizational and systematic change, this program gives you the competencies and confidence to actually make it happen.

Q: What was your area of greatest learning specifically during the leadership curriculum?

A: One of the most impactful areas of learning for me was strategic planning and implementation as a nurse in healthcare. Understanding how to align nursing initiatives with organizational priorities while measuring outcomes meaningfully has been transformative. This knowledge has helped me lead successful system-wide projects and mentor other nurses.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share?

A: I'm grateful for the supportive community at Chatham and the program's emphasis on strategic and organizational evidence-based leadership. The faculty's mentorship and the collaboration with fellow nurse leaders have been instrumental in shaping my education and career journey. I believe this program empowers nurses to be change agents, and I'm proud to be part of a future where nurses impactfully lead healthcare transformation.



PRECEPTOR SPOTLIGHT

Lisa Knudsen, DNP '20, RN-BC, CEN, CPHQ



Like many nurses, Lisa Knudsen, DNP '20, RN-BC, CEN, CPHQ started her nursing career with an associate's degree and has since excelled both academically and professionally. She completed her DNP at Chatham, during the height of the pandemic, in 2020. Since that time, Dr. Knudsen has been promoted to the Director of Clinical Quality at Kettering Health located in Kettering, Ohio. She has also taken on adjunct teaching roles at Southwestern Adventist University and Kettering College. In addition, Dr. Knudsen has had many successful presentations, holds memberships in several professional organizations, and has received recognition for Kettering Health's excellence in care including recognition from the *US News & World Report*.

Despite her rigorous job responsibilities, Dr. Knudsen has managed to carve out time in her schedule

to give back to the nursing community by precepting. She notes that, "Precepting is both a professional responsibility and a deeply personal privilege. Over my years of precepting newly licensed nurses through DNP students, the realization is clear how precepting gives us the chance to pour back into the profession by walking alongside the next wave of clinicians and nurse leaders. Guiding a DNP student from my own alma mater is especially meaningful because I get to pay forward what the school once poured into me. My 'why' has always been people and relationships, so helping a student gain confidence, swap ideas, and grow into a skilled, compassionate leader is pure reward. Seeing them connect the dots in real time reminds me why I chose nursing and keeps the spirit of mentorship alive."

Chatham is very appreciative of Dr. Knudsen service as a preceptor, and we wish her continued success in her career!

MSN Precepting: A Rewarding Experience

Precepting is a formal arrangement between a novice and an experienced nurse for a defined period. Preceptors serve as role models working collaboratively with the student towards meeting established program goals. Precepting is a rewarding experience for both the student and preceptor. It is also an essential component to nursing education. The identification of preceptors grows increasingly difficult as competition for practice experience sites increase. For the Chatham MSN program, we need MSN-prepared preceptors who are currently serving in the advanced practice roles of nurse educator (clinical or academic setting) or nurse leader (any setting).

As a preceptor, you are required to sign a student-preceptor agreement, provide a copy of your resume and your professional license number for verification and approval. If you meet the qualifications described above and are interested in precepting, please contact Cathy Natalia, practice experience program assistant, at c.natalia@chatham.edu or 412- 365-2926.

DNP Campus Residency



▲ December 2024 Residency ▼ April 2025 Residency



Chatham University held two on-campus residency experiences for our DNP students this academic year. Residency occurs at the completion of the program and attendance is a requirement for DNP degree conferral. Students had the opportunity to network with other students, faculty and staff, and receive feedback on their DNP projects.

We welcomed 27 attendees on December 12 and 13, 2024 and 23 attendees on April 24 and 25, 2025. Most of the students were joined by their families and stayed on to participate in the College of Health Sciences Recognition Ceremony (December) and University Commencement (April).

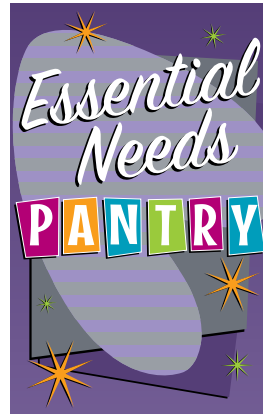


Chatham Alumni and Student Award Winners

••• The Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates (SGNA) celebrated their 52nd Annual Conference June 1-3, 2025, in Pittsburgh's David Lawrence Convention Center. During the national convention, two of the four awards were presented to a Chatham DNP student or graduate!

Current DNP student **Alicia Mena, MSN, RN, CCRN, CGRN**, and received the prestigious *Gabriele Schindler Clinical Excellence Award* for excellence in gastroenterology clinical practice. As a distinguished GI nurse at the GI Endoscopy Unit in Palo Alto, CA, her many contributions improved patient care and operational efficiency.

Gypsy Glover, DNP '22, FNP-C received the *Novice Writers Award* for her 2023 publication, "Implementing a Combined Phone and Mail Recall to Increase Screening Colonoscopy Rates in Adults with Chronic Ulcerative Colitis," *Gastroenterology Nursing*, 46(4), pages 275-281. Dr. Glover works as an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Troy University (Dothan, AL) and maintains her NP practice one day a week.



several food access initiatives to increase student food security. In 2023, a team of individuals—including Mim Seidel, Hayden Barns, Gina Zanardelli, Sally Frey, Laura Livingston, and Mandy Best—from all three Chatham University locations applied and secured the grant. The Eastside ENP was just one part of the five goals of the original grant.

No one individual staffs the pantry. It is open when Eastside is open. The primary maintenance is restocking shelf-stable items once a month and filling the refrigerator with Eden Hall Farm produce weekly when available. A food studies graduate student, paid through the grant, and occasional volunteers keep the ENP stocked. Gina Zanardelli monitors the pantry space. Currently, 79% of Eastside students are aware of the ENP and 44% of those students have utilized its services.

The ENP, located in Eastside Room 262. In 2024, 1,636 pounds of food were purchased for the Eastside ENP. To date, 221 pounds have been donated from anonymous sources, including the donation from our 2024-2025 nursing department service project! 410 pounds of produce have been donated by Chatham's Eden Hall Farm. 29 pounds of heat-and-eat meals have been

CHATHAM COMMUNITY SERVICE

Eastside Essential Needs Pantry

••• Opened in May 2024, the Chatham Eastside Essential Needs Pantry (ENP) is funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Hunger Free Campus Grant. The grant was aimed at securing

donated from a separate grant initiative, *Eden Hall Eats!* In total, 660 pounds have been donated.

Items go quickly in the pantry, so it is unclear which items are most needed, but items like pasta and ready-to-eat meals are most often requested. Beans, while also highly requested, are some of the last items to be taken. ENP users are not asked for identifying or demographic information, though the food is provided with students in mind.

If you are able and want to donate to the ENP, donations must be shelf-stable and have the ingredient label attached. Items that are expired, opened, packaged in glass, dented or bloated, or made at home are not accepted. Cans of pasta sauce would be greatly appreciated. Any donations should be placed in the available blue donation bin or coordinated with Gina Zanardelli at gzanardelli@chatham.edu.

The current grant funding of the ENP expires at the end of the 2025 calendar year. Further operation is dependent on continued grant funds. In an effort to provide more long-term and sustainable food access to students, the Hunger Free Task Force is in the process of piloting a wholesale grocery club set to begin in fall 2025. Unlike the ENP, the Chatham Wholesale Grocery Club will be open to all current Chatham students, faculty, and staff. Work is being done to make information regarding other Pittsburgh-based food access resources more available to students.

Special thanks to the founding members of the ENP for contributing to this article: Mim Seidel, Hayden Barns, Gina Zanardelli, Sally Frey, Laura Livingston, and Mandy Best



NURSING PROGRAM GRADUATES

... We are pleased to extend our congratulations to the following Chatham University nursing programs students that received a degree conferral in this past academic year.

AUGUST 2024

MSN

Jill Newhouse
Kit Y Ng

DECEMBER 2024

BSN

James A Gresos

DNP

Sylvia U Acholonu
Julia Allen
Blessing V Ayanou
Abigail Azubuike
Veronica Baah
Anne Florence Bakinde
Frank Bernard A Bobadilla
Renee M Bowen
Marina M Bragasin
Jasmine A Elia
Alexander I Gumbs
Teka Henderson
Margurite Isaac
Margaret Kamara
Manju Kaur
Ashley Knight
Marlene Lucas
Shari J Lynn
Wiseline Maingrette
Chindinma Oligbo
Elizabeth M Polie
An'gelique M Spencer
Oluwafunmilola O Sulaimon
Kendarius Talton
Kristen Taylor

BSN-DNP

Lauren Smith

MAY 2025

BSN

Chandler Benjamin
Elizabeth L Collins
Monique Daugherty
Adam DeStefano
Lindsey Dongilli
Emily Fawver
Elaina M Fisher
Olivia Garibaldi
Giana Ginoble
Kaitlyn M Hayes
Tyneen L Haywood
Lauren J Humphreys
Elizabeth Jardini
Keirstyn Kidder
Tara Kirby
Kelly Leamer
Kali Lonsinger
Emma Mays
Amanda S Miller
Isabell Nagel Russell
Althea O'Brien
Jacalyn Possessky
Rebecca Snyder
Daisy E Staub
Alexis Sykes
Kathryn Szekely
Jordan Teichmann
Emma Walsh
Sarah Walsh

MSN

Trudy A Connolly-Secor
Bailey C Donofrio
Denise O Hamdi
Priya Patel

DNP

Joseph N Achaleke
Tina Archer
Ursula S Bethel-Ramkerath
Candace Carter
Kamala D DeVivo
Twanda T Gainer
Emer Gaite
Geneia Gates
Angela M Gaynor
Sharon Hawout
Shumeka Hill
Sara Hoppe
Aimee A Mack
Marian Mbi
Melony J Murray
Christabel Muwanguzi
Olubukola F Olatoto
Shelley Padgett
Allison Schanck
Caroline Smolenski
Akisha Toussaint
Sabir Uddin
Rebecca White
Deneice Wickens

Graduation Celebration within the Nursing Department

... At Chatham's Spring 2025 commencement ceremony, Mrs. Cathy Natalia, the nursing department's Practice Experience Program Assistant graduated with her Master of Science in Counseling Psychology degree. While this is a major achievement, Cathy also had the honor of attending commencement along with her son, Tommy, who received his Bachelor of Arts in Film and Media Arts. Congratulations to both Cathy and Tommy!



Please keep the Chatham University nursing programs updated with your achievements. We would like to share your scholarly work and projects with the Chatham University community. Send your stories, news and publications to r.lemelle@chatham.edu.

Also, consider joining our *Chatham University Nursing Programs* group on Facebook. It's a great place for students, alumni, and faculty to share and connect.

Stay connected and get involved with the Office of Alumni Relations! We offer numerous volunteer and networking opportunities as well as alumni receptions at professional conferences and exclusive events at local Pittsburgh attractions. Interested? Please send us an e-mail at alumni@chatham.edu or visit us at chatham.edu/alumni. Stay connected with the Alumni Association via Facebook.