

## DEAN'S WELCOME



## From the Dean

As we continue our 15th anniversary series, 15 Years: Shaping What's Next in Health Care, this issue highlights how our school has grown with purpose. We have expanded our programs, strengthened our partnerships and continued to prepare graduates to meet the evolving needs of California's health care workforce.

What began as an aspiration has become a steady, connected institution. That growth is visible not only in our academic offerings, but in the impact of our alumni. In this issue, we celebrate Aron King, a 2021 graduate who has been named a UC Davis Young Alumni Award recipient. His commitment to collaboration, leadership and advancing health equity reflects the kind of impact we strive to cultivate in all our graduates.

That work is amplified by the support of donors, whose generosity helps create pathways for students to fully engage in their education and step into roles where they are most needed. Their investment directly supports the development of a workforce ready to meet the state's most pressing health care challenges.

Across this issue, you will see a clear thread in the work of our faculty. They have a commitment to research and practice that begins with people and extends into communities. Whether rethinking how health research is conducted, addressing gaps in care for rural older adults or building partnerships that improve access and outcomes, our faculty are helping move health care forward in ways that are both innovative and grounded in real-world needs.

We were also proud to welcome alumni back to campus for our recent reunion picnic. It serves as a reminder that our greatest strength is the community we have built together. As we look ahead, we remain focused on preparing learners to lead in complex care environments and continuing to grow in ways that reflect both our mission and the needs of the moment.

Thank you for being part of this continued journey.

— **Stephen J. Cavanagh, Ph.D., M.P.A., R.N., F.A.C.H.E., F.A.A.N.**

Dean, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing

## FEATURE STORY



### Nursing graduate earns UC Davis Young Alumni Award

A commitment to leadership, community and advancing health equity is earning recognition for one of the School of Nursing's rising alumni.

Aron King, a 2021 graduate of the Master of Science in Leadership program and current PhD candidate, has been named a recipient of the UC Davis Young Alumni Award – an honor that celebrates graduates who are making an early and meaningful impact in their fields.

King's work reflects a clear driving force: bringing people together to improve care and expand access, particularly for underserved communities. From his clinical roots to his growing influence as a nurse leader and scholar, he is building a career grounded in purpose and connection.

Colleagues describe him as a natural collaborator. He is someone who leads by listening, builds trust quickly and creates space for others to contribute. That approach is shaping his work across health care settings and community partnerships alike.

His recognition highlights more than individual achievement. It underscores the kind of leadership the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing aims to develop –leaders who are prepared to take on complex challenges and drive meaningful change.

[Read Aron's full story](#)

## STUDENT NEWS



### Nurse practitioner faculty and students serve at Asian health clinic

Several faculty and students from the Doctor of Nursing Practice — Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis volunteered at the [Paul Hom Asian Clinic Health Fair 2026](#).

Faculty Zyrene Marsh, Angie de Leon-Renteria and Michaela Gist, along with 13 students in various years of the program, provided help in the primary care, women's health, ophthalmology and patient education stations. The free event is a collaborative effort led by undergraduate students, professional students, volunteers, doctors and community members, all united in their mission to serve Sacramento's underserved populations. Founded in 1971, the student-run clinic provides free, high-quality primary and specialty health care to underserved individuals — regardless of insurance status or background.



## Nurse practitioner faculty and students volunteer at health fair

Several faculty and students from the Doctor of Nursing Practice — Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis served at a [California Care Force](#) event in Indio, Calif.

Faculty Chris deBelen-Wilson, Janet Meda and Mondana Zagarnian, along with second-year student Karla Salazar, provided free dental, vision and health services at the Empire Polo Grounds. Providers reported seeing patients who had not visited with a health care professional in five-to-six years. California Careforce is a group of volunteer health care professionals, community leaders and engaged citizens who believe all people deserve access to quality health care.

## 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



## 15 years: From bold vision to steady state — and still evolving

Fifteen years ago, the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis launched as a bold effort focused on leadership, research and system change. Today, it has grown into an evolving institution with intention to meet California's changing health care workforce needs.

That growth reflects sustained leadership, expanded programs and a clear commitment to preparing graduates for complex care environments. From launching the first Doctor of Nursing Practice — Nurse Anesthesia program in the UC system to addressing critical shortages through the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Certificate Program, the school continues to respond to real-world demands.

Alumni remain at the center of that impact, carrying forward the school's mission in communities across the state. Scholarships and donor support have also played a key role, helping attract talented students and strengthen the pipeline of future health care leaders.

[Read about the school's evolution](#)

*Look for more 15 Years news in the next Momentum*

## RESEARCH NEWS



### Research highlights a new model for nurse leadership

What does it take to prepare nurses to lead meaningful change in today's complex health care landscape? New research from the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing points to a powerful answer.

A recent collection of manuscripts highlights how the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators is redefining leadership development. The experience equips nurse scientists with the skills, mentorship and support to drive change across practice, policy and communities. Since 2020, fellows have advanced innovative solutions, strengthened partnerships and helped shape more inclusive models of care.

The findings offer a compelling look at how investing in leadership can transform not just careers, but the future of health care.

[Read about the manuscripts](#)

## RESEARCH BRIEFS

## Faculty present at statewide educational conference

Faculty from the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis, along with Doctor of Nursing Practice students and nurse practitioner fellows, recently shared their expertise at the 48th Annual Educational Conference of the California Association of Nurse Practitioners (CANP) March 12-15 in San Diego.

Presenters delivered sessions on a wide range of clinical and public health topics affecting patients across the lifespan and in diverse communities. Their presentations included updates on the 2026 American Diabetes Association standards of care, management of elevated lead levels in Middle Eastern pediatric refugee populations and a discussion of why reproductive health is central to child health.

Additional sessions explored HIV and hepatitis C prevention and treatment using a street medicine approach, pharmacology for skin lesions and wounds, and key takeaways from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2024 updates to contraceptive practice guidelines. Other presentations addressed suicide risk assessment for advanced practice registered nurses, clinical insights for managing chronic liver disease in primary care and the pathophysiology and progression of obesity across the lifespan.

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## National journal names caregiving research as Editor's Choice

The Gerontologist selected ["Comparison of Caregivers of Older Adults in State and National Surveys to Those Seeking Help in California's Caregiver Resource Centers"](#) as its second Editor's Choice article for the fourth quarter of 2025. Led by Professors Janice M. Bell and Heather M. Young, along with colleagues at the Family Caregiving Institute at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis, the study examines whether national surveys fully capture caregivers' needs.

The research finds that California caregivers who seek help are more likely to provide high-intensity, full-time care and report poorer well-being than those represented in national datasets. Researchers say the implication is clear: caregivers with the greatest burdens may be undercounted in widely cited surveys. Rounding out the team of researchers are alumna Robin Whitney, Benjamin Link, and former postdocs Tina Kilaberia and Orly Tonkikh.

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## Singh presents poster on integrating global opportunities at East Asian forum

Charleen Singh, program director of the Doctor of Nursing Practice — Family Nurse Practitioner program at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis, presented a poster at the [29th East Asian Forum for Nursing Scholars \(EAFONS\)](#) in Singapore. Charleen shared the study "Integrating, DNP education, global opportunities, as well as challenges and achievements faced at UC Davis with the DNP-FNP Program," where she discussed scholarly projects from the inaugural cohort of the DNP-Family Nurse Practitioner program, including global work. In addition to keynote and plenary speeches, it featured symposia, oral presentations, physical posters, e-posters and PhD roundtable discussions.

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## Fauer coauthors study in national cancer journal

Assistant Professor Alex Fauer coauthored the study, "[Acceptability of a practical geriatric assessment intervention with older adult cancer survivors and community health workers/promotoras: a qualitative investigation](#)," published in Supportive Care in Cancer. The team refined and validated a protocol aimed to reduce the burden of cancer for older adults after they are diagnosed and treated, partnered with community health workers and cancer survivor consultants.

Before new treatments and interventions are developed, exploratory and qualitative research help to understand what isn't working so that the solutions built later are grounded in real needs. This matters because for many cancer survivors, health care systems are fragmented to identify and address long-term health care needs.

His coauthors include PhD alumnae Sandra Calderon and Angela Usher, K12 mentors Diana Miglioretti and Fred Meyers, Quynh Vo of the Family Caregiving Institute, Chad Han from Flinders University and Vision y Compromiso's Miriam Hernandez, a community partner.

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## Simmons publishes study on diet quality of pregnant women

Professor Leigh Ann Simmons published "[A randomized digital behavioral intervention for prenatal and postpartum weight outcomes in women with overweight or obesity: The GROWell trial](#)" in BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth. This is the primary paper from the NIH-funded randomized trial of Goals for Reaching Optimal Wellness (GROWell), a digital intervention to improve perinatal and postpartum diet quality in women entering pregnancy with overweight or obesity.

Leigh Ann and her team found no differences in gestational weight gain or postpartum weight retention between the educational attention control and the intervention. Both groups had lower rates of weight gain and weight retention compared to averages in the U.S. and several Western European countries, suggesting the need to further investigate text-based educational support on weight and other perinatal health outcomes.

School of Nursing co-authors include HEAL Lab project scientist Jennifer Phipps, ReACH fellow Paige Gilliland and Assistant Professor Victoria Keeton.

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## Wung publishes study on impact of body weight on quality of life

Professor Shu-Fen Wung published "[Impact of body weight on quality of life trajectories following metabolic bariatric surgery in individuals with obesity: a longitudinal study](#)" in Quality of Life Research. This collaborative longitudinal study reveals that patients generally experience improved health-related quality of life within the first year after metabolic bariatric surgery, but recovery follows three distinct paths depending on the starting point: low, medium, and high.

Factors such as older age, female gender, higher education levels, and early postoperative depression symptoms significantly predict less favorable recovery outcomes, highlighting the need for personalized multidimensional support that goes beyond weight loss. Quality of Life Research is an international, multidisciplinary journal of original research, theoretical articles and methodological reports related to the field of health-related quality of life in all the health sciences.

## FACULTY AWARDS

### Nursing faculty awarded grant for smoking cessation study

Clinical Professors Holly Kirkland Kyhn and Shamika Brooks were awarded \$50,000 from the [UC Davis Tobacco Cessation Policy Research Center](#) Training Program for their pilot study, "Tiny Home Tobacco Feasibility." They are evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of a brief tobacco cessation survey and training, then identifying perceived barriers and facilitators to achieve tobacco cessation for people experiencing homelessness who live in tiny home communities. Their study will be implemented during their routine visits in the Nurse-led Mobile Clinic.

Findings will inform the development of resident-centered tobacco cessation approaches that are feasible and responsive to the unique context of tiny home communities. The center breaks new ground by bringing together academic researchers, community and advocacy organizations, and policy stakeholders to advance tobacco cessation.

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### Nursing faculty awarded seed grants for international work

Several faculty from the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis were awarded [Seed Grants for International Activities](#) for taking on innovative research, service and engagement projects around the world. Assistant Clinical Professors Janet Meda and Lynda Creighton-Wong, along with PhD student Willoughby Moloney, earned the award for their study, "Best Practice Modeling: U.S. & Kenyan Academic Health Partners with "HEART" NGO Multidisciplinary Teams Mitigate Health Impacts of Climate and Health Access Barriers for HIV+ Women and Children in Kenya."

Assistant Professor Zyrene Marsh, family nurse practitioner program Director Charleen Singh and Dean Stephen Cavanagh received funds to support their work, "UCD Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, Central Philippine University (CPU), Universidad de Santa Isabel (USI), and University of Santo Tomas (UST) Partnership: Modeling Advanced Practice Nursing Interprofessional Medical Care Teams in the Philippines to deliver primary care as a model for surveillance and prevention of tropical and emerging diseases." In partnership with UC Davis colleges and schools, [Global Affairs](#) provides these grants to faculty taking on innovative research, service and engagement projects around the world.

## ALUMNI NEWS



## Alumni picnic highlights legacy, connection and community

More than 30 alumni spanning over five decades gathered March 14 for the School of Nursing's Alumni Reunion Picnic. The event brought together graduates from as early as the class of 1973 alongside the newest members of the community.

The event reflected the full breadth of the school's impact, with representation across every program, including nurse practitioner (NP), physician assistant (PA), master's-degree leadership, the Master's Entry Program in Nursing (MEPN) and those who completed the NP and PA certificate programs in the early 1970s. The mix of backgrounds, experiences and generations created a powerful reminder of the School of Nursing's enduring mission: to prepare leaders who transform health care across time and settings.

Faculty and campus leaders joined alumni and their families. Conversations flowed — as easily as the ice cream — as alumni reconnected with peers, met graduates from other programs and reflected on how their shared foundation continues to shape their work and communities. The afternoon served as both a celebration of where the school has been and a reflection of where it is going — powered by a diverse, engaged and deeply connected alumni community.

**DEVELOPMENT NEWS**



## Celebrating the impact of scholarships

More than 90 donors and scholarship recipients gathered April 15 for the third annual Scholarship Appreciation Reception — an event centered on celebration, connection and shared impact. The evening brought together those who give and those who benefit, creating space to reflect on the meaningful role scholarships play across the School of Nursing community.

Throughout the reception, students connected directly with the individuals whose generosity helps make their education possible. For many recipients, scholarships ease financial pressure, reduce the need for outside work and allow greater focus on academic, clinical and leadership opportunities. For donors, the event offered a powerful reminder of how their support extends beyond tuition by fueling student success and strengthening the future of health care.

The celebration underscored a simple but significant truth: scholarships do more than open doors, they create opportunity, expand access and empower the next generation of health care leaders to make a lasting impact.

## ADMISSIONS

### Applications are open now

- **Doctor of Nursing Practice — Family Nurse Practitioner Degree Program** – [Apply by June 1](#) with our Space Available deadline to join the June 2026 cohort
- **PhD in Nursing Science and Health-Care Leadership Degree Program** – [Apply by May 1](#) with our Space Available deadline to join the September 2026 cohort
- **UC Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Certificate Program** – [Apply by May 15](#) with our space available deadline to join the June 2026 cohort

**Stay connected!**

[Join our email list](#)

**Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis**

Betty Irene Moore Hall

2570 48th St., Sacramento, CA 95817

916-734-2145

[nursing.ucdavis.edu](http://nursing.ucdavis.edu)

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