

2025 MAGAZINE

COLLEGE OF NURSING



IOWA



Welcome!

In 2018, Dr. Cormac O'Sullivan came to me with an intriguing and ambitious proposal; he had learned of a program funded by the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust that was providing mobile, simulation-based continuing education to healthcare providers in rural areas and he thought the College of Nursing should apply to lead the program in Iowa. While I think we all recognized the potential, I don't think any of us imagined an outcome even close to what we have now.

Today, Simulation in Motion-Iowa (SIM-IA), the program that Drs. Jacinda Bunch and O'Sullivan built, is well-received, highly respected, and nationally recognized. Along with the Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program, another innovative program rooted in the college, SIM-IA was recently named an Edge Runner by the American Academy of Nursing. The SIM-IA team has provided education in each of Iowa's 99 counties and shows no signs of slowing down, thanks to the team's dedication and recent financial support from The Wellmark Foundation, the Bedford Falls Foundation, and many alumni and friends of the college. To say that we in the college and across the university are incredibly proud of this program and the impact it is having on health and healthcare throughout our state would be an understatement. In the words of Brad Ratliff, director of emergency medical services for the city of Tipton, Iowa,

“

Working with SIM-IA has truly revolutionized our approach to healthcare training. In our small community, distant from larger counterparts with access to high-end training, SIM-IA has been a beacon of innovation. Utilizing high-fidelity manikins manned by real-world healthcare providers, the program offers highly realistic scenarios for our community providers to respond and react to. The experiences with SIM-IA have been unparalleled, enabling us to conduct incredibly real training in a safe environment. Our primary goal is to reduce the fear and stress that providers often experience when responding to calls or caring for others, ultimately improving the level of care provided to patients.”

As a college of nursing, it is not necessarily easy to see the profound impact we can have outside of traditional nursing programs. Leaders who have the courage to step outside our designated lanes and innovate must be supported on their journeys. Thanks to Drs. Bunch and O'Sullivan, Dr. Weathers (IONRP), and many other courageous innovators at the University of Iowa College of Nursing, we are turning heads and people are paying attention!

Go Hawks!

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ON THE COVER

A Simulation in Motion-Iowa truck is parked outside the Alburnett Otter Creek Fire Department on the night of a simulation training for several nearby rural EMS departments.

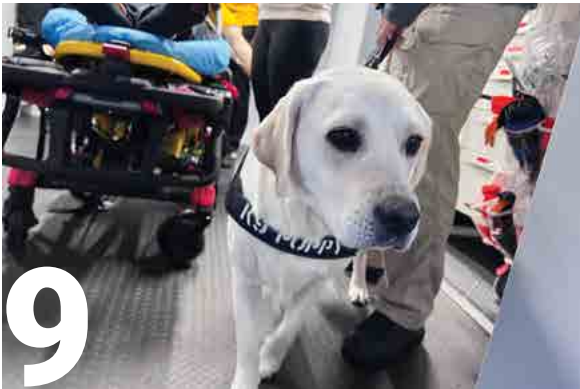
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Optimal Aging Day at the National Senior Games

The first ever Optimal Aging Day in Iowa was held in Des Moines on July 25, in conjunction with the opening of the 2025 National Senior Games. Students, faculty, and staff from the college and university partners shared a broad range of materials on and strategies for optimal aging with hundreds of athletes, their families, and community members. The event was organized by the Csomay Center for Gerontological Excellence.



Alumni reunite and reminisce after 50 years

Alumni from the classes of 1969–1975 gathered at the college in July for their Golden Reunion. Attendees enjoyed faculty and student presentations, a charter bus tour of campus, a recognition ceremony at Hancher, and lots of time to catch up and reminisce with their classmates.



Community Doula Program aims to improve health outcomes

A partnership between the College of Nursing, UI Health Care, and Johnson County Public Health has developed the Community Doulas of Johnson County program to improve local maternal health outcomes. After training ten bilingual community members as doulas, the program supports them in providing services to low-income pregnant people in Johnson County. The doulas support their clients through the pregnancy and birthing process, including multiple prenatal and postpartum visits at the client's home. Assistant Professor Julie Vignato, PhD, RN, RNC-LRN, CNE, a leader in the program, is collecting data to better understand the effectiveness of doulas on reducing the rates of maternal disease and death in Iowa.

Sinnwell receives Culturally Responsive Health Care award

Assistant Clinical Professor Emily Sinnwell, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, was honored with the 2025 University of Iowa Health Care Culturally Responsive Health Care award. The award recognizes health care professionals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and innovation in addressing health disparities among patients or populations through culturally responsive care. Sinnwell (14DNP, 12MSN, 09BSN) was nominated in part for her commitment to expanding access to care for immigrants in Iowa and teaching students to recognize and address the structural barriers that patients face around social determinants of health challenges.

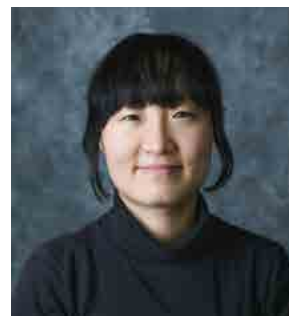


Familiar faces in Finland

Dean Zerwic traveled to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) 2025 Congress in Helsinki, Finland this summer where she spent time with national and international nursing leaders, including 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient and second vice president of ICN, Karen Bjoro (08PhD), and Hyeonkyeong Lee, a former student from University of Illinois-Chicago who is now dean and professor at Yonsei University College of Nursing in Seoul, Korea.

Lofgren receives AANP award for outstanding contributions to the state

The American Association for Nurse Practitioners honors one individual from each state who has made significant strides in advancing health care through practice, education, advocacy, research and leadership and has demonstrated efforts to advance the image, profile and visibility of nurse practitioners. The 2025 recipient from Iowa is Maria Lofgren, DNP, ARNP, NNP-BC, PNP-PC, FAANP. Lofgren (13DNP, 98MSN) is a clinical professor and director of faculty practice at the college, and director of advanced practice providers at UI Health Care.



Kim receives OVPR Arts and Humanities Initiative grant

Assistant Professor Kyung Soo Kim, PhD, RN is one of 11 UI faculty to receive funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research Arts and Humanities Initiative, a competitive, internal grant program that supports scholars in the humanities or creative, visual, and performing arts. With this grant, Kim and her team will conduct a pilot study investigating art making as a complementary approach to managing chronic pain in older adults.

Montgomery receives DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award after 47-year career

Lou Ann Montgomery PhD, MAN, RN, NP-BC, FAAN associate chief nursing officer at UI Health Care and co-director of the Nursing Clinical Education Center, was recently honored with the DAISY Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. Throughout her 47-year career Montgomery (88MAN), who retired in September, has impacted the College of Nursing in many ways. She was instrumental in creating the Nursing Collaboratory, a partnership between the college and UI Health Care's Department of Nursing to improve both patient outcomes and nursing practice. She also spearheaded efforts during the pandemic to have nursing students designated as essential workers so they could continue their clinical education.



Wesemann named AAN Fellow

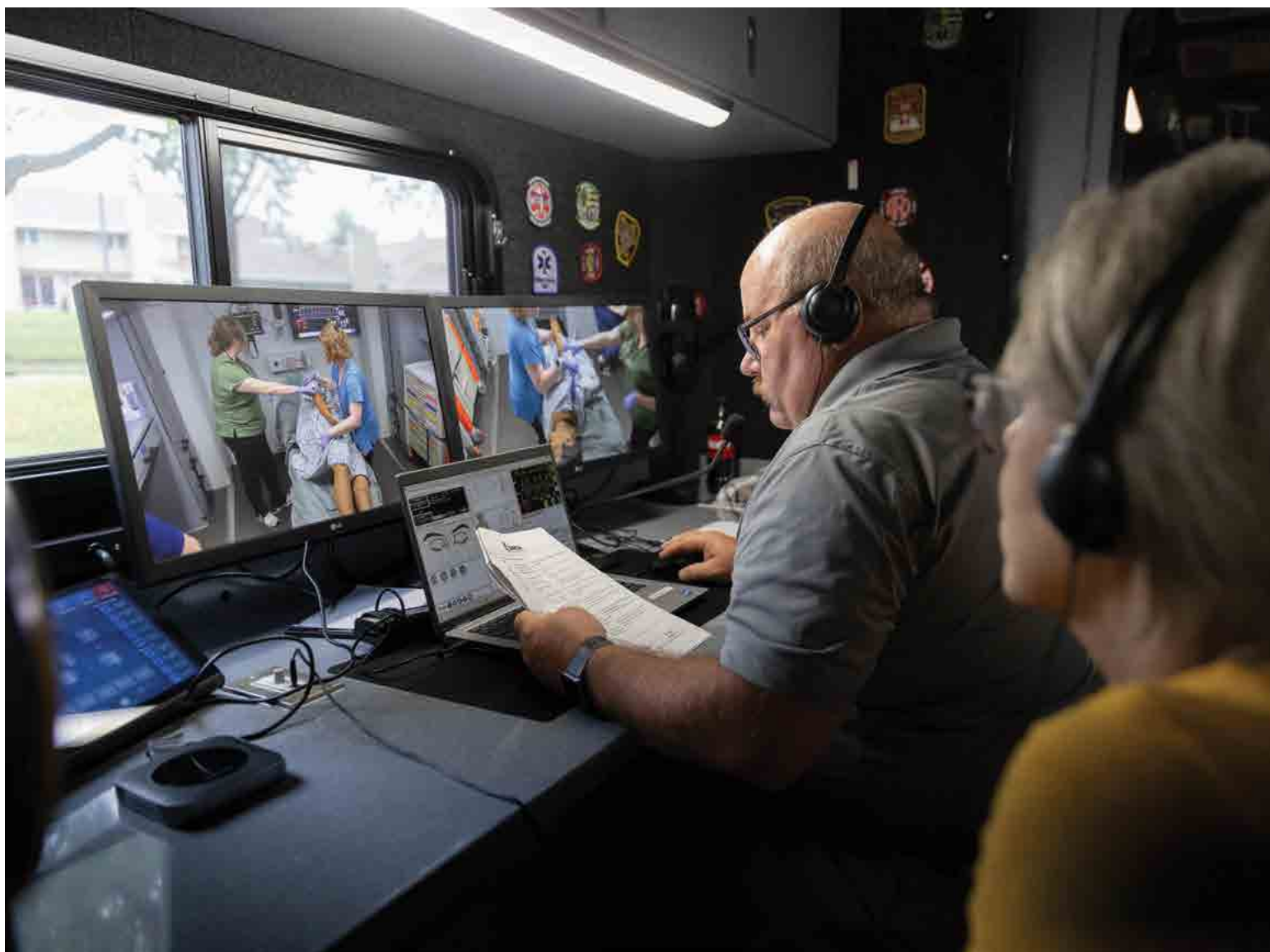
Clinical Associate Professor Daniel Wesemann, DNP, ARNP, PMHNP-BC, FAANP was inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing this fall. Wesemann, who directs the college's Psych-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner DNP program, is a two time college alum (08MSN, 06MNHP) and joined the faculty in 2015. College of Nursing alumni Teri Pipe (85BSN), Ryannon Frederick (00BSN), and Ju Young Shin (07PhD) were inducted this fall. Alumna and faculty emerita Connie Delaney (78MAN) was honored as a Living Legend.



Inaugural Buckwalter Prize awarded

Kathleen 'Kitty' Buckwalter (76MAN, 71BSN) established the Kathleen and Joseph Buckwalter Prize in Gerontological Nursing Research this year, to recognize the hard work of faculty that participate in the intensive, month-long College of Nursing Grant Writing Workshop. The prize will be awarded annually to the principal investigator of the best gerontology-focused proposal submitted by the workshop deadline. The winner of the 2025 Buckwalter Prize is Assistant Professor Alaa Albashayreh, PhD, MSHI, RN (22PhD).





Above: SIM-IA educator Chuck Cross (left) leads a simulation at ChildServe in Des Moines. **Right:** Child Serve employees participate in a simulation. **Opposite page:** SIM-IA participates in a mass casualty scenerio training outside of Swisher, IA.

SIMULATION IN MOTION-IOWA

SIM-IA was launched and supported for the first five years through a generous grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. The grant funded program development, three custom mobile simulation units, simulation equipment for each unit, and program support. Without the Trust's vision and investment, SIM-IA would not be the outstanding program it is today.





Going the distance

Through mobile, simulation-based education, SIM-IA strengthens emergency response care across the state

On June 21, 2022, the Simulation in Motion-Iowa (SIM-IA) program was launched with an official ribbon cutting at the Capitol in Des Moines. "SIM-IA is like nothing the state has ever seen," University of Iowa College of Nursing Dean Julie Zerwic said at the event. "Three custom-built mobile simulation units will soon be traversing the rural roads of Iowa, bringing high-quality, real-world clinical simulation education to healthcare providers. Whether the providers are in Adams County or the town of Zearing, SIM-IA allows us to bring this education to their doorstep."

Less than three years later, the program has educated more than 14,000 people around the state, including emergency medical services (EMS) providers, high school students, quarry workers, nurses, long term care workers, and athletic trainers. In May 2025, at a training with Chickasaw County EMS in New Hampton, Iowa, the goal of providing education in every one of Iowa's 99 counties was completed.

"Reaching the 99th county in Iowa is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the SIM-IA team," said Brian Reckemmer, program director. "This milestone underscores our commitment to enhancing emergency medical training and ensuring that every community in Iowa has access to life-saving education and resources."

A 2019 needs assessment found that many EMS and critical access hospitals in Iowa had little to no continuing education (CE) budget. As a result, most

of their CE opportunities were lectures or computer-based review, not the hands-on, interactive learning or simulation-based education providers indicated they needed.

SIM-IA's program design was informed by the needs assessment, and the hands-on simulation training is provided at no cost to EMS and critical access hospitals. The program was initially funded by a five-year, \$8 million grant from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, and now relies on grants, philanthropic support, and a newly established endowment to ensure it remains accessible.

The program has been met with enthusiasm throughout the state. In bringing this education to the providers' doorstep, whole departments can receive the same education while maintaining availability to cover emergencies within their community. SIM-IA also offers an invaluable opportunity for rural providers to practice rarely utilized skills in a non-emergent environment and be prepared when a situation arises.

"This opportunity enhances the readiness of our EMS personnel by providing a safe environment to practice critical life-saving interventions," Fire Training Captain Thad White of Indianola, a central Iowa town of about 16,000, said after the fire department hosted SIM-IA this spring. "It ensures our team is prepared to deliver the highest level of care when minutes matter most."



Above: Henry County Emergency Medical Services personnel participate in a SIM-IA training in Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

The enthusiasm can be concretely seen in program data. Between June 2022 and June 2025, SIM-IA delivered 3,189 education hours to 14,456 people at 759 training events. Partnerships have been established with Sioux City Fire and Des Moines Fire to house the western and central trucks, respectively, and the program employs eight full-time and 29 part-time people. Together, the three trucks have traversed more than 98,500 miles these last three years—equivalent to nearly three trips around the world.

As the reputation of and appreciation for SIM-IA has grown around the state, it has also gained recognition more broadly. Jacinda Bunch, PhD, RN, SANE-A, NREMT, SIM-IA senior advisor and College of Nursing associate clinical professor, has been invited to present about the program at conferences across the country, and papers have been published about the project in national journals such as *Nurse Leader*. The model was recently named a 2025 American Academy of Nursing Edge Runner, a prestigious recognition of nurse-designed models of care that was given to just five programs this year.

Additional recognition of the program's importance and success has come in the form of operational support. SIM-IA recently received \$600,000 from the Bedford Falls Foundation-DAF (see Donor Impact, page 21) and \$5.3 million from The Wellmark Foundation to continue bringing high-quality continuing education to rural Iowa communities.

"Wellmark believes that where you live should not

determine the quality of care you receive," said Laura Jackson, executive vice president of health improvement at Wellmark and chair of The Wellmark Foundation. "Knowing SIM-IA addresses many health care needs across rural Iowa, we are excited to partner with the UI College of Nursing to broaden their ongoing program."

SIM-IA's partnership with The Wellmark Foundation will ensure that over the next five years first responders and other health care professionals in Iowa's 86 rural and urban-mixed Iowa counties receive training at no cost at least twice per year, with one session focused on maternal health.

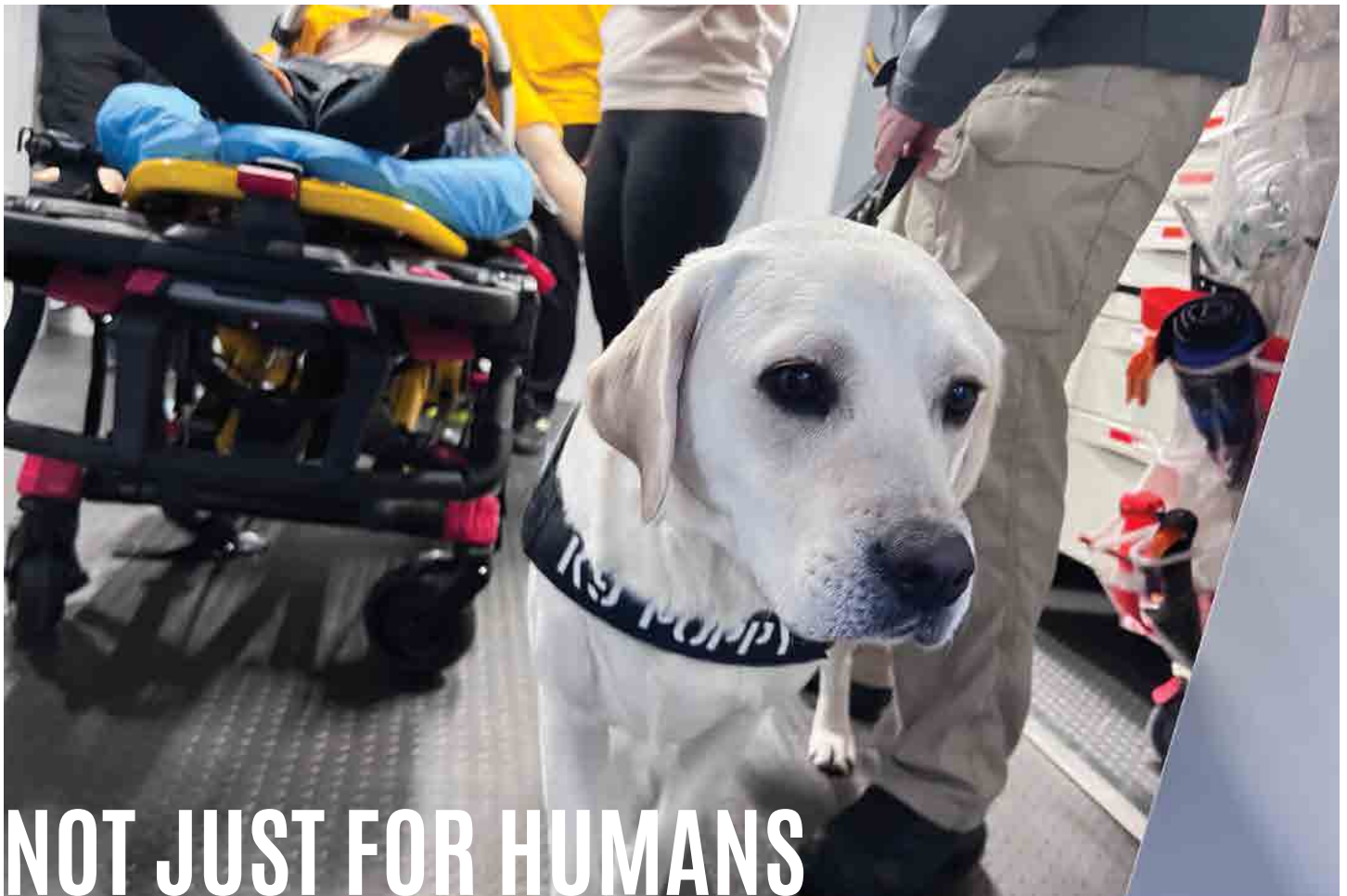
SIM-IA is a unique, innovative, and highly regarded program. Most importantly, though, it is effective and makes a difference in communities like Clarence, Iowa.

On Oct. 5, 2022, the ambulance service in the small, rural town of Clarence, Iowa, hosted a SIM-IA training. One of the scenarios in their training was a pediatric seizure. On Oct. 7, 2022, Clarence Ambulance was dispatched for a pediatric seizure patient who was unresponsive and not breathing.

"We are so thankful for the opportunity to train on skills in a realistic setting that refresh us to this type of call," they shared on social media. "Our patient, due in part to the recent hands-on training that our crew received with [SIM-IA], had a positive outcome as our crew was able to act quickly and efficiently."

Learn more
about
Simulation in
Motion-Iowa





NOT JUST FOR HUMANS

Crisis Canine teams benefit from SIM-IA training

Inside an emergency room bay, a cacophony of mechanical beeps filling the air, a woman breaks down crying. Doctors have just declared there is nothing else they can do for her father. As she veers back and forth between despair and anger, between screaming and crying, a cold wet nose pushes its way under her hand. The nose is followed by a fluffy head, and the woman's body visibly relaxes, her hands rubbing the soft golden fur. "This is Mabel," a calm voice says. "She's a crisis response canine and we're here to help."

Although it all felt real, the woman in this scenario was a volunteer, her "father" was a simulation manikin, and the ambulance bay was inside the Simulation in Motion-Iowa (SIM-IA) mobile simulation unit. The scenario, part of quarterly training hosted by Crisis Canines of the Midlands (CCM), was designed to give crisis canines and their human partners the opportunity to train in real-life scenarios.

Crisis canines are specially trained dogs who work side by side with first responders to provide a calm, comforting presence to those in need during times of crisis. Each team of first responder and canine partner trains together for one year, after which they certify as a team and are deployable by their agency, says CCM co-founder Rebecca Smith. Once certified, these teams provide peer support for other first responders and respond to critical incidents within their communities or across the state. "That's the difference in this type of a dog versus a civilian therapy dog—the handler

is trained in critical incident stress management and peer support techniques," says Smith, adding, "and the dog is trained to be calm in every sort of situation you can imagine, which is why we partnered with the SIM-IA truck." The truck offers a unique opportunity for the partners to train in high distraction environments without interrupting care in the community. In this training, canines were challenged to ignore distractions and focus on the person who needed their support, as well as provide calming support while navigating the cramped space of an ambulance.

For Mabel, a ten-month-old Golden Retriever just starting her crisis canine training, the high distraction environment was a new experience. "Having all of that chaos going on at the same time was really helpful because she's never been in a situation that was that loud or with so much stuff going on," said her handler Mandy Bieber, emergency management coordinator for Delaware County, Iowa. "She's a pretty tired girl now, she worked hard." Although Bieber was familiar with the SIM-IA truck, having brought it to Delaware county for EMS training, this training experience was new and helpful for her as well. "I've never interacted with patients like that before," she said. "[Mabel is] a natural—she just goes in and loves on people—but for me to know what to say in those kinds of situations was very helpful."

Mabel and Bieber became a fully certified crisis response K9 team in April 2025.

Above: K9 Poppy from the Jasper County Sheriff's Office takes part in a training inside the SIM-IA mobile simulation unit on Dec. 11, 2024.

Left: Abby, a three-month-old pup getting a jump start on training, shares some love with her partner Jeffrey, a community health coordinator and paramedic with Mercy One Des Moines during a Dec. 11, 2024 training.



Follow Crisis Canines of the Midlands on Facebook.



SIM-IA and Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program named

AAN EDGE RUNNERS

The Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program (IONRP) and Simulation in Motion-Iowa were recently named 2025 Edge Runners by the American Academy of Nursing. With this elite designation, the programs are recognized as two of the most innovative and transformative nurse-designed models in the country.

Edge Runners are models of care that reduce cost, improve health care quality, advance health equity, and enhance consumer satisfaction. Each of the five programs selected this year highlights nurses' resourcefulness, leadership, determination, and collaboration.

Over 25 percent of new graduate nurses leave their first job within the first year. Nurse residency programs are shown to improve retention rates, but they are typically based in large urban areas. The IONRP is the first fully online transition-to-practice program designed to support new nurses in rural and underserved areas. By providing a standardized, evidence-based curriculum and supportive resources, the program helps bridge formal educational preparation with practice. This model ensures that more new graduate nurses have the foundational skills needed for a long and thriving career regardless of where they start. Using a hub-and-spoke model, new nurses receive online education, peer support, and practical application guided by organizational leaders and preceptors.

IONRP was created in response to recommendations from the 2010 Institute of Medicine report, "The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health." After the report came out, the Iowa Action Coalition, co-led by College of Nursing Dean Rita Frantz, set a goal to create an affordable, online nurse residency program accessible to new-graduate nurses, regardless of the practice setting. IONRP launched in 2014, with Nicole Weathers (25DNP, 06BSN) as director. Ten year later, thanks in no small part to Weathers' leadership, the program has expanded to 54 organizations across 13 states.



Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program



Simulation in Motion-Iowa





Amy Schafer (third from left) with CON faculty and staff

AMY SCHAFFER, MSN, BSN, RN

2024–2025 Undergraduate Preceptor Award

Schafer is a Housing and Urban Development–Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) nurse at the Des Moines VA Medical Center.

Schafer's nominator wrote, "Amy Schafer is an amazing and kind human being. She is a phenomenal nurse and a valuable resource for our community. She taught me that nurses are not only there to treat wounds but also to be a friend to those who need it. Amy is sunshine in human form and deserves all the recognition she receives."

2025 NOTABLE PRECEPTOR AWARDS

The College of Nursing Notable Preceptor Awards recognize exceptional preceptors who model and encourage critical thinking, compassion, curiosity, and motivation; who are knowledgeable; and who have a lasting impact on student learning.

SALLY TWEDT, ARNP, CPNP

2024–2025 Graduate Preceptor Award

Twedt (02MSN-PNP) is a pediatric nurse practitioner who practices at Des Moines Pediatric & Adolescent Clinic.

Twedt's nominator wrote, "Sally Twedt is an exceptional preceptor. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience, and her expertise makes her an invaluable resource to her patients, students, and colleagues."

Sally's passion for teaching is unmistakable. Every day I work with her, I learn clinical pearls and practical techniques that enhance my understanding and skills.

This experience has been transformative, and I have grown immensely as a future pediatric nurse practitioner under Sally's mentorship."



Sally Twedt (right) and her nominator, PNP-PC student Kylee Cibula.



FULL CIRCLE

Alumna returns to lead and inspire **at the College of Nursing**

Kimberly Bergen-Jackson is best described as a gerontological nursing Renaissance woman. She has decades of clinical and administrative experience, a twin passion for older adults and students, a gift for connecting people and resources, and a steadfast determination to make an impact on the future of aging and long-term care. Bergen-Jackson is a three-time alumna who recently became faculty, and the College of Nursing has played a large part in her development into a compassionate, dynamic, and impactful nurse leader and educator.

Bergen-Jackson's nursing career began with an 18-year stint as a licensed practical nurse in Iowa, Washington, and Georgia. She earned her Associate Degree in Nursing in 2005, completed the College of Nursing RN-BSN program in 2008, and then returned to the college for a master's degree (2009) and PhD (2013) with a focus on aging. She began working at Oaknoll Retirement Residence in Iowa City, Iowa, as the director of nursing in 2005. By 2016 she had risen to chief operations officer—health services.

After her 2023 induction into the American Academy of Nursing, Bergen-Jackson began contemplating a career shift. "I always [precepted] students while I was at Oaknoll and encouraged them to be involved in every level of care," she recalls. She also enjoyed teaching as an adjunct and guest lecturing in the School of Social Work and the College of Nursing. Considering where she could make a bigger impact on the future of long-term care, Bergen-Jackson left Oaknoll in 2024 and joined the college as an associate clinical professor. "I made that switch and I'm thrilled to be here," she says. "Faculty and staff are great, I really like the sense of community, and I love the students."

In addition to teaching undergraduate and Master of Science in Nursing-Entry into Practice students, Bergen-Jackson enjoys collaborating with other

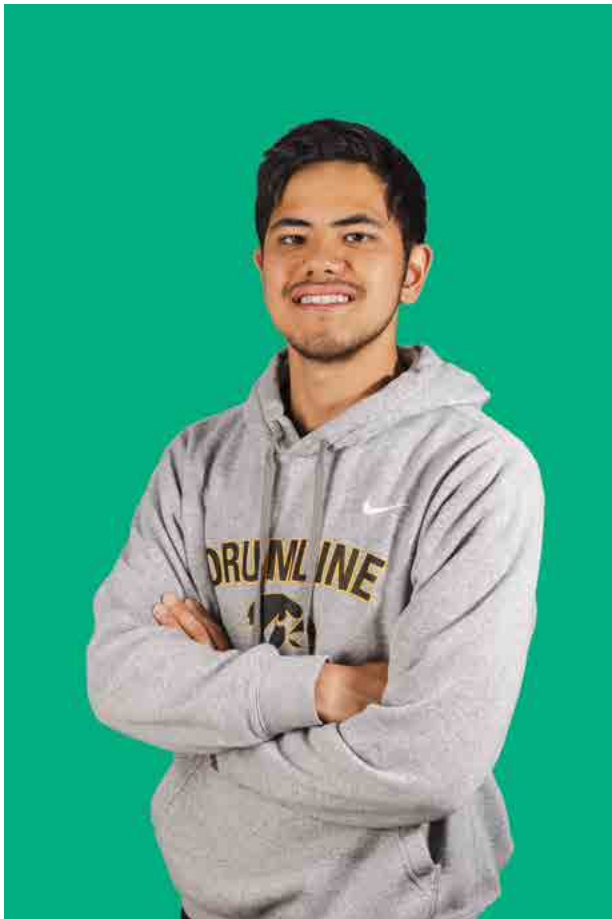
faculty. "I'm not a researcher, per se, but here I have the opportunity to work with researchers, and I'm already knee deep in a couple of projects that are really exciting for me," she says. She also continues to lead the Iowa Nursing Home Quality Improvement Coalition and serves on the leadership team of the Csomay Center for Gerontological Excellence.

Earlier this year, Associate Dean for Research Tracie Harrison suggested Bergen-Jackson apply for the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, a year-long fellowship that aims to create leaders who will serve as change agents in health and aging policy. Fellows are selected from a national pool of applicants based on their commitment to health and aging issues, leadership potential, and interest in impacting policy. Bergen-Jackson was accepted into the program and begins her fellowship in October. The fellowship "is perfect in my trajectory to having a bigger impact," says Bergen-Jackson. "This would give me a national opportunity to write policy that could change the way people age. It's exciting and scary and awesome and anxiety provoking. I hope I do a good job and learn how to incorporate policy into what I'm teaching people."

Reflecting on her return to the college as faculty brings up fond memories for Bergen-Jackson. "Janet Specht, Paula Mobily, and Meridean Maas were my mentors, and they were a powerful force to be reckoned with," she recalls. "I wish Janet could have seen this day happen. I think she would be very pleased because she was pretty sure I was going to stay at Oaknoll forever, much to her chagrin." Specht wanted Bergen-Jackson to join the faculty early on, but Bergen-Jackson wanted to gain some experience first. Now she has come full circle, bringing the richness of her experiences back for the next generation of students. "That's how I teach," she says. "I tell stories, and that experience is invaluable to me and puts things in a concrete way to the students."

not your average *nursing student*





Nursing school is rigorous, takes fortitude, and can be overwhelming in the best of times; but what happens when you add an NCAA sport, a toddler and a newborn, or a complete career switch to the mix?

Five College of Nursing students share their experiences, the support they have found at the college and across campus, and the ways they flourish as non-traditional nursing students.

Austin Smith, BSN student

Austin Smith joined the Marine Corps at 17 after a traumatic childhood. He spent eight years in the military before coming to the University of Iowa to fulfill his dream of becoming a nurse. Smith and his wife have two sons, the youngest of whom was born this summer.



What led you to join the military?

Growing up, it was not a good situation. I was subjected to a lot of abuse, which is what led me to join the Marine Corps when I was 17. I was a motor transport operator for eight years, and went all over the world.

Why nursing?

I always knew I wanted to be a nurse. I just love helping other people; it's kind of who I've always been. It really solidified when I was in Afghanistan [during the 2021 evacuation], and the Abbey Gate bombing happened. Seeing so much loss of life and knowing that I can learn so much more to help other people; the whole experience really resonated with me.

How do you balance school and family?

My wife does a lot of the work. I mainly take care of the laundry, the dishes, cleaning the house, and making sure it's good for her in the morning. She stays home three days a week but also works.

I like the fact that all our classes are together. This semester it's all early classes, but that gives me the rest of the day to study and I can do dinners with my family now, which is really nice.

Future plans

I worked in the Surgical and Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit for a short while and I really loved it. I want to become a nurse practitioner and study emergency medicine and maybe do research further on down the line.

Support

They have the veteran's association over at Calvin Hall, and I've made a bunch of friends there. That's my main support group.

There's always beauty in the struggle. I know ultimately my past made me a better man and it taught me how I want to raise my sons. I'm very intentional with my kids. I don't ever want them to feel like they're not loved, because I felt that growing up and it's an empty hole that still haunts me today. I don't know if that'll ever truly get healed.





Ryan Arceo, BSN student

An avid drummer, Ryan Arceo joined the Hawkeye Marching Band his freshman year. As he begins clinical coursework, he transitioned to working for the band, but values the skills performing taught him.

Why nursing?

My mom is a nurse, and Filipino culture in general is very associated with nursing. I really like the patient care aspect and the number of things I can choose to do, as well as the job stability.

How did you become involved in Hawkeye Marching Band?

I've been a drummer since sixth grade. I got interested in drumline in high school, and by senior year I was the drumline captain.

Hawkeye Marching Band is something really big that connects a lot of people. Over the past two years, I've developed really good relationships with a lot of people across the band.

What was the time commitment?

Rehearsals are from 3:40–5:30 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, with additional music rehearsal on Tuesday night. Game days took up our entire day since we had to be at Kinnick around six hours before kickoff to rehearse for the drumline lot show.

Drumline is the only section that's required to have the music memorized, so I also had to spend a lot of time practicing and making sure I knew the music.

How did you balance school and marching band?

Starting my nursing course load, I knew that if I did drumline again it would have been extremely stressful. Instead, I'm part of the Marching Band Work Crew, which oversees a lot of the organizational and logistical parts of the band. It's a paid position, and it allows me to focus more on school.

I appreciate the things that drumline taught me, like mental discipline, dedication, and learning to work well with other people to achieve a common goal.

Now I'm the co-president of the Filipino Student Association and I do Brazilian Jiu Jitsu off campus.

Advice

Writing out your schedules and learning time management very early is really important. So is knowing your list of priorities.

Future plans

I see myself in healthcare leadership and finding different ways to improve things that are done systematically.



Abigail Thomson, BSN student

When Cedar Rapids high school senior Abby Thomson was invited to attend the University of Iowa and join the Iowa rowing team, she thought it was a joke. It wasn't. Thomson learned to successfully balance the life of a Big Ten athlete with that of a nursing student and will graduate in December 2025.

Why nursing?

I worked as patient care tech and I liked being at the bedside and having the interactions with the patients and family.

What was your schedule like?

It's 20 hours of practice a week. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday you are lifting weights at 7 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday, you're going to practice at 6 a.m. Then in the afternoon you are coming back for more.

How did you balance nursing school and rowing?

[Academic Program Advisor] Linda Myers was my best friend! I didn't know if I could do it, and she said, "you're going to do this and you're going to get me the sweatshirt one day that says Iowa Rowing on it." So, we walked through, step by step, how I was going to do it.

I had a lot of help from the college. Their communication and changing things like clinicals to fit my schedule was amazing. They basically said, "you're not going to forego this experience. You're going to be a student athlete and a nurse at the same time."

With rowing, you get four years of NCAA eligibility and mine ended May 19th, 2025. Every day for the last four years I've had practice after school

or on a Saturday morning, so this semester I'm learning what life is like without that.

Advice

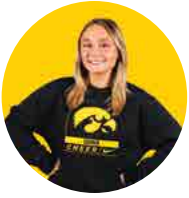
You can do it. Communication is number one, and you need to let everyone know ahead of time what's happening.

At the beginning of every semester, I sent out two paragraphs to each professor letting them know who I am, what's going on, these are the dates I'm going to be gone, etc.

If you communicate, you can do it, especially with this athletics program and this college.

Future plans

I want to become a pediatric oncology nurse. Getting to do some Dance Marathon activities through athletics helped me realize that kids with cancer is the population I want to work with.



Eliza Greenfield, BSN student

Balancing nursing school and Iowa Cheer was not easy, but Eliza Greenfield made it work. Now in her final semester of school, she knows the skills she learned along the way—like trust, teamwork, support, and communication—will make her a better nurse.

Why Iowa, why nursing?

I always knew I wanted to do nursing, so the Iowa program was a big draw. I also really loved how Iowa had a great game day atmosphere and thought it would be super awesome to cheer for the Hawkeyes.

What was your schedule like?

We cheer for football, men's basketball, women's basketball, men's and women's wrestling, volleyball and gymnastics. On top of the games, we have practice 3 - 4 times a week, usually 3 to 6 p.m., and we lift twice a week for an hour.

How do you balance nursing school and cheer?

It comes with a lot of time management. That meant making schedules in advance – knowing all my assignments, knowing when all my tests are coming up, and then building in time to cook dinner, to sit down and study, to get enough sleep and to have a social life and decompress as well.



Cassey Bullard, PhD student

Originally from West Point, Iowa, Cassey Bullard was a hairdresser on the East Coast for most of her career. She met the right people at the right time and began her PhD in Nursing this fall.

How did you become a nurse?

I was working as a hairdresser, and I had quite a few clients that were nurses. I saw that I had a strength for connecting with people, and I wanted to find something where I could make a difference in people's lives. A client who was a school nurse explained her community college trajectory to me. Knowing her and her path opened up something that I could see as being possible for myself.

I earned my associate's degree in nursing and then worked at a community health center as a pediatric nurse. I completed my BSN at Curry College in Massachusetts while I was working there.

How does your past contribute to being a good nurse?

I learned so much as a hairdresser. I think sometimes an experience like that can be devalued, but that's the reason I was an effective nurse—because I was a hairdresser. For instance, I knew when I needed to speak and when I needed to hold space for someone, and I knew how to create common ground with someone very quickly.

I think doing hair was like a proving ground for me to get those skills to be an effective and compassionate nurse.

I'm not doing cheer right now. I knew it would be too difficult, with internship and everything. I now get to have a semester as just a college student, which is nice. Last weekend was my first time in the stands of a football game ever in my whole life!

Has cheer helped you become a better nurse?

Cheer taught me a lot of life skills. You're literally getting thrown in the air, standing on top of people, and having people stand on top of you, so there comes a lot of trust in that and a lot of teamwork. You can't do cheer without your whole team, and you're only as good as your weakest link.

Future plans

As of right now, I really want to be a Neonatal Intensive Care nurse.

Advice

If there's ever a time where you feel like you can't keep up, communicate that. Your teachers and coaches will never turn you away.

Make calendars and be ahead of things.

School can feel really daunting, especially nursing school. But college is the time to put yourself out there and try new things; you can always take a step back if you need to.

Why are you pursuing a PhD in Nursing?

In college, I fell in love with evidence-based practice and research.

It was just a series of interacting with the right people at the right time that made it possible for me to consider pursuing a PhD.

Why Iowa?

I chose Iowa mostly because of family. I love it here. I'm happy to be back where I'm from.

What is your experience as a first-gen student?

I literally did not know how people got into college because I didn't have a guidance counselor and my parents didn't graduate college. I had to work to find my own way, which made me resourceful and resilient.

I have moments where I feel very uncomfortable in my knowledge base, or lack thereof. No one's telling you it's normal, so it's like fumbling around in the dark. I try to think back on the moments in my life that I have felt really uncomfortable, and they're usually moments of growth. That feeling of having my boundaries pushed is when I know that I'm going to come out better than when I went in.

Future plans

I loved training new nurses, and at the salon I was head of the education program for cutting. I could see myself being happy as a professor, staying in academia and getting to do my research at the same time.

ALUMNI WHO SHINE

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD
EMERGING NURSE LEADER AWARD



JULIE COWAN NOVAK

DNSC, RN, MA, CPNP, FAANP, FAAN
Distinguished Alumni Award

Julie Cowan Novak, DNSc, RN, MA, CPNP, FAANP, FAAN, is the recipient of the 2026 College of Nursing Distinguished Alumni Award. Novak earned her BSN (72) and MSN (76) from the college, and soon after became the inaugural perinatal nurse clinician at University of Iowa Health Care's Newborn Nursery and Primary Care Clinic. She furthered her education at the Hahn School of Nursing at the University of San Diego where, in 1989, she was the first graduate of the Doctor of Nursing Science program.

Novak is a Fellow of both the National Association of Nurse Practitioners and the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) and has held academic and leadership positions spanning the spectrum — from assistant professor to chief wellness officer to dean — at institutions across the country. In 2024 she received the prestigious Edge Runner Award from the AAN for her Integrated Nurse-led Model of Sustainability and Innovation (INSMI). Initially focused on primary care workforce development in rural Virginia, the model has expanded nationally and internationally, becoming a network of 14 nurse practitioner-led clinics.

Novak is also heavily involved in philanthropy in her San Diego community and was recently honored as a 2025 Woman in STEM by the Fleet Science Center.



DAN LOSE

DNP, RN, CNML
Emerging Nurse Leader Award

Dan Lose, DNP, RN, CNML, is the recipient of the 2026 College of Nursing Emerging Nurse Leader Award. Lose (16DNP, 12BSN) currently serves as nursing director for the Medical Surgical Services Division at University of Iowa Health Care, where he oversees nine inpatient units, encompassing 293 beds and over 600 clinical staff. Lose's accomplishments include developing the Unit Partner program, a student employee program that provides undergraduate nursing students with flexible and meaningful clinical exposure while helping to meet staffing demands; the addition of assistant nurse managers and clinical practice leaders on four high-volume units; co-designing and implementing a nurse manager onboarding series; and co-founding the Young Nurse Leader Program to introduce pre-licensure BSN students to formal leadership pathways.

Lose's leadership "reflects a commitment to high-quality, patient-centered care; the advancement of nursing systems; and the preparation of future nurse leaders," his nominator wrote, adding, "his strategic thinking, data-informed action, and strong interpersonal leadership have inspired countless colleagues and students."



Alumni in the spotlight | Alumni from the classes of 1969–1975 toured Hancher Auditorium (below), listened to faculty panels, attended a Golden Gala, and engaged in lively discussions during the Golden Alumni Reunion this summer.





2025 COLLEGE OF NURSING BY THE NUMBERS



11,570

Average steps taken by senior nursing students in a day



2.15

Average cups of coffee/tea consumed per student per day



14.4

Average age of students when they decided they wanted to pursue a nursing career



3.75

Pairs of comfy shoes owned by the average nursing student

Together Hawkeyes

C A M P A I G N

Generous support from donors provides faculty, students, and staff the opportunity to advance in education, research, and outreach initiatives. We are grateful to our generous donors who continue to impact the lives of many students through scholarships, internships, optimal learning environments, and highly sought after educators. As the cost of education increases and science evolves, the need for support to advance nursing and healthcare is essential.

As of July 2025, nearly \$58.2 million has been raised toward the \$70 million UI College of Nursing campaign goal as part of the university's \$3 billion Together Hawkeyes campaign.



Learn how you can join us in leading and transforming healthcare in Iowa and nationally by contacting:

Dayna Ballantyne
Director of Development
dayna.ballantyne@foriowa.org
319-331-4135



Bedford Falls Foundation **FUELING NURSING FUTURES**

When University of Iowa College of Nursing junior Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) student Ahava Atar talks about her future, her vision is clear: work in an intensive care unit, pursue graduate studies to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, and continue her advocacy for the Deaf community. But her path hasn't always been smooth.

"As a financially independent student, balancing coursework, work hours, and leadership roles has been a constant challenge," she said.

Atar is one of the undergraduate students whose lives have been impacted by a \$3 million gift from the Bedford Falls Foundation-Donor Advised Fund to the College of Nursing. Of the total gift, \$2.4 million is dedicated to scholarships for Iowa residents pursuing a BSN. Over the next four years, approximately 120 students annually will receive the Joanne and William Conway Nursing Scholarship, named for the foundation's creators.

"This scholarship eases my burden significantly," Atar said. "It brings relief, balance, and a renewed sense of purpose."

The Bedford Falls Foundation was established by Bill Conway Jr., co-founder and co-chairman of The Carlyle Group, and his late wife, Joanne Barkett Conway. Guided by the belief that nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system, the foundation partners with schools across the country to remove barriers to nursing education.

"Through this partnership with the University of Iowa College of Nursing, we're proud to support Iowa students as they

work toward their nursing degree," said Conway. "These future nurses will go on to make a difference in the lives they touch."

The Bedford Falls gift also directs \$600,000 to Simulation in Motion—Iowa (see cover story, page 6), a program that brings mobile simulation training to healthcare providers in all of Iowa's 99 counties.

UI College of Nursing Dean Julie Zerwic sees the dual impact clearly. "This investment directly supports our mission to educate the next generation of nurses while extending vital training to providers cross Iowa," she said.

When financial barriers fall away, the future of nursing—and the health of Iowa communities—grows stronger.

For junior BSN student Evan Lacina, the scholarship is helping transform his personal experience as a patient into a professional calling. "I didn't choose nursing. Nursing chose me. I was a patient in the Stead Family Children's Hospital, and I plan to give back excellent nursing care that I once received," he said.

Lacina hopes to build his career first in emergency nursing, then pursue a Doctor of Nursing Practice to become a nurse practitioner. "My goal is to build a strong foundation in direct patient care before advancing my practice," he said. "The scholarship is helping me take these steps with confidence, and I cannot thank the Conways enough."



Bill Conway, Jr.

A \$3 million Bedford Falls Foundation gift is opening doors for Iowa's nursing students and strengthening healthcare across the state.

Above: MSN-Entry into Practice students learning from associate professor of instruction Theresa Bechtel, DNP, RN, PCCN, CNE (right), at the Nursing Clinical Education Center at University of Iowa Health Care.

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering the lives of our alumni

1940s

Delores (Skorheim) Heyl, 44GN
Evelyn (Fisch) Bothmer, 48GN
Beverly (Bringolf) Lindsey, 48GN

1950s

Elizabeth (Barry) Nitzke, 50GN
Charlene (Flickinger) Sutherland, 50GN
Mary Jo (Becker) Chapman, 51GN
Pat (Valentine) Johnston, 51GN
Janet (Allbaugh) Knorr, 51GN
Marjette (Hovden) Fitzgerald, 52GN
Dolores Whitehead, 53BSN, 61MA
Virginia (Taylor) Meadows, 53GN
Elsie (Jerdee) Foerstner, 54BSN
Anita Wildman Hockett, 54GN
Patricia (Templeton) Harms, 55BSN
Shirley (Klehfoth) Lamb, 55BSN
Karen (Kratz) Lewis, 55GN
Shirley (Ralston) Webster, 55GN
Cynthia (Johnson) Pansegrau, 56BSN
Nancy (Bresnahan) Senneff, 56BSN
Mary (Evans) Bereman, 57BSN
Janice (Hagens) Butts, 57BSN
Lois (Boland) Hennings, 59BSN
Judith (Frank) Johnson, 59BSN
Janet (Klindt) Lohman, 59BSN
Kay (Accola) Strobel, 59BSN

1960s

Susan (Ausland) Rollins, 61BSN
Jane Fay, 62BSN
Mary (Buswell) Mallison, 62BSN
Beverly (Smith) Hunter, 63BSN
Marjorie (Walsh) Curtis, 64BSN

Charlotte (Hooker) Rembolt, 64BSN
Margie (Okano) Fearing, 64MA
Nichele (Schulz) Miller, 66BSN
Yvonne Riddle-Wessels, 68BSN
Georgia (Griffith) Whitley, 69MA

1970s

Carolyn (Swanson) Hudgens, 72BSN, 75MA
Mary (Micka) Franck, 73BSN
Beverly (Dunn) Nelson-Forbes, 73BSN
Beverly (Jenne) Cronnelly, 74BSN
Joan H. (Hanson) Dohrer, 74BSN
Ruth (Ripley) Bice, 75BSN
P. Elizabeth (Robson) Abel, 75BSN, 78MA
Vernette (Backhaus) Riley, 75BSN, 78MA
Teri (Botsford) Verduyn, 76BSN
Mary Taylor, 78BSN
Verabeth (Eckert) Bricker, 78BSN, 94MA

1980s

Ardith Maile, 81BSN
Marsha Morton, 81MA
Ellen Mellick, 89MA

1990s

Mary Jo Bain, 91MA
Patricia Rank, 94MA
Karen (Christianssen) Duehr, 95BSN

2000s

Jenny (Schneider) Bailey, 01MSN
Kristin (Boswell) Ledvina, 07BSN

In closing | Llamas from Prairie Patch Farm in Swisher, Iowa visited the College of Nursing on May 12, 2025 during finals week. Every semester, students are invited to "take a break with the dean," pausing their studies in the middle of a busy week to stretch their legs, have a snack, or cuddle a llama.



IOWA

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RANKED AMONG THE BEST

U.S. News & World Report Rankings

2025–2026 rankings

Undergraduate ranking

#8 Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Graduate rankings

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#4 Pediatric Primary Care Doctor of Nursing Practice

#7 Nursing Systems Administration
Online Master of Science in Nursing

#7 Adult/Gerontology Acute Care
Doctor of Nursing Practice

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