

**IOWA**

*alumni*

# CONNECTIONS

News from the University of Iowa College of Nursing

SPRING 2023





## FROM THE DEAN'S DESK

Dear friends,

It has been a busy spring at the University of Iowa College of Nursing. In late March, we hosted the Midwest Nursing Research Society annual conference in Des Moines, Iowa, where a record number of students, faculty, and post-doctoral fellows presented their research. We also had sixty-one graduating Doctor of Nursing Practice students present and defend their evidence-based practice and quality-improvement projects at the College. Moments like these, as well as the energy and excitement in the air, remind me of the exceptional leaders we develop.

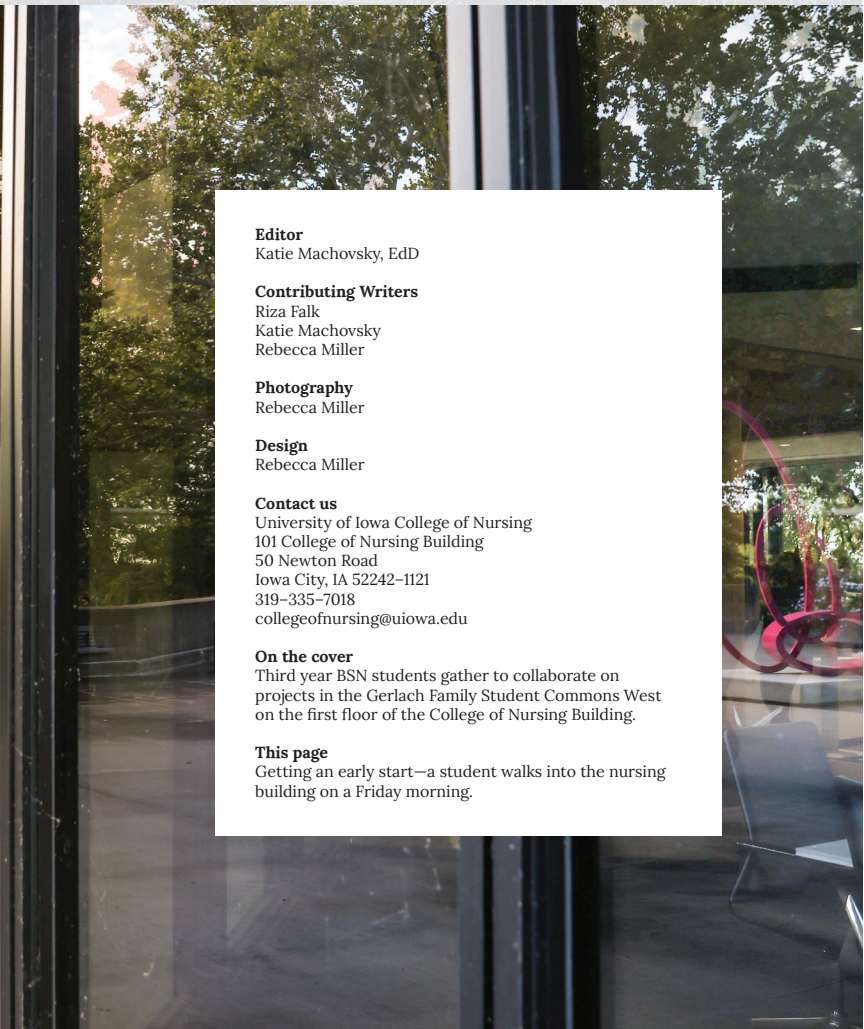
Three student leaders from our BSN, DNP, and PhD programs attended the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Student Policy Summit in Washington, D.C., to learn about nursing's role in professional advocacy. I was in D.C. for the AACN Dean's Annual Meeting, and the students and I visited Capitol Hill together. It was wonderful to spend time with these young leaders and see the energy they have for changing the future of nursing.

We are graduating another class of Iowa nurses who are moving forward on their journeys in the field of nursing.

This year, as we celebrate 125 years of the College, and we are spotlighting nurse leaders who began their careers or furthered their education at Iowa. With this newsletter, we bring you the story of Nicole Weathers (06BSN), who has been with our Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program since its inception in 2014. As an innovative leader, Nicole is forging new paths for the future of rural nursing.

Have a wonderful summer,

Julie Zerwic, PhD, RN, FAHA, FAAN  
Kelting Dean and Professor



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**On the cover**  
Third year BSN students gather to collaborate on projects in the Gerlach Family Student Commons West on the first floor of the College of Nursing Building.

**This page**  
Getting an early start—a student walks into the nursing building on a Friday morning.

### NAMI LEADERSHIP VISIT UI

College of Nursing Clinical Associate Professor Dan Wesemann, DNP, PMHNP-BC, ARNP, hosted state and national leaders from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to share about the college's efforts at educating future providers.

**"Iowa is leading the nation in getting NAMI provider education to so many providers and students across the state."**

—Peggy Huppert, NAMI Iowa Executive Director



### MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING-ENTRY INTO PRACTICE PROGRAM KICKED OFF IN JANUARY

Fifteen students started their journey into nursing this semester. The program is targeted toward people with non-nursing college degrees. This new cohort's educational backgrounds range from communication and speech disorders to Spanish.



### STUDENT NURSES LENDING A HAND

Every week, nursing students wait tables, socialize with guests, and help with health check-ups at Agape Café, which provides a free hot breakfast for unhoused community members or those experiencing food insecurity in Iowa City. This year, the cafe celebrates 30 years of service.

**"The partnership with Agape Café has allowed nursing students an opportunity to engage with community members who are impacted by social determinants of health."**

—Tess Judge-Ellis, DNP, ARNP, FAANP  
Clinical Associate Professor

### Students and SIM-IA win on One Day for Iowa

This year's annual 24-hour fundraising effort focused on supporting student scholarships and Simulation in Motion-Iowa. Thanks to generous contributions from donors, alumni, and College of Nursing faculty and staff, we surpassed our goal and raised \$20,075!

We are especially grateful to Susan Schilson, who matched the first \$1,000 in donations to the scholarship fund in honor of her cousin, Eleanor McClelland, College of Nursing professor emerita and former associate dean of undergraduate studies & community affairs.



### CON hosts MNRS

In March, the College hosted the Midwest Nursing Research Society's 2023 conference in Des Moines. Three post-doctoral fellows, 20 faculty, and 15 students gave presentations, two associate faculty and three post-doctoral fellows won dissertation awards, and a PhD student placed second in the poster competition.



**DID YOU KNOW?** Our very own Linda Myers, academic program manager in the Felton Student Success Center who coaches our BSN students to greatness, was an assistant coach for the 1993 Iowa women's basketball team that went to the Final Four? The Daily Iowan interviewed her before the current team defeated top-ranked South Carolina in the March Madness semifinal game. → [tinyurl.com/linda-myers](https://tinyurl.com/linda-myers)

# GROWING

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF RURAL NURSE LEADERS

After graduation, **Nicole Weathers (06BSN)** did exactly what new nurses are advised not to do; she took a high-stress job far away from home. It didn't take long before she became the statistic—the one in three new nurses who leave their first job within the first year. Today, as program manager for the Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program (IONRP), Weathers finds this “kind of ironic,” because, “every day I work to help new nurses thrive throughout their first year of practice.”

Growing up in a small town in northwest Iowa, Weathers was confident she would someday be a Hawkeye. What she would study at the University of Iowa was less clear. Initially she wanted to be a science teacher but then decided nursing, with its multitude of opportunities, was the way to go. After graduating and both starting and leaving her first nursing job in a year, Weathers found herself back in northwest Iowa. She took a job at a 25-bed critical access hospital and discovered a passion for rural healthcare. “In rural health care, you have to be the expert in everything,” Weathers said. “You deliver babies, you do end-of-life care, and everything in between, all with fewer resources and people than most organizations. I think it's that time in the critical access hospital that helped me develop an appreciation for rural health care. It ignited a passion in me for helping nurses

and rural facilities be the best that they can be and getting resources out into these rural communities to help them provide better health care to the patients that they serve.”

In 2014, Weathers came across an opportunity that seemed tailor made for her. The University of Iowa College of Nursing was starting a program to help new nurses working in rural facilities transition to practice. “When I was reading that job description, I felt like all of my experience up to this point was just pointing me in the direction of taking this role,” she recalled. Nine years later, Weathers runs the program with a staff of four, and the IONRP serves 54 healthcare organizations across 17 states.



Weathers sees her leadership role primarily as that of a facilitator. “Sometimes when people talk about leadership, they talk about inspiring people or motivating people. But for me, it's more about facilitating the success of others,” she said. With the IONRP, “it's ‘How can I help these organizations successfully support their new graduate nurses?’ Then when I think about my team, it's ‘How can I help them find success in what they do? What are their strengths? How can we use those strengths and passions to fulfill our mission and carry out the work that we do, with the goal that they enjoy their work and feel good about what they do?’”

Two nurses were particularly influential on her path to leadership. The first was Terri Nobles, her nurse manager at the critical access hospital. When Weathers was wavering on whether she needed or wanted to pursue higher education, Nobles said, “Nicole, you have 40 more years to work. If you have even the smallest inkling that you maybe want to go back to school, you have to do it. You can't tell me in those next 40 years that going back to school now isn't going to be worth it,” Weathers recalled. “And I remember at the time, all I could think about was, ‘I have to work for 40 more years?’”

That was the push she needed, and Weathers decided to pursue a master's in nursing education. “I think doing that opened up so many doors,” she said. “This position, for instance – [a master's degree] was one of the requirements, and had I not taken that step when I did, when I didn't think I needed it, I wouldn't have had it when I did need it.”

The second was Lori Forneris, the chair of the task force that put the IONRP curriculum together. “She was one of those people who always pushed me to think outside of the box, to not be afraid to chase these big, wild ideas,” Weathers said. “You need those people in your corner who continue to push you along, even when you're unsure if you want to keep going in that direction.”

Recently, Weathers took another step on her leadership path and began a Doctor of Nursing Practice in Health Systems at the UI College of Nursing. “As my position has evolved and the program has evolved, I realized that I also needed to evolve,” she said. She is especially

excited about the innovation aspect of the program. “The very first class that I took was on innovation in healthcare. That was really exciting, because I'm always thinking about how we could do things new or different. Before it was a lot of trial and error, and I think the courses that I've taken thus far have given me a better framework [for a] structured way in which we can actually bring some of these innovations to light.”

As for the future, Weathers is sure of one thing: it will involve improving the quality of rural health care. “I believe that's going to be done by ensuring rural clinicians have access to all the things,” she said. “Access to best practices, access to mentoring, access to professional development.” One piece of that is her current work with the IONRP, and she believes another piece could be nurse-led innovation and entrepreneurship. Weathers enjoys encouraging nurses to see value in their experience and run with their ideas. For her, it is all about supporting nurses and getting “resources out there, so those of us that are not working in the large academic medical centers have access to the tools needed to be successful,” she said.

“I have 1,000 other ideas of things that I think should exist and could have real impact in our rural communities,” she added. “I'm not quite sure what the future is going to hold, but I do know I want to focus on what I can do to help nurses improve the quality of health care provided in my own backyard.”



## Keela Herr, PhD, RN, AGSE, FGSA, FAAN WINS MNRS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Kelting Professor in Nursing Keela Herr, PhD, RN, AGSE, FAAN, received the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Midwest Nursing Research Society at their annual conference in March. Dr. Herr is associate dean for faculty and co-director of the Csomay Center for Gerontological Excellence at the College of Nursing.

Over the past 35 years, Dr. Herr has been engaged in a program of research, scholarly, and professional activities focused on the problem of pain in older adults, with emphases in assessment strategies, improving practices through translation research, and supporting caregivers. Her research is nationally and internationally recognized and has included the movement of research findings into evidence-based practice, significantly improving the lives of older adults.

The MNRS Lifetime Achievement Award is presented annually to a member who has significantly advanced the profession of nursing through extensive research or creation of environments where research can flourish, and whose sustained leadership and distinguished career yielded outstanding and noteworthy accomplishments.



The **Iowa Online Nurse Residency Program** is an innovative, competency-based, online nurse residency program designed to support recent nurse graduates transition into practice. Developed with small and rural organizations in mind, this curriculum is delivered using a combination of online, evidence-based content, monthly cohort discussions, and engagement in a professional experience.

For more information, visit [→ NURSING.UIOWA.EDU/IONRP](https://nursing.uiowa.edu/ionrp)

### Know an alum in nursing leadership?

We are looking to feature a variety of CON alumni in leadership roles during our 125th anniversary year. If you know of an alum in leadership, please share their info with us!

→ [TINYURL.COM/LEADERSHIP-FEATURE](https://tinyurl.com/leadership-feature)

# Improving medication safety in schools ONE BARCODE AT A TIME

Approximately 27 percent of the 52 million school-aged children (5–18 years) in the United States experience at least one chronic medical condition requiring them to receive medication during the school day. Throughout the nation, however, widespread budgetary cuts have left nearly 20 percent of schools without a school nurse. When there is no school nurse on staff, medication administration is primarily left to unlicensed assistive personnel such as secretaries.



AMANY FARAG, PH.D., RN  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Errors are three times higher when medication is administered by unlicensed assistive personnel than by a school nurse, and missed

doses are one of the most frequently occurring errors. When doses of critical medication are missed, the health and academic progress of the millions of school-age children with chronic medical conditions who rely on medication is placed at risk.

When health systems researcher **Amany Farag, PhD, RN**, associate professor at the University of Iowa College of Nursing, learned about the chaotic nature of medication administration in schools from her colleague, College of Nursing Professor **Ann Marie McCarthy**, it sparked something inside her. Up to that point, Farag's research had focused on how to decrease medication errors in the acute care setting.

**"I thought, 'Why don't I mimic what is in the hospital setting and modify it in a more user-friendly way to assist schools in medication administration?'"** Farag recalled. "The technology is there. It has been used in many areas, so why not the schools?"

After reaching out to stakeholders, talking with school nurses, and immersing herself in the literature, Farag created the design and plan for a technology-assisted medication administration system. She received pilot funding from the UI Institute of Clinical and

Translational Science to develop the system and found collaborators in the UI College of Engineering to help bring it to life.

Five years later, the Electronic School Medication Administration Record (eSMAR) is ready for real-world testing. Farag was recently awarded a three-year, \$1 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to implement and evaluate the eSMAR system in a select sample of K-12 schools in the Iowa City Community School District over 1½ years. The desired outcomes include a reduction in missed medication doses and errors, an evaluation of the usability and effectiveness of eSMAR, and development of a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing eSMAR implementation in schools.

**"Dr. Farag and her team have identified an often overlooked but incredibly important area of medication safety improvement – our schools,"** said **UI College of Nursing Dean Julie Zerwic**. "Widespread implementation of the eSMAR system has the potential to improve the safety and wellbeing of millions of children."

Farag hopes eSMAR will eventually be used state and nationwide, and her dream is to create a closed loop communication with the primary care provider so they can interact with the school and the parent or guardian through the system. For now, though, she is looking forward to testing the system in local schools.

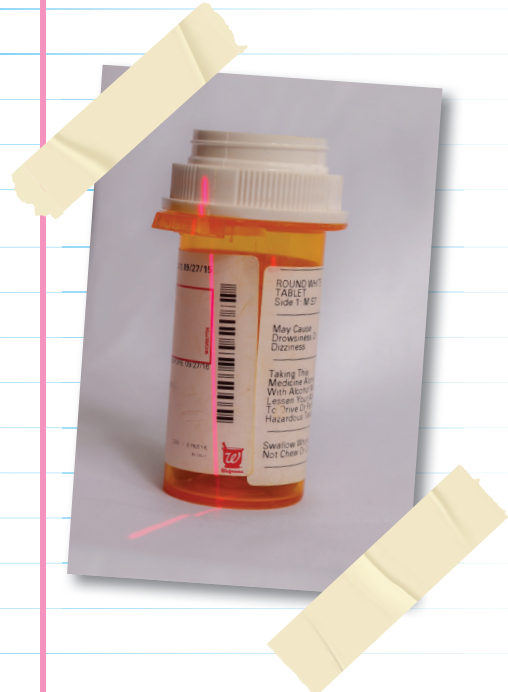
"Nurses' offices are busy and chaotic," Farag notes, "and inevitably there are a multitude of distractions and disruptions during medication administration. These can cause medication errors because we are human and we are error prone. Hopefully this system will provide an added safety layer."

### How does eSMAR work?

▶ A student's fingerprint serves as a temporary key to bring up their medical record, just like a barcoded bracelet at the hospital.

▶ The barcode on the medication bottle is scanned. If there is a mismatch between the student, medication, or time of administration, the system will alert the administrator.

▶ The medicine is administered, and the system records and time stamps the administration information.



Kurt and Crista Geitzenauer of Queen Creek, Arizona, have a passion for expanding access to health care in rural communities and opportunities for men in nursing.

Kurt grew up in the small rural town of Fenton, Iowa, with parents in the health care profession. His father volunteered for much of his adult life as an emergency medical technician and his mother as a licensed practical nurse. When determining the direction he wanted his career to go, it was an easy decision. Kurt attended Iowa Lakes Community College for Pre-Nursing and then transferred to Drake University, and landed at Iowa Methodist School of Nursing where he earned his Diploma of Nursing.

In search of warmer weather, Kurt packed his bags and moved to Arizona where he met his wife Crista, a native of Arizona, and in 2014, he returned to school to earn his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Grand Canyon University.

As a lifelong Hawkeye fan, Kurt follows athletic events from afar and takes every opportunity to show his affinity. Although initially Crista was not a Hawkeye fan, as her love for Kurt grew, so did her love for the University of Iowa.

When Kurt and Crista visited the UI College of Nursing in 2019, they met with the Men in Nursing student organization and shared Kurt's background as a paramedic, medic/nurse for the Arizona Diamondbacks, Phoenix Suns, and the Arizona Cardinals, and his work as the on-field medic/nurse for the Arizona Cardinals. He also discussed his time working for MedAire where he provided care over the phone to commercial airline crew members from around the world.

"If a pilot were to get sick in Germany, I would triage them and then send them to the doctor," Kurt explained. "These scenarios involved anything from a cold to a heart attack."

Kurt always knew he was interested in health care, particularly a career in emergency or trauma. Because of his education and experiences,

he has had many opportunities in his career. Reflecting on his time in college and preparing for his nursing career, he shared that there were not many scholarships available for him as an undergraduate student.

**"That's the reason I give back—to give kids who grew up in rural Iowa another scholarship to further their education."**

Kurt and Crista have a planned gift established at the UI College of Nursing. Kurt expressed, "I am giving back to Iowa because I am a huge fan of the state and the University of Iowa. I am also a big supporter of getting nurses involved, especially men in nursing. I felt like it was great to give back some of what Iowa gave me as far as education and my upbringing."

To aid in getting nurses involved, Kurt and Crista have made financial contributions to the College's Men in Nursing student organization that enabled students to participate in the National Men in Nursing Conference. Crista added, "I love everything that male nurses bring to the table and to be able to support future men in nursing from small town communities, just continues to give back to the communities from which he was raised."

Additionally, with the launch of the new Simulation in Motion-Iowa program, a cutting-edge mobile education program that brings high-quality, evidence-based clinical education to emergency medical services and hospital professionals across the state, they have found another avenue of giving that aligns with their passion for rural health care.

"Planning for the future is important in all aspects of life, including giving in the areas you are passionate about. It's not always about what you have today, but what you can give tomorrow or in the future," Crista said.



## Making a difference for men in nursing

LEARN HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY CONTACTING

**Dayna Ballantyne**, Director of Development

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## TOP 5 REASONS YOU SHOULD CHOOSE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HEALTH CARE

#1 MAGNET®

We've earned 4 consecutive Magnet® designations, the highest distinction given for excellence in nursing practice.

#2 TOP HOSPITAL

We've been ranked as Iowa's top hospital by *U.S. News & World Report* for over 30 years.

#3 SHARED GOVERNANCE

We offer shared governance. You'll have the chance to provide feedback and collaborate with nurses of all levels and interprofessional team members.

#4 TEAMWORK

Teamwork and collaboration are at the heart of the care we provide. You'll be part of an interprofessional team providing high-quality care to patients.

#5 SIGN-ON INCENTIVES

Whether you're an experienced nurse or a new graduate, registered nurses may qualify for up to \$12,500 in sign-on incentives.





### Send us your Class Notes!

Have a job update, an award to share, or a new future Iowa Nursing baby in the family? We want to hear about it! → [tinyurl.com/conclassnotes](https://tinyurl.com/conclassnotes)

# 125

*Years of Nursing*

## SEPTEMBER 21-23

### Celebrate with the College of Nursing!

Join us for a weekend of activities to ring in our 125th year.

- Reconnect with classmates and enjoy Iowa City
- Learn about the latest research from our distinguished faculty
- Tour the Simulation in Motion—Iowa truck
- View the Iowa Women's Archive special exhibit
- Watch the Iowa vs. Penn State game at Kinnick Stadium
- And more!

Registration opens June 1—more info coming soon!