FROM TRUDY BUSCH VALENTINE

I am writing to share my thoughts about naming the School of Nursing. This honor stirs many emotions in me because it tells so much of my life story: why I wanted to become a nurse and how being a nurse has defined me as a person. I started thinking about becoming a nurse when I was 11, reading the very old Cherry Ames Nurse series of books. The summer I turned 14, I began volunteering in the pediatric division of a hospital.

When I was 17, my little sister Christina, who was just 8 years old, was critically injured in a car accident. We shared a bedroom and a lot of love since she was a baby. After the accident, Christina lived for 11 days on a respirator at Mercy Hospital. I spent much of those days and every night sleeping on a chair, holding her hand and resting my head on her bed. All that time, I closely observed the nurses and nurses nursing my sister with their well-tuned clinical skills and scientific knowledge, their endless compassion and abiding love. I watched the nurses, especially those with a deep spiritual dimension, accompany, comfort and even begin to heal Christina into her new life with God and help our family say goodbye to her, sending her on with all our love, tears, happy memories and prayers. From that time on, I knew that I wanted to be a nurse, and I began looking at college programs.

A year or so later I found what I was seeking at Saint Louis University, as so many of you have. The heart of our Jesuit education is holistic health care: care of the body, mind and soul. To really heal and stay well, each part must be in harmony with the other. Our Jesuit education calls us to be people for others, for the glory of God and the service of humanity. What an incredible gift to be able to try to teach that to our young patients, one family at a time. The knowledgeable, wise, demanding faculty at the School of Nursing opened our eyes and hearts to evidence-based learning and to the wider, complex world people lived in and to the despair and needs of others. Here, we started on a path to become lifelong learners and to look at our inner selves in the context of who we are and who we want to be.

Naming this school has been humbling and joyful for me. Names are a way of passing on legacies and showing deep and abiding love. I named my daughter Christina after my sister. My daughter also graduated from SLU and went on to become a nurse practitioner. In naming this school, I honor two very passionate and brilliant women, Dean Emeritae Dr. Teri Murray and our late Dean Dr. Joan Hrubyetz. Both have been my friends and mentors. They have made our School of Nursing one of the best and most innovative schools in the country. I was hired at Massachusetts General Hospital the day I interviewed because I was a SLU nurse. This holds true today, as I have seen many of our graduates go on to work in the finest hospitals in the nation. So many of our nurses are leaders throughout the world.

Finally, I want to thank and acknowledge my parents for giving me so much love, a down-to-earth upbringing formed by faith in God and the financial means to make this gift to our school, a portion of which goes to faculty and staff who are chosen annually by a committee for their excellence in teaching and for going above and beyond what is expected of them.

I am humbled by this incredible gift of naming the Valentine School of Nursing. I know it will always be a place of love, learning, healing and compassion for others. The Jesuit tradition of being people for others, for the glory of God and the service of humanity. What an incredible gift to be able to try to reach this goal one patient, one family at a time. The knowledgeable, wise, demanding faculty at the School of Nursing opened our eyes and hearts to evidence-based learning and to the wider, complex world people lived in and to the despair and needs of others. Here, we started on a path to become lifelong learners and to look at our inner selves in the context of who we are and who we want to be.

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I am humbled by this incredible gift of naming the Valentine School of Nursing. I know it will always be a place of love, learning, healing and compassion for others. The Jesuit tradition of being people for and with others is ingrained in our hearts and minds.

WITH DEEP GRATITUDE AND LOVE, 

Trudy Busch Valentine

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For more information about the magazine or to submit story ideas, please contact 314-977-8920 • Curapersonalis@slu.edu

Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing

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Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing

St. Louis, MO 63104-1099

ON THE COVER: Trudy Busch Valentine (left) stands with her daughter Christina (Valentine) Cammon (right) and Dean Danny G. Willis (middle) in front of the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing.
In 2021, Niche ranked Saint Louis University's Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing as the No. 8 college nursing program in the country. Niche collects data and reviews of colleges and universities around the country, analyzes and ranks them. It notes that the most popular major at SLU is Nursing.

"Nursing students in the Valentine School experience first-hand the power of an excellent college education shaped by expert faculty and staff grounded in our mission of educating the whole person—mind, body, heart and spirit," said Danny Willis, D.N.S., dean of Valentine School of Nursing.

As of early May, SLU students volunteered more than 2,393 hours, faculty gave 679 hours of their time and SLU families and staff volunteered 553 hours, Benz said.

Jonathan Smith, Ph.D., SLU vice president of Diversity and Community Engagement, passed away on June 19, 2021. Smith, 61, was known throughout SLU for his kindness, compassion and creativity. He taught courses in pharmacology, public health and community health education.

"Perhaps no time has felt as poignant as now," Medlin said. "Over the past year, you have gone to great lengths, working around the clock and putting your lives on the line to help others in profound ways."

The following Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing faculty members were honored as finalists for the 2021 Excellence Awards by St. Louis Magazine in April:

- Associate Professor and e-Technology Coordinator Cynthia Rabideau, VSN '79, '80 (M.Ed., M.S.N.)(R), RN, was an honoree. In 2015, she was an Eliever Leading Stars in Education (ELSE) Simulation category honoree.
- Denise Cinti-Assadault, Ph.D., RN, CNLC, FNP, FAAN, Cinti-Assadault, who is featured in this issue about her Fulbright research in Scotland, was honored in the Women's Health category. The hemodialysis expert of Professor of Maternal Child Nursing, she is an internationally recognized expert in pregnancy loss. Her research also focuses on breastfeeding/facilitation, early parenting, theory and perinatal palliative care.
- Adjunct Faculty Michelle Mandl, M.S.N., RN, CCRN, who teaches clinical public health in SLU's undergraduate nursing program, was named a finalist in the Immersive Care category.
- Sarah A. Johnson, a clinical nurse at SLU's Center for Comprehensive Cardiovascular Care, was honored in the Medical-Surgical Nursing category.

During the virtual awards ceremony in April, Jerret Mullin, the magazine's editor-in-chief and publisher, praised the finalists.

"Perhaps no time has felt as poignant as now," Mullin said. "Over the past year, you have gone to great lengths, working around the clock and putting your lives on the line to help others in profound ways."

City honors Benz for COVID vaccine work

In April, the City of St. Louis Department of Health recognized Assistant Professor Margaret Benz (VSN ’79, ’82, ’16), M.S.N.(R), APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, for her organization of volunteers associated with the Department's vaccine clinics.

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March of Dimes honored Hendricks-Ferguson and other Valentine School Faculty

Irene Riddle Endowed Chair Verna Hendricks-Ferguson, Ph.D., RN, FCN, FAAN, received the "Legend in Nursing Award" during the March of Dimes Missouri Chapter Nurse of the Year Awards gala in November 2019.

Hendricks-Ferguson's research has focused on making significant contributions to the pioneering study of palliative and end-of-life (PC/EOL) communication practices by pediatric oncology providers with parents of children with poor prognostic cancer. She has published research articles focused on PC/EOL, pediatric provider communication practices and parental preferences to receive PC/EOL support during the care of children with cancer.

Along with Hendricks-Ferguson, Assistant Professor Micki Marquard, D.N.P., APRN, AGACNP-BC, ACNP-BC, CLNC, the Advanced Practice Nurse of the Year. Marquard has focused her teaching on health policy and regulatory environment, nursing fundamentals, public health, health policy and finance and clinical teaching for public health across multiple programs. The organization also named Assistant Teaching Professor Karen Scaglione, D.N.P., APRN, AGACNP-BC, ACNP-BC, CLNC, the Advanced Practice Nurse of the Year. Scaglione, VSN ’02, ’06 teaches in the Adult Geriatric Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program and is an instructor in the graduate and doctoral programs.
2021 nursing graduate receives University social justice award

Brielle Heraty (VSN ‘21), recipient of the 2021 Merc Puldo Social Justice Award, never met Saint Louis University alumna Merc Puldo, but in many ways, Heraty, who graduated in May from the Trudy Beach Valentine School of Nursing, is carrying on Puldo’s legacy of devotion to social justice work. At the same time, Puldo’s legacy has impacted Heraty in various ways throughout her education.

For both women, immersing themselves in cultures other than their own ignited the tenets of their Jesuit education. In fact, their experiences offered each of them opportunities to use their talents to live SLU’s mission. Before her death in 1996 at the age of 32, Puldo (A&S ’83) focused her camera lens and her advocacy work on the forgotten and forgotten people who live on little and need much more than they receive, primarily in Haiti, El Salvador and Brazil.

Heraty, who also minored in Urban Poverty Studies, embodies every aspect of Puldo’s legacy. Like Puldo, she has taken up the cause of social justice and international perspectives on global issues of poverty throughout her academic career at SLU.

“I really do feel my time at SLU has been shaped by my academic experiences in the School of Nursing and my extracurricular experiences,” she said. “The things I have learned inside and outside of the classroom integrate the things I have learned inside and outside of the classroom integrate what was happening to families on the margins and a commitment to social justice in the four years that I have had the privilege of knowing her,” Verner said.

Heraty completed her career challenging herself to be present for others in every aspect of her education and every location from St. Louis to Spain to Costa Rica. Through it all, she weathered typical and unexpected experiences of homesickness, language challenges and living in unfamiliar settings. Heraty said she anticipated these struggles and chose to embrace them and others that were unexpected. It is in those moments, she said, that she could see her own growth and value the struggle.

“Brielle has shown a consistent commitment to care for those around her and those on the margins and a commitment to social justice in the four years that I have had the privilege of knowing her,” Verner said.

This year, Saint Louis University’s Student Government Association honored Assistant Professor Cristina McGroarty, M.S.N., RN, of the Trudy Beach Valentine School of Nursing, with the Fr. James Vedra, S.J., Cura Personalis Faculty Excellence Award.

The award is given annually to a faculty member who exemplifies an extraordinary commitment to the spiritual and intellectual development of members of the SLU community. The SGA selected McGroarty in part for her devotion to students and their development, but also for her work focusing on spirituality in nursing through her course Ignatian Spirituality in Health Care.

“McGroarty’s concern and commitment to be a part of” Heraty said of the course at the awards event in April. “At her core, Cristina makes her students feel seen and known and has never hesitated to meet us where we are. She has encouraged all of us to show up as our authentic selves with the reminder that this alone is enough.”

“Heraty about McGroarty

Each Monday at 8 a.m., 32 students gathered, some physically in the room and others virtually. Together, they encountered speakers who addressed spirituality in various forms, stress management tools and more. Each week, they shared ideas and worries about their own thoughts and concerns. “It was a very reflective class,” she said. “It was a really special, sacred place.”

During her freshman year, Heraty had those experiences,” she said. “I have come to see that the most concrete relationship building comes from the power of being present.”

Part of that she learned from her host family in Costa Rica. Living with a host family really immersed her in the culture and lives of Costa Rican people; it broke down a barrier that would have limited her experience had she been in a different setting.

“I’m excited to take all I have learned throughout the world and my college experiences and apply those lessons to nursing in the St. Louis community,” she added.

After graduating, Heraty began her nursing career as a registered nurse in the medical-surgical unit at St. Mary’s Medical Center in Richmond Heights, Missouri.

“The thing I love about nursing is that it is so versatile,” she said. “I’m honored to be in this profession, to go to work every day doing something I love, something that is valued and needed. I cannot begin to express how excited I am to be a nurse.”

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CHOSEN BY STUDENTS: McGroarty receives faculty excellence award

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“The idea for the class grew out of her participation in the University’s Mission and Identity Committee, where the discussions focused on ways of ensuring that SLU is educating the whole person and finding tangible, purposeful ways to put this goal into practice in new ways,” McGroarty said.

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In a time of isolation, shutdowns and social distancing, the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing faculty and students synergized their efforts, volunteered tirelessly and showed up to do whatever needed to be done in the ever-evolving landscape of contact tracing, screening, vaccinating, treating and comforting those impacted by the infectious disease.

IN THE BEGINNING... 

From the start, Saint Louis University administrators turned to experts within the faculty to deal with the pandemic. Specifically, University President Fred Pestello, Ph.D., turned to Terri Rebmann, (GRAD VSN ’06), Ph.D., RN, CIC, FAPIC, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, and director of SLU’s Institute for Biosecurity; Rachel Charney, M.D., professor of pediatric emergency medicine and director of disaster preparedness for SLU’s School of Medicine and SLUCare; and Valentine School Assistant Professor Deborah Artman-Horton (M.S.N. ’08, M.P.H. ’09), RN, PHNA-BC, expert on disaster preparedness in schools.

From early days in 2020, faculty and students at the Valentine School watched, wondered and waited to see what would happen next. Many had questions for Artman-Horton, who directed SLU’s asymptomatic testing program and eventually oversaw SLU’s vaccination clinics.

“They wanted to know what was happening, what could be done, how to handle the situation, if it was true and what was inaccurate information,” Artman-Horton said of nursing students. “There was so much conflicting information out there, and also everything was changing so fast. I could see why they would have questions.”

On March 22, 2020, the University went to virtual learning settings all across campus. By late May, officials were planning for an early beginning to the fall semester, and started putting in motion plans for a safe return to in-person learning in some fashion.

STRUGGLES AND LOSSES...

While administrators and experts set policies and established protocols, Valentine School nursing students at all levels found themselves on the front-lines and in unthinkable hardships.

Graduate and doctoral students working in hospitals, beyond SLU, shared harrowing stories with Assistant Professor Margaret Benz (VSN ’78, ’82, ’95), M.S.N.(R), APRN, ANP-BC, FAAN, about experiencing shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), caring for the sick and dying, and often being the person holding the hands and the iPads of dying patients as they said final farewells to distant family members.

Those who could do so, isolated themselves from their families for fear of transmitting the disease. Others did all they could to protect their loved ones...
as best they could, all the while managing their
households. And they all worried about catching the
disease themselves and what would happen then.
Benza remained in contact with her graduate
students stationed at hospitals in St. Louis and across
the country. She watched and worried about the
struggles many recounted to her.
There were some who were single mothers
afraid to go home to their children, but who had few
options. There were others isolated from those they
loved, facing homelessness or the potential of infect-
ing a loved one at high risk of perishing from the
disease. And they all were living with death, despair
and devastation on a daily basis.

“I worry about my graduate students the most,”
Benza said. “They have devastating stories as nurses
treating dying patients with COVID-19. On top of
their already stressful jobs, they have faced unimagi-
nable hardships and been forced to make very
difficult choices regarding the safety of their loved
ones and themselves.”

RETURNING, TESTING, LEARNING…
Like graduate students, many undergraduates, faculty
and alumni were on the frontlines as well, volunteer-
ing as contact tracers and testing site workers.

When students returned in August 2020, the
University put several protocols in place to ensure
the safety of all, including:
- Requiring all students who lived on campus to
be tested prior to move-in.
- Starting school in the early weeks of August so
that there was plenty of time to establish protocols.
- Establishing random weekly testing of asymptom-
atic students to ensure that any outbreak could be
detected early and those students could be isolated.
- Engaging in vigorous contact tracing to ensure
the follow-up of any spread, should it arise.
- Communicating regularly with students, parents, faculty, staff, fellow administrators, alumni
and all stakeholders in the area to provide the most
current information possible.
- And connecting with regional stakeholders to
partner with them to establish clinics to protect all
by monitoring and stemming the flow of outbreaks
as much as possible.

In September 2020, nursing students began
randomly testing 10 percent of all 3,500 residential
students showing no signs of infection, Artman-
Horton said. While some students volunteered to
help, others had the opportunity to fulfill required
clinical hours for their involvement.

Artman-Horton said she saw it as a fantastic
opportunity to learn all that goes into establishing
and bringing to fruition large-scale testing programs.
Nursing students also made calls and followed up
as a part of the contact tracing effort. The
experience taught them the diplomacy of commu-
nity health care and the complications of trying to
convince people to share information.

“Contact tracing is not easy,” Artman-Horton
said. “Sometimes people don’t want to talk. They
feel the questions are too invasive. Students have to learn
how to explain the need for their help and how that
help can save lives.”

In an online message to the community, Pestello
praised Artman-Horton and the nursing school
faculty and students who helped with injections and
managing the clinics, saying, “Their commitment
to care personally in the communities in which they
serve has long been known and recognized. Now,
when faced with a need in our community, they
have risen to the occasion, providing that same level
of compassionate, holistic care for their peers, and
in doing so, make our weekly COVID-19 testing
possible.”

Throughout the semester, and much of the
2020-21 school year, SLU remained open, conducting
the testing and tracing. In that time, the University
reported “zero documented cases of disease transmis-
sion in classrooms, lab spaces or other educational
settings on campus.”

“It was great not to see the disease transmitted,”
Rehrmann said. “When everyone else was closed, we
were open, and open safely.”

“Every member of our Saint Louis University community should
be proud of all we have accomplished this past year, much
of which many thought impossible a year ago. The pandemic
tested us, and we pulled together and rose to the challenges
as One SLU.”

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT FRED P. PESTELLO, PH.D.

As of late June 2021, the Valentine School of Nursing
talled big numbers while assisting with COVID-19
vaccine delivery.

13,500 vaccines given
297 nursing students and faculty have participated and given vaccines
75 staff members from across the University helped staff the clinics (for nonmedical jobs)
47 clinics held

“it was so rewarding because people were eager to stop the
virus. There were cars with as many as three or four generations
of families, some came after church, and some had rolled out
of bed in their pajamas. I remember looking back into the line of
cars and felt so grateful that I was there to make a difference.”

SLU SENIOR ABISAI GRIEMEN
ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AT COMMUNITY VACCINATION CLINICS
“During the spring of 2021, the University, with volunteers primarily from the Valentine School, administered vaccines to the SLU community and beyond,” Rebmann said.

Along with students, faculty, staff and Valentine School alumni stepped forward to volunteer to staff the clinic. Among the alumni volunteers was Kevyn Schroeder (VSN ’75, ’83), who eagerly signed up to help administer vaccines at the Simon Recreation Center.

“I got my master’s degree in public health and epidemiology,” she said. “I like helping others. It’s what I do.”

Rebmann praised the work of all who helped. Various faculty spoke of their appreciation for the ways nursing students at all levels mentored and assisted each other. Rebmann also spoke of how the clinics offered opportunities for students who had been unable to do remote clinical rotations because of COVID.

“I really feel like the contributions by the School of Nursing helped SLU stay open and be safe,” she said. “There was a synergistic experience where students were volunteering, when we did not have a way for them to do their regular rotations.”

ONE STUDENT’S EXPERIENCE...

For Abigail Griesman, senior nursing student, giving vaccines has been rewarding and important work. So much so that she has volunteered around 12 hours to help any way she could.

“I volunteered 72 hours working as a contract tracer for St. Louis County. I spent probably 20 hours doing vaccines, and I spent 2 or 3 days, around 20 hours, doing the asymptomatic testing at SLU. I began volunteering when Margaret Benz signed up my entire public health clinical group to work on the vaccines for SSM. We started on a Saturday at 7 a.m. It was the first-ever car vaccine event. The rainy-day experience giving COVID vaccines took my breath away. It was just incredible. When we arrived, people were already lined up eager to get their vaccines. We had no idea what to expect,” she continued. “We were all really nervous and had only practiced one or two times. Nurses and faculty were very helpful because people were eager to stop the virus. There were cars with as many as three or four generations of families, some came after church, and some had rolled out of bed in their pajamas. “I remember looking back into the line of cars and feeling so grateful that I was there to make a difference. People waited up to an hour to get their vaccines and rolled down their windows every time with a smile on their face. We flew through all of our shots in half the amount of time they predicted.

“By the end of the day, we all were extremely grateful to have been involved in this experience. “I continued to volunteer after that. My favorite experience was giving vaccines at Union Station for the St. Louis City Health Department. This event stood out to me because I met so many people that were eager to make change.

“I met a woman fighting cancer who had waited at many events before hoping for a waste dose. She was in tears when she heard she was eligible and to come as soon as possible. She parked the tractor and immediately ran to the vaccine clinic, leaving the rest of her work for when she got back.

“It was just so rewarding. I volunteer so often because I love the difference I was able to make in people’s lives, whether it’s for protecting grandma, an uncle or aunt, or themselves. I loved to hear each person’s personal story. It made me appreciate the change people are willing to make to keep themselves and their family safe. Through these experiences, I also noticed the extreme lengths that health care workers will go to in order to protect people. It made me so grateful that I had the opportunity to give them their vaccines. I am so proud to be a nurse in the near future and join all of these healthcare heroes in the field.”

AND SO IT GOES...

As of late June, the Valentine School faculty and staff had vaccinated more than 13,500 people in 47 clinics on and off campus and in the larger St. Louis community. Beyond the clinics on campus, faculty and students worked with the City of St. Louis Department of Health to provide vaccines to as many people as possible.

Offering all three approved vaccines, Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson, 297 nursing students and faculty volunteered to participate in the clinics. In addition, 71 staff members from across the University gave their time to help at the clinics to ensure they vaccinated as many people as possible.

“Every member of our Saint Louis University community should be proud of all we have accomplished this past year, much of which many thought impossible a year ago,” said University President Fred P. Pestello, Ph.D. “The pandemic tested us, and we pulled together and rose to the challenges as One SLU.”

As the pandemic further unfolds, the University continues to ensure a safe and successful Fall semester for everyone at SLU.

“By the end of the day, we all were extremely grateful to have been involved in this experience.

“I continued to volunteer after that. My favorite experience was giving vaccines at Union Station for the St. Louis City Health Department. This event stood out to me because I met so many people that were eager to make change.

“I met a woman fighting cancer who had waited at many events before hoping for a waste dose. She was in tears when she heard she was eligible and to come as soon as possible. She parked the tractor and immediately ran to the vaccine clinic, leaving the rest of her work for when she got back.

“It was just so rewarding. I volunteer so often because I love the difference I was able to make in people’s lives, whether it’s for protecting grandma, an uncle or aunt, or themselves. I loved to hear each person’s personal story. It made me appreciate the change people are willing to make to keep themselves and their family safe. Through these experiences, I also noticed the extreme lengths that health care workers will go to in order to protect people. It made me so grateful that I had the opportunity to give them their vaccines. I am so proud to be a nurse in the near future and join all of these healthcare heroes in the field.”

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“I volunteered at many vaccine clinics, but volunteering at SLU’s clinic touched my heart on a deeper level. It was more personal; I knew some of the people I vaccinated. I had the pleasure of collaborating with fellow nursing students, like my friend Magdelena ‘Maggie’ Ariza (pictured left), and nursing professors in distributing the vaccines at the Simon Recreation Center. … I know I will be telling my children, grandchildren, and hopefully great grandchildren, one day, about how I was able to help save lives during the Covid pandemic by vaccinating hundreds of people, even fellow students at Saint Louis University.”

SARAH LITZSINGER, SENIOR NURSING STUDENT
After earning his bachelor of science in nursing degree from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Willis went on to complete a master’s and doctor of nursing science at Louisiana State University Health Science Center-New Orleans.

CURA visited with him just as he completed his first year at SLU.

What drew you to Saint Louis University and the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing?

I really aligned with the mission here. It is building on my 13 years spent at Boston College, another Jesuit and Catholic University. Here at SLU, the identity of the University and the School is very central to who I am and my focus on the marginalized. The marginalized and oppressed have been a focus of my work as a psychiatric mental health nurse and researcher. This is a really special place.

In my discernment, I found that this is how I would align myself. The Jesuit identity and mission is very central to who I am and what I do. The University of Wisconsin-Madison was a great career opportunity, as well. I valued my time as an academic dean there, but my soul was calling me home to the Jesuits. When this opportunity came open, I thought that this could be the place for me.

What were your first impressions of the City of St. Louis?

It reminds me of my time in New Orleans. I earned two degrees at Louisiana State University Medical Center in the city and was very aware of the disparities between the haves and the have-nots. St. Louis is the same; here we have the “Delmar divide.” (The Delmar divide denotes the street’s distinction as a physical separation between traditionally financially challenged North St. Louis and the wealthier communities south of Delmar Boulevard.)

I wanted to see the issues public health and nursing are facing in the city, so I took a drive and frankly I became teary to see that within a few miles of each other you have these amazing mansions and structures with these gilded gates and then, just sheer poverty and desperation that comes with that. I find the contrast disturbing, but the chance to make a difference is very real. In this setting, I see our mission. It is challenging making inroads. But I find that the mission of the University and of the world is to go and meet other human beings where they are and be of help, be supportive and caring, show compassion. It was part of what made me want to come here and be a part of this mission.

Now that you have been here for a while, what are your thoughts regarding the city and the role of the Valentine School of Nursing and the University?

As I said, there are very challenging inroads that have to be made. I don’t want to understate that. Still, I believe deeply in the power of humanization, of meeting people where they are, of learning their stories and understanding their experiences. From my perspective, it is in the language of the University. “Higher purpose. Greater good.” These are very grounding words to me. It’s easy to get distracted. There are so many messages, so many details. Yet, at the end of the day, I ask myself, “What is the purpose? What is the meaning?” For me, it could not be a better choice of words. If you get lost — and we all do — it is a way back. I find it very grounding; I don’t feel that these are just words. Here, at SLU, people really live these words. I have seen that this past year.

What has COVID revealed?

What has this year taught you?

I see the need for people to engage in self-care. When we closed out the school year, I said time and again to people to please take care of yourselves. I am hoping that we all use this time — a break for our own restoration. If the past months have taught us anything, it is the power that lies in self-care. It is and has been really important.

I think the other thing it really helped us see was the value of connections and coming together. We’ve been in Zoom meetings and hybrid classes for a long time, which is so, so challenging. While Zoom kept us moving forward, we functioned, but it lacked something. My own experience of
walking on the new england songs from the 49th parallel, and camille saint-saens. man’s search for meaning favorites, go-tos st. louis public radio, i love classical music. and must haves by viktor e. frankl good will hunting ice cream chocolate music movie book food sushi it is moving. one of the things at the forefront is comes in. mental health nursing can help people struggling. it really was baptism by fire — or more accurately, disaster. yes, it was in a way a testament to all that we do in the school and in the community. obviously, there was a need for short-term strategic planning, and one of the most important key elements was to get wide input from the community, faculty, students, stakeholders, staff, so that we could address immediate needs and prepare for the changing scenarios. we must stay vigilant and at the same time, we can start setting an agenda for the next five years.

so, what is on your agenda for the next five years? it is critical that as i see dean understand what the needs are for education, research and the community. we need to think about education and where it is moving. one of the things at the front of simulation opportunities for students so that they get real-world experiences in controlled settings that allow them to grow and learn. the best education incorporates simulation that requires both education and technology.

of course, nursing needs to be grounded in its own disciplinary goals and science, while collaborating across disciplines. and to that end, i envision a robust scholarly environment and research program. we are already engaged in important and vital research. dr. denise cété-arsenault is a fulbright scholar, who is continuing her research in care for couples who have lost their babies. dr. verna hendricks-ferguson studies care for children and families at the end of their battles with life-threatening illnesses; and dr. norma mehren, who has just retired, has a distinguished career in research focusing on bedside nursing that has led to changes in practices worldwide, particularly her work associated with reducing the risk for complications when patients have feeling tubes.

diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are key. and our former dean, dr. teri murray, has garnered federal support for our education endeavors focusing on diversifying the nursing workforce to better serve those we care for in nursing. she is looking at the critical question that ensures our school and our workforce mirrors the people we serve. in addition, myself plan to engage in research and to ensure that we grow and become a prominent scholarly environment and research center.

you’re following dr. teri murray, the first black female dean. in many other settings, following a woman of color with a white male would seem to be a step back, rather than forward, but nursing is different. you are actually the first male nurse to hold this post since the nursing school was founded in 1909. would you speak about that?

of course, there are many changes that have taken place since 1909. the school has grown from a small group of 15 students to a school with over 1,000 students today. we have expanded our facilities and added new programs, and we have become a leader in nursing education and research.

i am not a white male, and i am not a minority, typically speaking. in fact, when i was a biology science major in college, i had not even thought of nursing, though i have always had a love of science. i thought i would be a scientist or a medical doctor. i had an academic advisor who asked me what i wanted to do with my career path; he asked me if i had ever considered nursing. we had a transformative conversation. the conversation led me to think about my future career on a deeper level, and i realized that nursing was a really good path for me because it brought together my love of science and humanity.

clearly you love research. are you still involved in it?

i am currently working on a research grant proposal with a colleague here at slu and a former colleague in boston college that moves my prior research on male survivors’ healing from child abuse forward with a great team. i have also been involved in crafting a federal grant proposal and providing qualitative research consultation for a new specialty study with a colleague. while i have been involved in a broad spectrum of research, my primary focus in my own program of funded research has been on understanding trauma and healing among populations of boys and men who have experienced interpersonal violence and abuse. generally, you could classify all the research i’ve been involved with as either principal investigator or team-member falls within the area of non-pharmacological healing approaches to promote well-being with vulnerable populations. i’ve been very fortunate with my own research grants, and i have really enjoyed being able to help others with their work as a qualitative research consultant.

in terms of climate, Murray is not speaking of weather or earthly terrain, but of persistent residual effects of jim crow laws, human-made redlined neighborhoods, systemic socioeconomic inequities, food deserts, as well as lack of access to medical care and well-funded educational programs. her work explores the intersectionality of these environmental factors and access to, and representation in, health care.

in june, murray learned that she had received a $2.06 million nursing workforce diversity grant from the u.s. department of health and human services, health resources and service administration. this latest grant is the third in a series of ever-increasing funding. the first grant totaled $897,427 and funded murray’s work from 2010 to 2013. the second for $1,575,219 provided support from 2017 through june of this year. the new grant began july 1, 2021, and offers funding through 2025.

“these federally funded grants fit nicely with my new role at slu,” murray said.

in her new post as chief diversity and inclusion officer, murray will study and work to resolve issues involving bias in educational opportunities at valentine school of nursing. the goal is to help bring more students into the school by changing the admissions approach and offering greater support. specifically, the school will use the grant funds to implement:

• holistic admissions, considering leadership, volunteerism, work experience and other training with the academics, and focus less on act scores (optional during the pandemic) and grade point averages.
• academic support, including tutoring.
• financial support, tuition assistance and additional funds to cover costs of incidentals students require.
• mentoring support, providing counseling, and assistance in social and emotional growth.
• collaborative community partnerships, helping students with pre-entry preparation, developing study skills, time management, stress relief methods and more. the students will have the opportunity to learn more about the federally qualified health centers as well as have two opportunities for immersion programs — one during the school year and one in the summer that allows them shadowing experiences in a hospital setting.

the goal, murray said, is to establish a population of successful diverse nursing students who not only reflect the populations that slu serves but can provide care rooted within the cultural and environmental contexts that impact health, a necessary step to achieve health equity.
OF FULBRIGHTS AND ELEPHANTS

The purpose and presence of the sculpture speak to Côté-Arsenault’s purpose as a Fulbrighter. In her Fulbright application, she specifically addressed the need to study how and how much Scotland supports bereaved parents, particularly given the United Kingdom’s national socialized medicine: “The question I am pursuing is, given the education and training of nurses, midwives and with national socialized health care in Scotland, what is the philosophy, quality and approach used in the care and support mothers and fathers receive in the circumstance of pregnancy and infant loss?”

Throughout her travels, Côté-Arsenault collected accounts of practices and experiences of doctors, nurses and midwives. As the past recipient of NINR funding and co-editor of the newly published clinical guide for perinatal palliative care, she also shared her research with them. In her Fulbright proposal, Côté-Arsenault articulated her interests: “I am curious about how philosophical and policy differences in health care priorities impact the care and outcomes for bereaved parents. Time to immerse myself in Scottish care and interviewing parents and midwives will provide me the opportunity to examine bereavement care within another culture, one that I can access without major language barriers, in Edinburgh, Scotland.”

Upon seeing the elephant sculptures, she recognized its significance to her work. Its presence on the scene was a reminder of the place of bereaved mothers and fathers in the world. “It was very touching to go to Lockerbie,” she said. “I was very appreciative to see that memorial.”

Côté-Arsenault’s research and travels included a visit to Scotland’s Isle of Skye. There, among the floral topiaries and statues to Scottish culture, she recognized its significance to her work. Its presence on the scene was a reminder of the place of bereaved mothers and fathers in the world. “It was very touching to go to Lockerbie,” she said. “I was very appreciative to see that memorial.”

Côté-Arsenault sees connections between her research into grief and aftermath of loss and her interest in perinatal and infant loss. “They experience a loss of hopes and dreams, a loss of their child who cannot be replaced. It is important to know that parents are not alone.”

Côté-Arsenault also sees the research she conducted in Scotland as connecting with her personal history. “I have interviewed several parents now. Their sense of loss is the same as all parents. The difference with perinatal loss is that people avoid asking about babies that have died, and parents want to talk and remember their babies,” she said. “They experience a loss of hopes and dreams, a loss of their child who cannot be replaced. It is a common experience, and it is important to know that parents are not alone. Humans gain a lot of support from each other, if they reach out to each other.”
Answering the calls of the questions

Rarely does a single question lead to a lifetime of significant, standard-changing research. Yet for retiring Professor Emerita Norma Metheny (GRAD ED ’78), Ph.D., RN, FAAN, who is also the Dorothy A. Votsmier Endowed Chair in Nursing and the former associate dean of research, it is precisely how her career moved from the bedside to the spfe of the field of nursing.

After 42 years at Saint Louis University, Metheny, retired at the end of June. During her career, she became the most funded researcher at the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing and an internationally recognized nurse and scientist who set the standards for feeding tube placement. That said, a feeding tube placement served as a catalyst, driving her curiosity, which began at the bedside of a patient. “I wondered, ‘How do we know we are putting the feeding tube in the right place?’”

RESEARCHER EXTRAORDINAIRE

It was that query that led to a lifetime of inquiry. From 1987 to 2011, Metheny was awarded more than $5.64 million from the National Institute of Nursing Research that funded six R01 grants and one R21 grant for her studies regarding the safe delivery of enteral nutrition to acutely and critically ill patients. She used that funding to equip a laboratory in the Valentine School to conduct major components of her research.

Metheny received her B.S.N. at Alton Memorial Hospital in Alton, Illinois. She worked her way through her bachelor’s degree in medical-surgical nursing from Southern Illinois University in Alton. In 1985 she earned her master’s degree in medical-surgical nursing from Washington University in St. Louis. And in 1978, she completed her doctorate in education at Saint Louis University, joining the faculty the following year.

PREPARING others

Metheny taught students at every level, from undergraduate to doctoral candidates, focusing on medical-surgical nursing and research.

“As a teacher, I tried to instill in my students the importance of critical thinking when providing patient care,” she said. “Anyone who has been sick and hospitalized knows the value of a compassionate and skilled bedside nurse. While I recognize that nurses can serve in a variety of important roles, I most value the contributions of bedside nurses.”

Colleague Kathleen Armstrong, Ph.D., M.S.N., RN, values Metheny and cherishes the years she has had with her as an undergraduate and graduate student, and then as a colleague. Her first encounter with Metheny was in her fluid and electrolyte class.

“To say that Norma has been an influential researcher on my nursing education is an understatement. I was also lucky enough to call the woman who I admire so greatly a colleague,” Armstrong said. “I am especially grateful for the support I received from SLU colleagues in a variety of disciplines, as well as from the Saint Louis University Hospital for my research,” she said.

Professor and Dean Emerita Terri Murray (GRAD ED ’97), Ph.D., RN, PNA-BC, FAAN, recognized her extraordinary efforts and successes by appointing Metheny to the post of associate dean of research in 2007.

“Simply put, Norma is a nurse-scientist. She is driven by curiosity,” Murray said. “It is that inquisitiveness that is the mark of a scholar, not just accepting what you are doing but questioning it. That is how you advance practice and improve it. It is what makes her the most funded faculty at the School of Nursing.”

Metheny certainly did question. Her research generated more than 140 publications in both nursing and medical journals and has contributed to national-level guidelines on enteral nutrition. It also led to Metheny serving as a permanent member of the National Institute of Nursing Research Review Panel from 1997 to 2001 and then again from 2007 to 2011.

At the cornerstone of Metheny’s publications was her textbook, Fluid and Electrolyte Balance: Nursing Considerations, that has trained nurses the world over.

“I’d be at conferences and say that I’m from SLU, and whoever I was speaking with would say, ‘Oh, isn’t that Norma Metheny?’ She is truly a living legend,” Murray said.

TO SLU NURSING’S HIGHEST FUNDED RESEARCHER

1956 Became an RN at Alton Memorial Hospital, Alton, Illinois. 1960 Received her B.S.N. at Southern Illinois University, Alton, Illinois. 1965 Completed M.S.N. in Medical-Surgical Nursing at Washington University in St. Louis. 1975 Earned Ph.D. at Saint Louis University. 1985 Became professor of nursing.


2014-2016 Generated more than 140 publications in both nursing and medical journals and has contributed to international level guidelines on enteral nutrition. 1997-2012 Published eight revisions of her textbook on fluids and electrolytes.

1999 Inaugural Dorothy A. Votsmier Endowed Chair (retired for endowed).

Throughout her illustrious, internationally recognized career, Professor Norma Metheny has demonstrated deep compassion, endless curiosity and meticulous study that has set the standards of care in hospitals around the world. She is truly a woman for today and for others. Her impact on the nursing profession is profound, and her influence on her students at the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing has been meaningful and genuine. She will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

FRED P. PESTELLO, Ph.D., SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

“Dr. Metheny has been an example of excellence for Saint Louis University, the Valentine School of Nursing and the profession of nursing. Her career has been marked by guiding students, faculty and nursing practice. She is known for her numerous contributions to nursing science, improvements in clinical practice, specifically around tube feeding placement, and nursing education. A recipient of many prestigious awards, including research funding by the National Institutes of Health for her science, Dr. Metheny has been a trailblazer. We have been fortunate to have such an esteemed faculty member helping light the way for others here at SLU.”

DEAN DANNY WILLIS, D.N.S.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

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Tender touch leaves indelible impression

For Alumna Kevyn Schroeder (VSN ’75, ’83), P.N., P.H., the gift is in the giving. She isn’t splashy or self-serving. Rather, she shies from the limelight for hers is a tender touch.

So much so, that in 2019, she surprised her alma mater by announcing her generosity and service to the nursing school. While she prefers to point out the benevolence of others, her own love of the school and dedication to it did not go unnoticed.

Over the years, Schroeder has happily returned to her alma mater often as a volunteer, a fundraiser and even a student.

In 2019, she audited a course in fundraising and even a student. Schroeder completed her bachelor’s in nursing in 1975. She was surprised to discover the enthusiasm she had for the field of public health and epidemiology, which she finished in 1983. Through her training and beyond, she worked at Children’s Hospital in St. Louis for 11 years before leaving nursing to pursue a career in nursing education.

“I walked into my first class, and there was Connie Nien Finger. She and I went to grade school and high school together, and here we were in college together,” Schroeder recalled. “It was so great. We loved that class, and we did our clinicals together.”

Always a self-starter and conscientious student, Schroeder said she felt support and encouragement to do her very best. It was a standard she found in all of her classes.

“I loved being in class,” she said. “Our professors were such an inspiration, and they really pushed us to be our best. They each had their specialty, and each was in the right place to teach us and to be great examples of nursing and what it should be.”

Schroeder completed her bachelor’s in nursing in 1975. She then trained as a pediatric nurse practitioner at Washington University before returning to SLU to complete her master’s degree in public health and epidemiology. In 2007, she finished her doctorate.

“I loved being a volunteer,” said Shroeder. “Participating in the vaccine efforts was a wonderful opportunity to help others. That’s what I care about, helping others, I do it today, just in a different way.”

That way is Schroeder’s “Tender Touch,” depicted in her favorite statue outside the building that now bears her name.

For more information, contact: Carolyn Layloff, M.S.N., RN, Clinical Resources Coordinator, Valentine School of Nursing, Carolyn.Layloff@slu.edu or 314.977.6653.

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Pioneering a remarkable future for all.

The Valentine School of Nursing counts on our generous alumni to partner with us in our efforts to create a future that serves a higher purpose and seeks the greater good through the power of a Jesuit education. With a gift to the Valentine School of Nursing, we can continue to shape and advance our students’ experiences as we prepare them to be compassionate, ethical and contemporary practitioners in their various nursing careers. To make a gift to the Valentine School of Nursing, contact Michelle Cohen, senior director of Development at michelle.cohen@slu.edu or 314-977-8723.