Message from the Dean

Each new academic year brings the opportunity to reflect on the many accomplishments of the Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies. For the second consecutive year, the Egan School has been ranked in the top five percent of all nursing programs in the U.S. by College Factual’s 2019 Best Nursing Colleges report. Fairfield University’s nursing program was ranked #11 out of 519 four-year colleges and universities nationwide. The Egan School was also ranked #2 out of eight colleges in Connecticut, placing it in the top 15 percent of all programs in the state. In addition, The Egan School’s Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program rose to 17th rankings of the top U.S. nursing schools. Out of 3,000 institutions, the Egan School was ranked #96 in the United States, #97 among private nursing schools, #5 overall in the New England region. Only three percent made the list of top 100 nursing schools in the nation. While continuing to be inspired by the light and energy of our new 70,000 square foot building, the Egan School launched our first interprofessional education program in public health this past year and prepared for our first class of social work students. Our new state-of-the-art Simulation Center received full accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare, making us the first accredited simulation center among Connecticut colleges and universities. We received approval from the Accreditation Commission for the Education of Nutrition and Dietetics to begin a doctoral program in clinical nutrition and our new master’s in healthcare administration was unanimously approved by the Academic Council in May 2019.

Egan School faculty members take pride in educating students who will become future leaders in healthcare. Consistent with the University’s mission to educate men and women for others, the Egan School personalizes this mission to educate healthcare leaders who will not just care for patients but are prepared to improve healthcare systems. As you read the stories in this newsletter you will undoubtedly be impressed by our faculty and students who are truly making a difference in this world, and by how the Egan School impressively facilitates this process. Thank you for all your support and for reading about our points of pride in educating healthcare leaders and their impact on the patients, families and systems we serve.

Sincerely yours,

Meredith Wallace Kazer PhD, APRN, FAAN
Dean & Professor

ON THE COVER: Students gain hands-on experience during an emergency room simulation at Egan School’s accredited Simulation Center. Photo by Newman Architects.
This summer, Fairfield Egan was awarded a four-year grant of $2.64 million from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) program. Joyce Shea, DNSc, APRN, PMHCNS-BC, associate dean for graduate studies, and Jackie Conelius, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, track coordinator for the Family Nurse Practitioner program, are co-principal investigators for the project, called the Telehealth and Inter-Professional Practice (TIPP) program.

"Once again, we are thrilled that Fairfield University and the Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies have been selected to receive the latest of these valuable training grants that allow us to offer the highest quality programs for our family nurse practitioner, psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner, and nurse midwifery students," said Dr. Shea.

The grant will support the University’s Nurse Practitioner and Nurse Midwifery programs. In addition to providing tuition support for students, this grant will help the Egan School develop curriculum in the area of telehealth, which has risen in popularity within the medical field in recent years. Telehealth offers accessible and affordable access to care and allows care providers to remotely connect with patients through the use of digital technology. Mounting evidence supports the benefits of telehealth for patients who have chronic illnesses, cognitive impairments, mental health issues, or physical rehabilitation needs.

The grant funds will also provide an opportunity for students to work effectively in interprofessional teams and to incorporate evidence-based telehealth approaches in delivering care to underserved patients across the lifespan.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is the primary federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is committed to improving health and access to health care for the medically underserved through quality services, a skilled health workforce, and innovative programs.

**EGAN SCHOOL FAST FACTS**

- CCNE Accredited
- Society for Simulation in Healthcare Accredited
- National League for Nursing Center for Excellence
- #2 Nursing Program in Connecticut
- College Factual
- 100% Employment Rate
- Six Months Post-Graduation
- TOP 5% among Nursing Programs in the U.S.
- College Factual
- #3 Best Grad Nursing in Connecticut
- U.S. News & World Report
- 11th Nursing Program Nationally
- College Factual
- $72,607 Average salary of class of 2018 graduates

**HRSA GIVES EGAN SCHOOL A $2.64M TELEHEALTH GRANT**

Launching Fall 2019, Fairfield Egan is excited to announce the new Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA) program. The program was established in response to the rapidly changing healthcare environment. The versatile 42-credit program complements various fields of study — from nursing to science to business — with the knowlege and experience to pursue a wide range of healthcare-related careers.

MHA students will take courses in both Fairfield Egan and Fairfield University’s Charles F. Dolan School of Business. Courses include U.S. healthcare systems, finance, accounting, healthcare policy, information technology, research methods, management, healthcare economics and marketing, and more. All students are required to take the healthcare capstone and practicum with established leaders in healthcare.
The education of nutrition professionals fits seamlessly with the Egan School’s current health offerings, and we are honored to offer the first doctoral nutrition program in the state,” said dean and professor of nursing Meredith Wallace Kazer, PhD, APRN, FAAN. “Ensuring leaders across social and healthcare environments improve health outcomes for all, inclusive of underserved or vulnerable populations, is our goal. The DCN offers an interprofessional, competency-based health education program that will truly impact those we serve.”

Developed to meet the competencies set forth by the Accreditation Council for the Education of Nutrition and Dietetics, Fairfield’s DCN program will prepare students to become registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs). Although nutrition is often associated simply with what a person should or should not eat, RDNs are experts in the use of food science and nutrition to promote health and manage disease.

Armed with a DCN degree, graduates of Fairfield’s new program will be equipped with the necessary knowledge, values, and skills to assess, manage, and evaluate common nutritional problems through a cross-population perspective. Additionally, graduates will be educated in U.S. and global nutrition, dietary issues, and social justice as it relates to services and resources.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment opportunities for dietitians and nutritionists are expected to grow 15 percent between 2016 and 2026. This faster-than-average growth is due to an increased emphasis on disease prevention, greater awareness of health and wellness initiatives, and the growing number of aging populations.

Fairfield will begin to accept applications in fall 2019 and classes will begin in the fall of 2020. The DCN is a three-year full-time, or four-year part-time, program. Admission to the program is open to students who have completed a bachelor’s degree in any discipline, with required prerequisites. DCN students will first take courses in foundational nutrition and health competencies, including: food science, fundamentals of nutrition, health assessment, physiology and pathophysiology, and pharmacology. They will then progress through higher-level competencies such as research, health care policy, organization and financing of health care, ethics, professional role development, and population health.

Upon program completion, graduates will be granted the required verification statement to sit for the national credentialing exam set by the Commission on Dietetics Registration and state certification licensure, if applicable.

According to Janet Hiser, MOE, RDN, CNSC, CDN, who will serve as director of the new clinical nutrition program, Fairfield’s DCN comes at a pivotal time for students interested in becoming RDNs. “Beginning in January 2024, the Commission on Dietetic Registration will require a graduate degree, in addition to a verification statement, in order to sit for the national credentialing exam to become a registered dietitian nutritionist,” she said. “The DCN program at Fairfield will not only meet this new requirement, but will integrate didactic courses along with experiential learning within the curriculum, to fully prepare graduates to take the exam.”

Learn more about the DCN program at fairfield.edu/nutrition.
Daniel Hughes, CNL’19 is on a mission. Actually, he’s on a couple of missions, and the first is well underway: having earned his master’s in nursing leadership from Fairfield Egan last May and passed his boards this summer, he has enrolled in the DNP program for fall. “I’m on a roll, and I guess I’ll keep going ‘til they throw me out,” he jokes.

The second mission is one that he acknowledges may never be complete: raising awareness among health care providers about human trafficking so they can better identify and report suspected cases of abuse. “I first learned about human trafficking in a global health class as an undergraduate, but the more research I did, the more I realized that it’s a national and state problem—and not just something that happens in underdeveloped countries,” he says.

Human trafficking is defined as a type of slavery in which victims are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sex or forced labor. While there is no official estimate on the number of victims in the U.S., the Polaris Project, a nonprofit organization working to combat modern-day slavery, estimates that victims could number in the hundreds of thousands of minors and adults each year.

“Eighty-three percent of all human trafficking victims have a healthcare encounter at some point during their captivity. If we don’t recognize them at the time, we may never get another chance. They could be lost into ‘the life,’ and life expectancy of a victim is only seven years,” he says.

The subject became Hughes’ project for his nursing leadership degree and resulted in a research paper, “If I Had Only Known: Human Trafficking and Healthcare.” Over the year, he spearheaded two conferences—one at Norwalk Hospital and another in Danbury—to educate healthcare providers about what to look for and how to report suspected cases of abuse.

Even armed with new information, healthcare workers—and indeed anyone suspecting abuse—can be frustrated in their attempts to help someone. “You can’t hold anyone without their okay, even a minor,” says Hughes. “If they don’t want help getting out of ‘the life,’ at that moment, we should get them as much information as we possibly can and hope that they will use it in the future.”

Hughes, a staff nurse at Norwalk Hospital, will be an adjunct professor at the Egan School this fall, assisting undergraduate students in their clinicals. He is also collaborating with Associate Professor Sally Gerard, DNP, RN, CDE, CNL, on a paper to be submitted to the American Journal of Nursing. It focuses on the statistics gleaned from the conferences, and encourages other nurses to create local initiatives to increase awareness of trafficking in their communities.
The Jonas-Flynn Scholarship is made possible by a partnership between Jonas Philanthropies and the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program. The goal of Jonas Philanthropies is to improve healthcare by financing areas where it is most needed. Promoting nursing leadership by investing in doctoral nursing students who will go on to positions as professors, clinical leaders, and researchers is an important component of that mission.

In 2014, Fred Flynn began the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program in memory of his wife, who had succumbed to ovarian cancer the previous year. The highly competitive program allows senior nursing students nationwide the opportunity to do internships where they can experience best practices in oncology nursing care. While undergraduate nursing students at Fairfield University, both Kopas and Earls were awarded Susan D. Flynn internships; Kopas completed her internship at Greenwich Hospital, while Earls was at Stamford Hospital. Kopas, a native of Norwalk, Conn., says that she became interested in oncology nursing while watching her grandmother and aunt undergo treatments for lung cancer. She continued working at Greenwich Hospital after her internship was over, and today serves as an oncology and palliative care nurse. She is currently a graduate assistant at Fairfield University, a nurse preceptor for new graduate nurses, and a mentor to future Flynn Fellows. She is an active member of the Oncology Nursing Society and the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society, and her research has focused on assessing the spiritual well-being of oncology patients.

For the past three years, Earls has been working at Yale New Haven’s Smilow Cancer Hospital, most recently in the hematology-oncology unit, where she cares for patients undergoing bone marrow transplants and CAR T-cell immunotherapies.

FALL 2019
EGAN UPDATE EGAN UPDATE
FALL 2019

Made possible by a partnership between Jonas Philanthropies and the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program, Jonas-Flynn scholarships provide monetary assistance toward the recipients’ degrees and present opportunities to develop professional and leadership skills.
FACING PAGE: Last spring, 88 nursing students from the Class of 2019 were challenged to test their skills and manage a range of clinical situations in an immersive 12-hour hospital shift simulation.

SENIOR NURSING STUDENTS TAKE ON 12-HOUR SIMULATION

Firmly at the forefront of health care education, the Egan School hosted a 12-hour simulation in its state-of-the-art Simulation Center and challenged senior nursing students to imitate a real-world nursing shift. The simulation was the largest Fairfield has ever executed, with participation by 88 students during their final semester.

“Great nurses are those who have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills, and are able to critically manage situations with compassion and grace,” said simulation director Susan Reynolds, RN, BSN, MAHSM. “Simulation is a crucial component to an effective and safe learning environment in nursing education as it provides that context and the realism without the risk of harm we have when working with hospitalized patients.”

The Egan School has fully integrated simulation education into the nursing curriculum, challenging students to learn how to manage a range of different clinical experiences. This simulation is part of a course taught by Katherine Saracino, MSN, RN, CWOCN.

“I felt that the simulation of skills was a very helpful tool because some of the skills we have not used in practice such as trach suctioning,” said Carissa Corraro ’19. “I also really enjoyed the simulation experiences with the live people because there was immediate feedback given and questions asked through live conversations.”

During the simulation, the students cared for patients across the lifespan and with a multitude of disease processes to give them a full range of experiences. This immersive experience was designed to help prepare the seniors for the upcoming National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), which each senior will need to pass after graduation to begin her or his practice. The simulation offered the students the opportunity to practice NCLEX-style questions with pre-tests and post-tests, as well as a reflective writing station.

Brittany Fasanelli ’19 shared her positive feedback of the simulation: “I really enjoyed the 12-hour simulation. It helped me refresh everything I have learned over the past few years in the nursing program and prepared me for my first 12-hour shift in the hospital.”

Photos by Joe Adams
Each year, the Order of the Malta holds a Lourdes Pilgrimage where dames, knights, chaplains, doctors, nurses, and volunteers from around the world come to aid the sick and disabled during the seven-day pilgrimage. In keeping with Fairfield University’s mission of care for others, nursing students Cara Walsh ’20 and Hannah Megan ’20 departed on the annual Order of Malta Lourdes Pilgrimage in Lourdes, France.

Walsh and Megan, who were sponsored by Gail Beradino, a Fairfield Egan advisory board member, dame in the American Association of the Knights of Malta, and her husband, former University trustee Joseph Beradino ’72, joined more than 4,000 dames, knights, chaplains, doctors, nurses, and volunteers to help 1,500 sick and disabled.

During the weeklong program, Walsh ’20 and Megan ’20 were paired with a Malade — which Megan defined as “the French term of endearment for ‘the sick.’” The students aided their Malade who had travelled to Lourdes in search of physical and spiritual healing.

Even after several years of nursing education, the experience in Lourdes offered something new to both students; neither foresaw the effect it would have on their understanding of health and healing.

“For me, it solidified my calling to be a nurse, and to serve patients in the hopes of making a small difference in their healing journey,” stated Megan. Additionally, it revealed the humbling experiences of physically and terminally ill patients—something that she will never forget and considers invaluable to her career as a nurse.

One of Walsh’s most eye-opening experiences came when the annual pilgrimage into the sacred baths. “I worked closely, as the only American in the room, with strong and faith-filled women from France, Italy, and Ireland,” said Walsh. Despite language and other cultural barriers, this trip united different people with a shared sense of purpose and demonstrated the “universality of prayer” through service.

For both students, this experience illuminated the intersection of healthcare and the Catholic faith, and furthered their desire to become nurses. In addition to professional growth, Walsh and Megan developed spiritually. Through countless hours spent caring for chronically and terminally ill patients, the students learned to appreciate the value of a “career of service.”

Fairfield’s Nursing Students Aid the Sick at Lourdes

Egan Students Making an Impact

Left: (l-r) Walsh and Megan pose in the traditional attire of the dames of the Order of Malta, at the Rosary Basilica in Lourdes, France.

Right: The Torchlight Procession begins at the Grotto and ends in Rosary Square in Lourdes.

Photos contributed by Cara Walsh ’20
During the 2018-2019 academic year, Egan School Faculty published 95 journal articles, three books, 55 abstracts in professional conferences, seven national and international conferences. Susan Barton, PhD, MSN, RN, CCRN, was awarded a research letter for her MSN AACN Associate Professor Diane Magr, DNP, RN-BC was awarded a scholarship for new and critical care research. Dr. Magr was named National NURSE INSIGHTS Editor for the 11th Annual YNHHS Janet Parkosewich Nursing Research and EBP Conference held on Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at the Yale School of Nursing, visiting faculty. Gina Trovato, RN, MSN was invited to the editorial board of the Journal of Nursing Education. These competencies were copyrighted, published, and are being widely disseminated for inclusion in undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula. This initiative was funded by a generous grant from the Giana Lea Foundation.

The trip most definitely provided professional development and networking opportunities. My conversations with the doctoral nursing students have inspired me to ultimately pursue an advanced degree in nursing after graduation, allowing me to have a greater role in improving patient health. Kathleen Morton '20

A highlight of the trip, known as Hill Day, allowed the Fairfield students a unique opportunity to interact with staff members in Congress. They sat with staff members of House members Charles Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal, as well as staff from the House of Representatives official Rose L. DeLauro. Together, they advocated on behalf of the nursing workforce development and research funding policies, and returned refreshed for research work.

The trip most definitely provided professional development and research funding opportunities. My conversations with the doctoral nursing students have inspired me to ultimately pursue an advanced degree in nursing after graduation, allowing me to have a greater role in improving patient health. Kathleen Morton '20

Above: Kathleen Morton ‘20, Christopher Pioli, Dean Meredith Kazer, Danielle Pittala, and Kristen Fitzgerald stand together outside the Capitol Building on Hill Day. Photo contributed by Danielle Pittala

Fairfield Students Attend Prestigious Nursing Summit in Washington, D.C.

This spring, a passionate group of Egan School students traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Student Policy Summit. The annual three-day conference brings together students in educational program sessions that specifically focus on the national policy process and policies that affect nursing professionals. This past March, Fairfield University students in educational program sessions that specifically focus on the national policy process and policies that affect nursing professionals. This past March, Fairfield University students in educational program sessions that specifically focus on the national policy process and policies that affect nursing professionals.
Janet Hiser, MOE, RD, CNSC
Visiting Professor and Director of Clinical Nutrition
Janet Hiser, MOE, RD, CNSC is a registered dietitian/nutritionist. She has extensive experience in clinical nutrition management in the acute care setting, and has served as a district nursing director for post-baccalaureate nutrition students. In her career, she has also worked as a food service director and dietitian in long-term care and as a policy research dietitian. She is involved at the state and national levels in The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Pamela Barnwell-Sanders, EdD, RN, MSN, MBA
Associate Professor of the Practice, Nursing
Pamela Barnwell-Sanders, EdD, RN, MSN, MBA joined the Egan faculty in fall 2019 as an associate professor of the practice. She received her doctorate of education from Southern Connecticut State University and her bachelor of science in nursing from Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on nursing education, vulnerable populations, and diversity in healthcare.

Taneka Eaves Simpson ’96, PhD, LCSEW
Assistant Professor of Social Work
Taneka Eaves Simpson, PhD, LCSEW has a bachelor of arts in psychology from Fairfield University in addition to a master of social work from Baruch University. Her practive as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Connecticut during the past two decades. She received her doctorate of education from Southern Connecticut State University and her bachelor of science in nursing from Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on examining bio-behavioral mechanisms, specifically the role of oxytocin and cortisol, in modulating premature infants’ behavioral, autonomic and stress responses following individualized developmental care strategies to better understand and support parent engagement. Uncovering the neurobiological basis of early parent-infant interaction is an important step in developing therapeutic modalities to increase parent engagement and improve health outcomes.

Dorothy Vittner, PhD, RN, CHPE
Assistant Professor of Nursing
Dorothy Vittner, PhD, RN, CHPE, is a dedicated leader, and international expert on infant neurobehavioral functioning, training multidisciplinary health professionals in infant brain and nervous system development. With more than 25 years of clinical experience in neonatal/perinatal nursing, she holds many certifications in infant neurobehavioral assessment and education and care professional education. Dr. Vittner completed her doctoral degree at the University of Connecticut in 2006. Her research focuses on examining bio-behavioral mechanisms, specifically the role of oxytocin and cortisol, in modulating premature infants’ behavioral, autonomic and stress responses following individualized developmental care strategies to better understand and support parent engagement. Uncovering the neurobiological basis of early parent-infant interaction is an important step in developing therapeutic modalities to increase parent engagement and improve health outcomes.

Erica Wuchiski, MSN, RN
Visiting Instructor and Clinical Placement Coordinator
Erica Wuchiski has been in the Egan School for the past five years as an clinical placement coordinator. Having recently completed her master’s degree in nursing leadership, she joined the nursing faculty as a visiting instructor and will begin teaching courses to our undergraduate students during the next academic year. She graduated with her BSN from the University of Connecticut in 2006 and received her MSN in Nursing Leadership from Fairfield University in 2019. Her background is in pediatric nursing where she worked as a bedside nurse in both the hospital and homecare settings for almost 20 years. Currently, she sits on the Board of Directors of the Fairfield Health Markers. She is a member of Alpha Sigma Nu, honor society of Jesuit Universities.