



# UTRGV School of Nursing Newsletter SPRING 2025

## Message from Dean Dr. Lilia A. Fuentes



To the Graduating Class of Spring 2025:

As we gather to celebrate the graduation of the Cohort of 2025, I am filled with immense pride and joy. This moment marks the culmination of your hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the noble profession of nursing. Throughout your journey, you have demonstrated resilience, compassion, and steadfast commitment to excellence. Today, as you prepare to step into the world as professional nurses, I encourage you to reflect on the Nightingale Pledge, which has guided our profession for generations. This pledge is a testament to our duty to uphold the highest standards of care, to practice our profession faithfully, and to devote ourselves to the welfare of those entrusted to our care.

Florence Nightingale's legacy continues to inspire us to strive for excellence in all that we do. As you embark on your professional careers, remember that you are part of a proud tradition of nurses who have made a profound impact on healthcare and society. Embrace the challenges and opportunities that come your way, knowing that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and support to succeed.

As you move forward, carry with you the values of integrity, compassion, and excellence that define our profession. You are the future of nursing, and I have no doubt that you will continue to make a difference in the lives of your patients and communities. Congratulations on your remarkable achievement, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

### ***To our Graduating Peer mentors and tutors:***

Your commitment to the UTRGV School of Nursing is truly invaluable. Mentorship spans beyond sharing knowledge. It is about fostering growth, building confidence, and guiding future nurses toward success. Your willingness to invest time and effort into supporting your mentees makes a lasting impact, not only on their academic performance but also on their professional development. By sharing your hard-earned expertise, experiences, and best practices, you have helped contribute to and cultivate an environment where challenges are reframed as opportunities for growth and learning and are not only supported but encouraged as well.

Your dedication to your craft strengthens the foundation of our nursing community, encouraging collaboration, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. The guidance and encouragement you provide help mentees navigate their arduous journeys with greater confidence and resilience.

We sincerely appreciate your commitment to shaping the next generation of nurses. Thank you for making a difference through your leadership and support. ***Dr. Roda Galang***



## Domingo Rios



Hello everyone! My name is Domingo Rios, and I'm a mentor in my fourth semester of the ABSN program. My path to nursing has been anything but conventional. I earned my bachelor's degree in biology in 2012 and spent 11 years working in an unrelated field away from my home and family. With the support of my family, I am now reshaping my future and embracing the opportunity I've hoped for over the years. The experiences I've gained throughout my life have turned me into the person I am today and will continue to influence the kind of nurse I aspire to become. Looking ahead, I plan to further my education with the goal of becoming a nurse practitioner or possibly a nurse anesthetist. However, I want to take my time gaining hands-on experience, building my skills, and growing into my role as a nurse before making that decision. I choose to mentor others to give back, support my peers, and promote a sense of community in this demanding yet rewarding profession. I know firsthand how valuable it is to have someone who understands the struggles and triumphs of nursing school, and I hope to be that support for others.

## Johana Aguirre-Gonzalez

My journey into nursing began when I started working as an ER scribe. I was inspired by the way nurses connected with patients, providing compassionate care while physicians moved in and out of the room. Building human connections has always been important to me, and I realized that becoming a nurse would allow me to make a meaningful impact. Initially, I earned a degree in Biology with the goal of becoming a physician assistant. However, through my experience in the medical field, I saw the deep respect nurse practitioners receive, largely due to their hands-on experience as nurses. This solidified my decision to pursue a BSN. Once I graduate, I plan to work in critical care – either ICU, ER, or pediatrics before advancing to NP or CRNA school. Through this mentorship, I had the pleasure of guiding others in the way I wish I had been. It was an opportunity to support and inspire future nurses, just as I was inspired along the way.



## Sofia I. Garcia



Hello everyone! My name is Sofia Garcia, and I am a fourth semester mentor in the ABSN program. I graduated December 2023 with a B. S. in Integrated Health Sciences with a concentration in Clinical Professions. My journey into nursing is quite unconventional. To be completely honest, I chose nursing because I'm indecisive. Now I know that isn't something you want to hear from someone who could be your future nurse, but hear me out. We often grow up believing that one day, everything will just "click", and we'll know exactly what career path to follow. While that metaphorical click may be true for some, I reached a point in my life where I had to make a choice about my future. I believed that my compassion and determination alone could serve as a foundation for a career in nursing – and here I am, one step closer to having BSN, RN following my name. Now, after going through this program, I am determined to be the best nurse I can be, not only for my patients, but for myself. As of now, my focus is honing my clinical skills, in whatever department that may be, and growing into my big girl nursing shoes before deciding on further education. Though I must admit, CRNA is starting to have a nice ring to it! I chose to be part of this mentorship program because, as I prepare to enter the real world, I recognize the value of having a mentor and hope to find one who not only understands the challenges of this profession but is also willing to help me grow.

## Itzel Saucedo

Hello everyone! My name is Itzel Saucedo, and I am a fourth-semester mentor in the ABSN program. My first degree was in Exercise Science with a concentration in Occupational Therapy. However, after careful consideration, I realized that path was not the right fit for me. I chose to pursue a second degree in nursing because of its job stability, high demand, diverse career opportunities, flexibility, and growth potential. While I see myself furthering my education in the future, my current focus is on becoming a skilled, compassionate nurse. Becoming a mentor has been a deeply fulfilling experience, allowing me to support and empower other students as they navigate their nursing journey. Through mentorship, I can share my knowledge, guide others toward their goals, build meaningful relationships, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the success of my mentees.



## Gerardo Muñiz



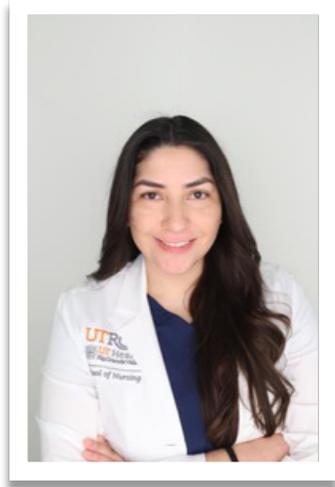
Hello, my name is Gerardo Muñiz, and I pursued nursing because I have a deep passion for helping others and believe in providing compassionate care to the sick and vulnerable populations. My previous degree was a B.S. in Integrated Health Science with a concentration in Clinical Professions, provided me with a strong foundation in healthcare concepts, preparing me for the complexities of nursing care. My future goals include serving the Rio Grande Valley community by delivering compassionate and high-quality care. Additionally, I aspire to obtain a Master of Science in Nursing to serve as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and expand my scope of practice to address healthcare disparities in underserved communities within our region. Mentoring has allowed me to develop coaching and leadership skills, and by guiding other students, I have gained confidence in my ability to educate and foster professional growth. I chose to mentor others because I enjoy providing guidance and encouragement to those who may need support, and in doing so, I continue to refine my skills that are fundamental to being an effective nurse.

My name is Linda Ceaser, and I pursued nursing because I have always been drawn to helping others, and transitioning from education to healthcare felt like a natural extension of my passion for learning and service. My background as an educator for over 12 years has given me strong communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills, qualities that are essential in nursing. While teaching was incredibly fulfilling, I wanted a more direct impact on patient care, especially in pediatrics, where I hope to work in the ER or ICU. Lifelong learning is a core value of mine, and I plan to continue my education by pursuing my Family Nurse Practitioner degree and eventually returning to teach future nurses. Mentorship has played a major role in my growth, helping me navigate challenges and build confidence in a new field. This is why I chose to mentor others, I understand the importance of guidance and support, especially for those just beginning their journey. Sharing knowledge and uplifting others not only strengthens our profession but also creates an environment where continuous growth and learning thrive.

## Linda Caesar



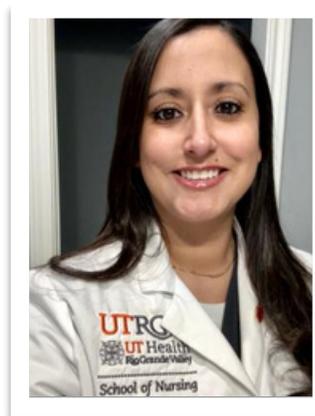
## Daniela Galván



My name is Daniela Galván, and I am a fourth-semester nursing mentor. I chose nursing because of its versatility – you’re never confined to just one specialty. The ability to explore different paths and continually grow, both personally and professionally, is something I truly value. Nursing offers endless opportunities for learning and development, which keeps me motivated and excited for the future. I earned my first degree in Biomedical Sciences, which was both challenging and rewarding. It pushed me beyond my limits and helped me develop resilience and adaptability. Looking back, I’m grateful for that experience because it prepared me for the rigorous and dynamic nature of nursing education. I believe lifelong learning is essential for both personal and professional growth. There’s always something new to discover, and that’s exciting! I chose to become a mentor because I didn’t have one when I needed it most. There were times I felt lost and wished for guidance, so I wanted to be that support system for others. Nursing school is a challenging but rewarding journey, and if I can provide clarity, encouragement, and direction to future cohorts, then I know I’m making a meaningful difference.

I pursued nursing because I have always been drawn to being the go-to person – the one others turn to for guidance and support. It is a career that is not only deeply rewarding but also one that carries a sense of honor, respect, and trust. From an early age, I have taken pride in being the person others rely on. I initially pursued a bachelor’s in liberal arts in Spanish with a minor in Sociology, intending to become a teacher. However, I soon realized that teaching was not where I truly wanted to be. I was drawn to nursing because it combines critical thinking, quick decision-making, and the ability to make a direct impact on people’s lives. I aim to cross-train in different nursing areas to gain a well-rounded understanding of various specialties. Additionally, I aspire to transition into nursing education, where I can share my experience and knowledge with future nurses. I hope to not only grow as a nurse but also contribute to the development of the next generation of nurses. Mentoring has allowed me to guide them through the transition from the classroom to clinical practice. I understand how overwhelming the early stages of nursing can be, so I strive to build their confidence. Strong mentorship is essential in shaping skilled and competent nurses, and I take pride in supporting their growth. By mentoring, I not only help develop future nurses, but also refine my own leadership and teaching skills.

## Erika Reyes



## Andrea Cantú



Hello everyone! I am Andrea Cantu, a 4th semester nursing student. I have always been interested in the medical field and have always thought nurses were the backbone of healthcare. Nurses provide care, compassion, and a voice to those who need it, and that is exactly why I decided to pursue nursing. I would love to one day become a pediatric nurse and, eventually, a pediatric nurse practitioner. I believe that you never stop learning as a nurse, so I am looking forward to a lifelong journey of learning. My goal is to obtain a master’s degree after my BSN, and possibly a doctoral degree as well, though that is far into the future. Additionally, I am also interested in becoming a nurse educator one day, as I would love to teach and motivate aspiring nurses. I have been a mentor since my second semester, and it has been a wonderful and fulfilling experience. I have enjoyed helping other nursing students navigate the challenges that come with nursing school, as well as giving them tips on how to study and manage their time. I would have loved to have a mentor when I started nursing school, so I am more than happy to be a mentor to those who need it. Being able to guide and motivate other future nurses has made nursing school even more rewarding.

## Kevin J Dougherty

I first became intrigued by nursing in late high school while exploring the idea of pursuing a career in medicine. However, my passion for nursing truly grew as I gained more exposure to its scope and practice. I came to understand that nursing is not just about healing patients but about providing holistic care that ensures their overall well-being. After graduating, I plan to pursue higher education, though I have yet to decide on a specialty due to the abundance of options. However, I am particularly interested in focusing on critical care. This mentorship program has helped me refine my ability to support others by understanding different lifestyles and creating structured plans to help mentees achieve their goals. There is no better feeling than hearing about their successes. The goal is not just to develop competent nurses but to cultivate excellent future healthcare professionals.



## Marina Flores



Hello everyone! My name is Marina Flores, and I am a fourth-semester nursing student. I pursued nursing because I have always had a passion for helping people. I knew I wanted a career where I could make a real difference in the lives of others, and nursing was the perfect path to fulfill that purpose. Providing care, comfort, and advocacy for patients during some of their most vulnerable moments is what drives me every day. Looking ahead, my goal is to become the most well-rounded nurse I can be. I plan to become a critical care nurse and obtain multiple certifications to expand my knowledge and skills, ensuring that I provide the best possible care for my patients. Lifelong learning is essential in nursing, and I am committed to continuously growing and evolving in my career. Mentorship has been a deeply fulfilling part of my journey. Supporting new nurses and being a part of their growth fills me with purpose. I remember the challenges of being in their shoes, and I choose to mentor others because I want to help them navigate those challenges confidently. Making a positive impact on their careers, just as others have guided me, is incredibly rewarding. As I continue this journey, I am excited to grow both professionally and personally. No matter where my path leads, my goal will always be the same—to provide exceptional care, support those around me, and make a difference in healthcare.

Hello everyone! My name is Vivianne Gonzalez, and I am a 4th-semester nursing student. From a young age, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in healthcare, but I wasn't always sure which path to take. That changed a few years ago when my grandfather was hospitalized. I quickly realized that the people who spent the most time caring for him, offering kindness and comfort, were the nurses. Their compassion and dedication in such difficult times left a lasting impact on me, and I knew then that I wanted to do the same for others. After graduation, I aspire to work in critical care or labor and delivery. My passion for learning doesn't stop there—I hope to continue growing in my career and eventually become a nurse educator. Mentorship has played a significant role in my journey. For the past two semesters, the Student Success Mentorship Program has allowed me to support fellow nursing students who are just beginning their path. Having been in their shoes, I understand the challenges, doubts, and obstacles they face. I am grateful for the opportunity to guide and encourage them, just as others have done for me. Nursing is not just a profession; it's a community, and I am honored to be part of it.

## Vivianne Gonzalez



## Emily Ruiz



I've always planned for a career in healthcare, where I can help patients and make a meaningful impact. What drew me to nursing, specifically, was the profession's versatility. The ability to work in diverse settings and take on specialized roles made it the perfect fit. In the future, I aim to acquire different certifications that will enhance my career. I would also love to continue my education, though I'm still unsure of the specific pathway I want to pursue. Through the Student Success Initiative program, I've gained a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment, knowing that I can support others in their educational journeys. Having once been in their shoes, it's incredibly rewarding to watch fellow nursing students grow, gain confidence, and succeed.

## Ammy R. Sanchez Coss

I pursued nursing because I have always had a passion of helping people. I wanted to be there for those who did not have someone and celebrate with the ones who did. I want to make a difference in the healthcare people receive and help them reach their goals and see their journey throughout their lives of how far they have come. My future goal is to one day become either a CRNA or FNP and have my own practice along with an aesthetic practice alongside my sister. Mentorship has helped me become a leader in a way and make a difference in someone's life. I know that I always needed someone, but no one was ever around to help me academically. Knowing that I can be that person for someone encourages me to continue myself in advancing in my studies and helping others.



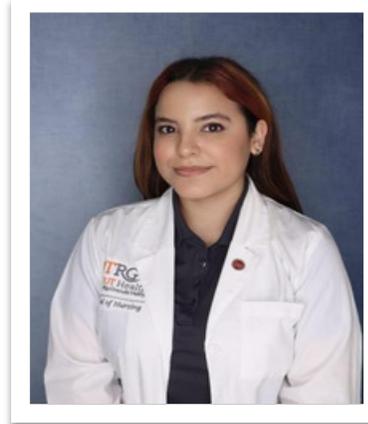
## Jolina R San Pedro



Hello everyone! My name is Jolina R San Pedro, and I'm a fourth semester nursing student. Drawn to healthcare and inspired by my family, I chose nursing for its flexibility and endless opportunities to exercise my potential and diverse interests. While I don't have a specific path in mind yet, I plan to take my next step in nursing toward critical care, where I can continue growing and challenging myself in a high-impact environment. Since my second semester, I've been blessed with the opportunity of mentoring fellow students through the Student Success Initiative Mentoring Program. Stepping into this role felt natural, as I've been surrounded by incredible friends and family who continuously modeled the importance of an ever-growing education, a supportive environment, and a journey led by passion. As a mentor, my goal is not only to help students find their footing in an academic setting but also to

## Alexia Serna

Hello everyone! My name is Alexia Serna, and I am in my last semester of nursing school. I've always had a strong desire to help others, which is why nursing felt like the perfect fit for me. Through volunteering and shadowing nurses, I saw how integral nurses are in providing care and support to patients. It was inspiring to witness the difference nurses make, and I knew I wanted to be part of that by using both my compassion and problem-solving skills to make an impact in people's lives. Moreover, mentorship has been a vital part of my journey, both as a newly nursing student and now as a mentor. When I was starting out, having someone to guide me through challenges would have been invaluable, and I would like to offer this support to others. I enjoy mentoring because it gives me the opportunity to help others gain confidence, navigate uncertainties, and grow in their nursing careers. Being a mentor allows me to give back and create a positive, supportive environment for those who are following the same path.

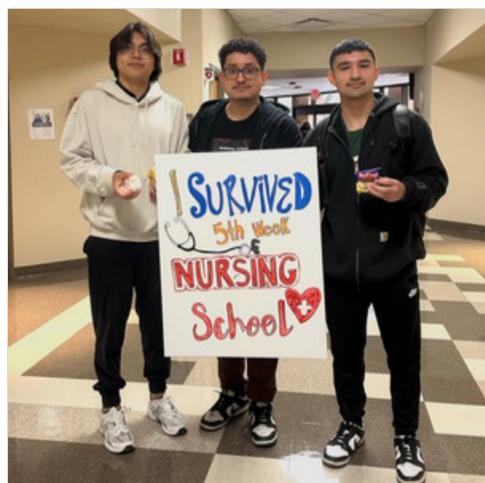
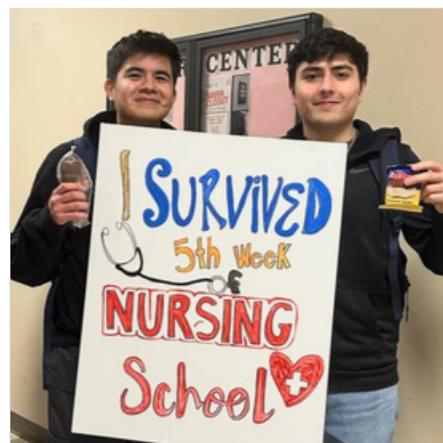


## CREATING A STRONG FOUNDATION

BSN Family Orientation – Spring 2025 Families were welcomed into an environment where they connected with faculty, representatives from local hospitals, and other families of incoming BSN students. The rigors of nursing school were made apparent to all in attendance. Students of current BSN cohorts presented on topics such as time management, expectations for clinicals, study tips, resources for student success, and self-care. Their parents chimed in about ways they support their children during their challenging school weeks. This goes to show that we respect the collaboration among faculty, parents, and students. By introducing families into the School of Nursing community, we hope to pave the way for a more enriching and successful experience. The BSN Family Orientation was a resounding success, with 95% of attendees indicating they would recommend the event to others. Participants particularly appreciated the family testimonies, with one attendee noting, "It was nice to hear from parents about their child's experiences." Another highlighted, "The input from current students and parents was invaluable." The event garnered high satisfaction, with 85% of attendees "extremely satisfied" with the agenda and 75% "extremely satisfied" with the food. Attendees left with positive impressions, setting a strong foundation for their journey in the

## “Scoops For Success”: Celebrating a Sweet Milestone!

After five weeks of hard work and dedication, nursing students celebrated a major milestone following their first exam with a well-earned ice cream treat! The School of Nursing faculty proudly recognized their commitment and encouraged students to continue taking an active role in their education. The event was a joyful reminder that every step forward in nursing school is worth celebrating. Keep up the great work, future nurses!



## Mentor Mixer: A Night of Connection & Inspiration!

Our Mentor Program kicked off the semester with an inspiring and engaging Mentor Mixer on March 3! This event was a fantastic opportunity for us to connect with fellow nursing mentors, build relationships, and reaffirm our mission of support and guidance throughout the semester.

One of the most inspiring moments of the night was hearing from our guest speakers, Dr. Judjee Diaz (ER Nurse Practitioner), Dustyn Cruz (CRNA Student), Dr. Angel Arjona (CRNA), and Daisy Arjona (Hospice Nurse). Each shared their personal journey in nursing, reminding us of the dedication, perseverance, and compassion it takes to succeed in this field. Their stories encouraged us to embrace the challenges of nursing school with confidence, knowing that one day, we too will make a difference in the lives of our patients.



As we move forward this semester, we are more motivated than ever to support each other and our mentees. The Mentor Mixer reminded us that nursing is not just a profession—it's a lifelong journey of learning, growth, and compassion. We can't wait to see the impact this program has on all of us!

## Meet our Nursing Mentors and Tutors

### Karyme Martinez



I chose to become a tutor and a mentor because I saw it as a highly rewarding opportunity. During nursing school, my best friend and I would FaceTime to study for exams, taking turns teaching each other the material. What started as a simple study method has grown into something truly meaningful, and now, I get to experience that same joy as I watch my students gain confidence and master concepts that once felt challenging.

### Valeria Vega



Becoming a nursing tutor and mentor was an opportunity I could not miss out on. Coming into the program can be a challenging and overwhelming experience. Having a person on the side, motivating you and guiding you towards success, is crucial. But being the person someone seeks for advice is an honor. I hope to become a helpful aide for students joining the program; to help them find their strengths and move towards a rewarding profession - nursing.

### Jacqueline Obregon



Being able to teach fellow peers has been a great gift to me. To be someone a student seeks help from provides a sense of gratitude and appreciation. Nursing school is no joke and even I, as a tutor, had my moments where the course material became difficult to understand. My goal as a tutor was to not only aid a student in the comprehension of information, but also to be an example that passing is possible, to show that they are meant to be exactly where they are as a student nurse

**RN Tutors: JohnMarc Candelaria BSN, RN**

**Lucas Carney BSN, RN & Jose Salinas BSN, RN**

## 4th Semester Community Engagement



As nurses, our role extends far beyond the walls of hospitals and clinics—we are advocates, educators, and partners in promoting wellness where people live, work, and play. Community health nursing is about meeting individuals where they are, building relationships, and understanding the unique needs of diverse populations.



Whether it's organizing health screenings, providing disease prevention education, or collaborating with local organizations, nurses bring valuable health resources directly to the community.



## Student Nurse Organization

### *A Semester of Growth, Advocacy, and Community Impact*

The Student Nurse Organization (SNO) at UTRGV demonstrated exceptional leadership, community engagement, and professional development. Under the guidance of President Kayla White, the organization reached new milestones while staying true to its mission of fostering growth among nursing students and making a positive impact in the Rio Grande Valley.

### *Community Service: Making a Difference Beyond the Classroom*

SNO members took their dedication to health and wellness into the community through a variety of service projects:

- Clinica Maria Luisa: Members volunteered at a community clinic located in Penitas at Proyecto Desarrollo Humano, assisting with essential healthcare services for underserved populations in the Rio Grande Valley.
- RGV Food Bank: Nursing students helped sort and distribute food to families in need, showcasing their commitment to combating food insecurity in the community.
- Gladys Porter Zoo: Members participated in health education initiatives and supported efforts to promote wellness and awareness during events at the zoo.
- 5K Events for Health Causes: SNO students lent their time and energy to multiple 5K runs, supporting health-related causes such as breast cancer awareness.

Through these service opportunities, SNO members embodied the values of compassion, service, and leadership that define the nursing profession.



## SON Faculty Achievements

The UTRGV School of Nursing highlights the recent achievements of our dedicated faculty who continue to drive excellence in nursing education and healthcare practice. We commemorate the members of our team that have contributed to important research, student involvement, and earned recognition for studies that address healthcare needs in the Rio Grande Valley. These accomplishments highlight our faculty's commitment to lead future nurses in their careers in healthcare.



### **Elizabeth Adamson, DNP, DNI, MSN, MSN-Ed, RN, CPHIMS**

With a focus on leadership, informatics, and healthcare technology, Dr. Adamson brings real-world executive and clinical experience to the classroom. Her background spans clinical operations, nursing informatics, and strategic planning, allowing her to bridge theory with practice in meaningful ways. She emphasizes data-driven leadership, innovation, and systems thinking to prepare graduates for complex healthcare challenges. Passionate about mentoring future nurse leaders, she fosters critical thinking and applied learning in every course she teaches.

Governor Abbott Announces Appointments to  
Board of Nursing

### **Folake Adelakun, DNP, MBA, HCA, MSN, BSN, RN, PHN, CNE**



She is certified as a Public Health Nurse and Nurse Educator. Dr. Adelakun has worked in various nursing roles and has taught at colleges and universities since 2010. She is a published author, conference presenter, and book reviewer. Currently, she is the secretary and chief editor of the National Association of Nigerian Nurses in North America's newsletter and serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Current Trends in Nursing and Health Care. She is actively involved in mentoring and community work.

Spring 2025 Achievements:

Date: February 13th, 2025

Location: Dallas, Texas.

Presentation: Human Resources for Health Challenges in Nigeria and Nurse Migration



**Maria I. Diaz, EdD, RN, BSN, MSN, APRN-CNS, PMHNP; Dr. Eleftherios Gkioulekas from UTRGV School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences, and Nancy Nadeau, MHEA, MSN, BSN, RN**

**Article publication:**

"Predictors of Nursing Students' Stress, Anxiety, and Depression During the COVID-19 Pandemic in a Hispanic-Serving University in South Texas: A Cross-Sectional Study," in the *Journal of Professional Nursing*. 58 (2025) 17-30. (Classification Q1)

**Roda Galang, DNP, MSN, BSN, RN; Edmundo Garcia, DNP, RN, FNP-BC. and Nancy Nadeua, MHEA, MSN, BSN, RN**



Date: September 17 to 19, 2025  
 Location: 2025 NLN Summit Florida  
 Poster Presentation: Harnessing AI to Overcome Barriers in Nursing Education: Enhancing Personalized Learning and Clinical Preparedness



## Vanessa Hale, MSN, BSN, RN

With a background in public policy, a passion for education, over 18 years' experience as a healthcare provider, Vanessa Hale is a perinatal registered nurse with one goal in mind... reduce perinatal morbidity and mortality in South Texas! Mrs. Hale is a graduate of the University of Texas Brownsville, the University of Texas Arlington, and Texas A&M International University, holding degrees in Nursing and Government. She is certified through NCC in inpatient obstetrics, obstetric and neonatal quality and safety, advanced fetal monitoring and will be seeking certification in obstetric emergencies this coming year.

10th Health Care Institute Conference

Date: April 30 – May 1, 2025

Location: Historic Menger Hotel, San Antonio, Texas

Podium Presentation with Nancy Nad eua: Addressing Rural Health Disparities Through Interprofessional Collaboration and Service Learning in Pepitas, Texas

---

## Deborah Moturi, RN, BSN, MSN



Volunteer NCLEX Exam Developer, approved by the nursing regulatory body for NCLEX panels.

## Carolina G. Huerta, EdD, RN, FAAN



Dr. Carolina G. Huerta Full Professor and associate Dean for Academic Affairs. She received her BSN from Incarnate Word College, her MSN from University of Texas, Austin and her Doctorate in Education from Texas A& M University, College Station. She has been a member of the American Academy of Nursing since 2012 and has taught nursing for over 50 years.

## Lilia Fuentes, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC



Dr. Lilia A. Fuentes is an Associate Professor and Dean at UTRGV School of Nursing. As a nursing professor for over 20 years, Dr. Fuentes has garnered recognition and professional achievement for her work with childhood nutrition through collaboration with UTRGV Border Health Office in developing the *CHECK* Program (Creating Health Eating Choices for Kids) in 2014. The CHECK Program has been implemented in 27 elementary schools across the Rio Grande Valley with close to 1,400 4th graders receiving nutrition education that helps connect children to the source of their food. Dr. Fuentes has also gained great respect for her leadership style and has been appointed to various university committees and leadership roles within UTRGV as well as being awarded the Lillian O. Slemp Endowed Chair in Nursing where she focuses her efforts on expanding Interprofessional Collaborative Education and community engagement through service learning for undergraduate and graduate nursing students.

The fourth edition of *Health Promotion in Nursing* by Dr. Carolina Huerta and Dr. Lilia Fuentes is now available as a public-facing "Coming Soon!" title. This means potential adopters can begin requesting a digital advance review copy for course consideration.

You can view the book listing in the Cognella Title Catalog using the following link:

<https://titles.cognella.com/health-promotion-in-nursing-9798823358330>

## Kochurani Joseph, DNP, RN, MSN, FNP-BC



Dr. Kochurani Joseph, an RN graduate of the Holy Family School of Nursing in India, has 38 years of clinical experience in high-acuity settings like ICUs and transplant units. She earned her BSN from American Sentinel University, FNP from Chamberlain University, and DNP from Touro University Nevada. Since 2018, Dr. Joseph has been a dedicated faculty member at UTRGV, shaping the next generation of nursing professionals.

## Susamma Thomas, MSN, RN



Ms. Susamma Thomas is a Clinical Associate Professor who received her BSN from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India, and MSN from the University of Texas Pan American, USA. She has been a nurse for over 40 years and has taught nursing for more than 25 years. She has been a member of the AACN since 2015.

Conference: National Nurse Educator Summit 2025

Dates: April 22-25, 2025, Location: Orlando Florida

Poster Presentation: Teach Learn Share: Method to reduce anxiety and improve clinical competency of Nursing students

## Jolly Jaison, DNP, MSN, BSN, RN, FNP-C



Clinical assistant Professor and currently function as the course coordinator for pharmacology2 and clinical faculty for the RN- BSN leadership and fundamentals of Nursing. Other teaching experiences include client assessment lab/Skills, mental health nursing clinical, family health clinical, and leadership in nursing clinical

## Pauline Jojo, DNP, CNP, CNM, MSN, BSN, RN



I'm Pauline Jojo, Clinical Assistant Professor at the UTRGV School of Nursing. With over 30 years of nursing experience spanning multiple specialties and roles, primarily in bedside nursing, I've developed a deep passion for delivering high-quality patient care. Since relocating to the Rio Grande Valley in 2007, I've pursued ongoing education, earning my BSN from GCU, MSN in Nursing Education from UTRGV, FNP from UT Arlington, and Doctorate from Aspen University in 2022. As an educator at UTRGV since 2015, I find immense fulfillment in mentoring and guiding future nurses, and I'm committed to empowering them to excel in their careers.

Presentation: David's CHRP 23rd Annual Conference

Date: March 5, 2025,

Location: The University of Texas at Austin, Poster Presentation: Improving the TDAP Vaccine Through Provider Education in a South Texas Clinic

## Nora Martinez, DNP, RN, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC



Dr. Nora Martinez is a Clinical Associate Professor who received her ADN, BSN, and MSN-FNP from the University of Texas Pan American, Edinburg, Texas, and her DNP from the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas. She has been a nurse for over 27 years, a family nurse practitioner for 17 years and has taught nursing for more than 16 years. She is a member of various local, state and national nursing organizations.

## Edmundo Garcia DNP, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC



10th Annual Health Care Institute Conference

Date: April 30, 2025

Location: Historic Menger Hotel in San Antonio, Texas

Poster Presentation: Interprofessional Collaboration and Education (IPCE) of Critical Care Concepts to Undergraduate Students in a University Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program by Expert Registered Nurses (RN) from a Community Clinical Site Partner Hospital.

## Jennifer Brewster DNP, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC and Nora Martinez, DNP, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC



End of life Nursing Education Consortium

Date: July 24-25, 2025

Location: Portland Oregon

2-day workshop: Faculty development and leadership training in palliative care workshop for undergraduate and graduate faculty



## Nancy Nadeau, MHEA, MSN, BSN, RN

Nancy Nadeau, Clinical Professor and Director of BSN Programs at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley whose career spans over 30 years in nursing education, community engagement, and academic leadership. In 2025, she earned a Bachelor of Metaphysical Science, presented on rural health disparities and service-learning at major conferences, and co-authored a Q1-ranked article on nursing student well-being in the *Journal of Professional Nursing*. Known for integrating experiential learning into curriculum, Ms. Nadeau continues to champion student empowerment through interprofessional collaboration and high-impact educational practices.

Conference: Engaged Scholar Symposium Research Day Conference

- Date: April 26, 2025
- Location: UTRGV
- Title of your presentation: Fostering Future Healthcare Professionals in Rio Grande Valley (RGV): The Role of Experiential Learning in Nursing Simulations and Health Advocacy

Conference: Engaged Scholar Symposium

- Date: April 21, 2025
- Location: UTRGV
- Title of your presentation: Together We Care”: Empowerment, Professional Identity, and Community Engagement
- Nancy Nadeau, Clinical Professor, RN, BSN, MSN, MHEA, and our BSN 4th-semester nursing students—Cynthia Ayala, Kaisy Bazan, Andrea Cantu, Marina Flores, Ximena Flores, Vivianne Gonzalez, Karen Macias, Yatana Peralta, Evan Ramos, Osvaldo Torres, and Yoshie Wong

Education degree:

- Bachelor of Metaphysical Science, B.Msc. University of Metaphysics & University of Sedona. March 10, 2025.

## Andrya Rivera-Burciaga PhD(c), DNP, APRN, FNP-BC



Dr. Andrya R. Rivera-Burciaga, is an esteemed Assistant Professor at UTRGV. As a trailblazing early career scholar, she has been honored with the prestigious Cambia Health Sojourns Scholar Award for her groundbreaking work with the Mexican American community. Dr. Rivera-Burciaga employs a community-centered approach to deeply understand and address the end-of-life needs of the Rio Grande Valley community.

In addition to her academic achievements, she is a dedicated End-of-Life Doula and Nurse Practitioner, specializing in hospice and palliative care, providing compassionate and expert care to those in their final stages of life.

### Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) training

- Date: June 26–27, 2025, at
- Location: Alexandria in Alexandria, Virginia.

This training prepares participants to serve as volunteer peer reviewers in CCNE’s baccalaureate and graduate nursing program accreditation process, a vital role in maintaining the quality and integrity of nursing education. Conference: ADCES25

- Date: August 8-11, 2025
- Location: Phoenix, AZ
- Presentation: Integrating Diabetes Management in Palliative Care: Approaches for Enhancing Quality of Life

### Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) National Seminar 2025

- Date: September 15-17, 2025
- Location: Philadelphia, PA
- She will be presenting in the CAPC Health Equity Accelerator, a program designed to equip health equity champions with the tools, mentorship, and peer support needed to drive meaningful change for patients with serious illnesses

### 6th Annual World Hospice & Palliative Care Day Conference

- Date: October 7, 2025
- Closing Keynote Speaker: She will be presenting her work on providing palliative care for Mexican and rural populations

## Andrya Rivera-Burciaga PhD(c), DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, Mayra Cantazaro, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC-ADM, CDCES, & Merlyn Palacios, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, ACHPN



Dr. Merlyn Palacios, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, ACHPN, is a Clinical Assistant Professor at UTRGV. With a robust background in nursing, she is a family nurse practitioner specializing in hospice and palliative care. As an NP, she is dedicated to providing compassionate care to patients facing serious illnesses. In addition to her academic and clinical roles, Dr. Palacios is an End-of-Life Doula. She is committed to her profession and community; her dedication is demonstrated through her involvement in numerous community projects aimed at improving end-of-life care. She continues to make significant contributions through her teaching, clinical practice, and community engagement.

Date: August 8-11, 2025

Location: Phoenix, AZ

Presentation: Integrating Diabetes Management in Palliative Care: Approaches for Enhancing Quality of Life

## James Waters, DNP, APRN, FNP, NRCME



Started working at UTRGV in August of 2023 and been a RN for 30 years.

Introducing Low Fidelity Simulation to Improve Self-Efficacy in Hispanic Female Family Home Caregivers Providing Care for Hispanic Patients Suffering with Alzheimer's Disease, Poster Presentation. St.David's CHPR 23rd Annual Conference. Addressing Intersectionality to Improve Health in Hard-to-Reach Populations. Austin, Tx. March 5, 2025

Establishing a Community Education Center for the Aging Population Utilizing a School of Nursing Simulation Center, Poster Presentation, 10th Annual Health Care Institute Conference 2025, San Antonio, Tx. University of Texas San Antonio, April 29-May 1, 2025

Investing in Our Students- Using Mini-Simulations to Bridge Didactic Content for Undergraduate Client Assessment, Poster Presentation, SimGHOSTS X-El Paso 2025, Southwest Regional Simulation Conference, May 15-16, 2025

Help!! Lessons Learned from Leading a Simulation Laboratory Remodel Project, Speaker, SimGHOSTS USA 2025 Conference, Nashville, Tn., July 29-August 1, 2025



School of Nursing Programs

**Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN):**

- Generic BSN: Combined, face-to-face and online courses
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Accelerated BSN: Can be completed in four consecutive semesters
- RN to BSN: Accelerated online program with 7-week courses (modules) to meet the busy RN's schedule

**MSN Family Nurse Practitioner:** 48 credit hours and 800 clinical hours (60% online, about 28% hybrid 12% face-to-face classes which are offered in the evening once/week)

**Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner:** 15 credit hours (12 hours face-to-face and 3 online) and 605 clinical hours

**Post Master's Certificate Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner:** 12-month 100% online program with 18 credit hours and 520 clinical hours

**Doctorate of Nursing Practice:** 45-credit hours post-master's curriculum delivered 100% online

Competitive Scholarships are available. For more information about our programs, please scan the QR code.



Visit [www.utrgv.edu/nursing](http://www.utrgv.edu/nursing) to see the scheduled School of Nursing Information Sessions