



# UTRGV Student Success Newsletter Spring 2024

## UTRGV SCHOOL OF NURSING STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVE



The mission of the UTRGV School of Nursing is to educate individuals to meet the health care needs of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. We are committed to fostering an environment where students succeed in their pursuit to become Registered Nurses. To make this a reality, as dean, one of my initiatives is to create a Student Success Center for nursing students. Our goal is to:

*Support our students in achieving their academic goals in a timely manner and reaching their professional aspirations through excellent integrated learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.*

Our Key Initiatives for student success are:

- Increase experiential learning opportunities that enrich the academic experiences of all students and link to future careers and advanced study.
- Support high quality and innovative instruction through faculty development, curricular evaluation, course redesign, empirically supported learning strategies, and universal design of learning.
- Increase access to courses across campuses and platforms for students to make timely progress to graduation.
- Provide excellent academic advising through highly trained advisors, robust technological tools, timely outreach to students, and self-advisement tools.
- Cultivate a campus environment that supports students' resilience and interpersonal skills to enhance relationship development, personal health, and safety.

## *Academic Support & Resources for Students*

To achieve this initiative, the student success team, led by Dr. Eloisa Tamez and Dr. Roda Galang, are working hard to develop useful tools and services to help nursing students through their studies and beyond. These services will be designed to meet academic, professional, and complementary needs. The academic support and resources available now are:

**Peer to Peer Mentoring:** The purpose is to support at-risk students in navigating the challenges of their academic journey and achieving success in the School of Nursing. Current students who have shown mastery in courses will assist at-risk students in a positive and active peer learning environment.

**Social and Community Engagement:** The purpose is to provide an environment of well-being through social and community engagement. Family, faculty, staff, and peers play a crucial role in a nursing student's life. The support of these during the teaching and learning process is of vital importance for the achievement of academic success. The inclusion of families at new student orientation and other school events, regular social events for nursing students and faculty, and support for student engagement in community events are a few of the activities planned.

**Academic Coaching:** The purpose is to provide support to students facing attrition risk with emphasis of early identification of at-risk individuals. Academic coaching will also assist faculty in the remediation process and reinforce concepts to students to fill knowledge gap. It will also assess student readiness, identify opportunities, empower students, and reinforce knowledge or concept gaps.

### *Congratulations to our Nursing Students as pioneers of our Student Success Initiative Mentoring Program!*

Dr. Roda Galang, student success coordinator together with Dr. Edmundo Garcia Adult I and II faculty have implemented a thorough selection process for student nursing mentors.

By choosing top performing students with a solid understanding of nursing concepts, they ensure that these mentors can effectively guide and support their peers based on their strong academic background.

It's great to hear that 15 out of 35 qualified students from the 3rd and 4th semesters have accepted the opportunity to become mentors for their peers in the nursing program. Congratulations to the selected mentors for their willingness to provide support and guidance to their fellow students!



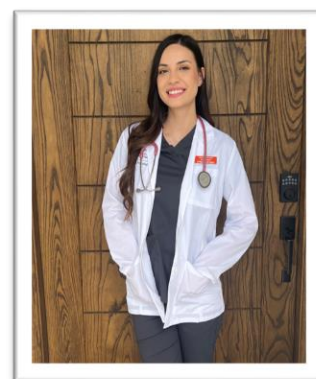
## Agassi Villarreal



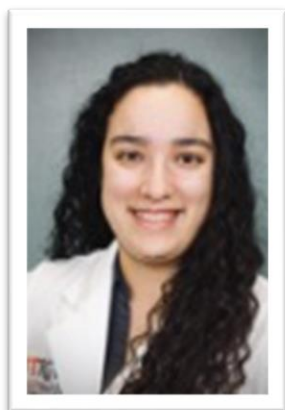
In 2020, I received my Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science with a concentration in Physical Therapy here at The University of Texas Rio-Grande Valley. I garnered 8 years of invaluable experiences as a Physical Therapy Technician prior to discerning my aspiration to venture into nursing. The Student Success Mentorship Program has created an opportunity for me to help and guide other nursing students who share the same compassion for nursing. I hope to instill great qualities in my mentees that will help them be successful in future endeavors.

After graduating from high school in 2019, I began my college journey at the University of Texas at Arlington. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I made the decision to move back home and continue my studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. There, I pursued a degree in Integrated Health Science with a concentration in Professional Studies, graduating in the Fall of 2023. It was during this time that I discovered my passion for nursing. I was inspired by the opportunity to be on the frontline of healthcare, caring for others in a meaningful way. As a Student Success Mentor, I aim to impart a strong foundation in student collaboration and academic support to my mentees. Drawing from my own clinical experiences, I strive to ensure they have access to the best learning opportunities available.

## Bailey Villalon



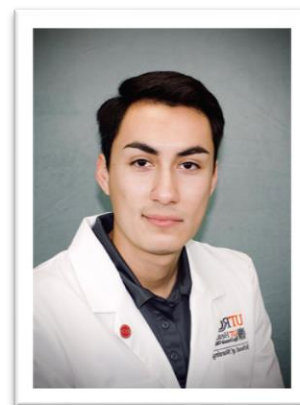
## Tatiana Montemayor



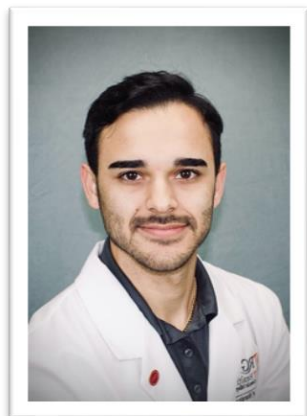
My name is Tatiana Montemayor, and I am 27 years old. I was born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley. I completed my first undergraduate degree in Exercise Science and a master's degree in respiratory care. I am currently a Neonatal Intensive Care Registered Respiratory Therapist. The Student Success Mentorship Program is a wonderful opportunity for me to give back to my program and help future nurses succeed.

## Orlando Cuellar

My name is Orlando Cuellar. In 2022, I received a bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences with aspirations of pursuing a medical degree. However, my journey in healthcare took an unexpected turn when I discovered the rewarding career of a CRNA. Passionate about medicine and dedicated to frontline patient care, I embarked on a transformative journey as a nursing student to one day be able to practice anesthesia as a CRNA. Along this path, I've encountered fascinating experiences and gained valuable insights into the nursing profession, which I've been honored to share through the Student Success Mentorship Program.



## Nathan Rohr



My name is Nathan Rohr. Before gaining acceptance into the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, I received a Bachelor of Science in Biology. Previously, I aspired to pursue a career in Medicine. However, I realized that a career in nursing provides a more suitable fit for my life. After graduating from the ABSN program, I plan to pursue a professional degree of Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice. Nonetheless, I am thankful to be a School of Nursing mentor here at UTRGV. Such a program provides leadership and learning opportunities that can advance one's knowledge, especially in the field of nursing. I would like to thank God, my family, and friends for the continuous support received throughout my education.

My name is Valeria Valdez, and I am from Weslaco, TX. In 2019, I received a Bachelor of Science in Biology. In 2021, I obtained a master's degree in health science with a concentration in Healthcare Administration. I worked with the CDC Foundation as a contact tracer and shortly as an epidemiologist for over 3 years. I pursued the opportunity for a career in nursing because I wanted a more hands-on approach to health care and helping the community. The Student Success Mentorship Program has created a space for collaboration, peer-support, and empathy, all nursing qualities both mentors and mentees will carry throughout our careers. I hope to create a supportive and nurturing goal-oriented environment for my mentees.

## Valeria Valdez





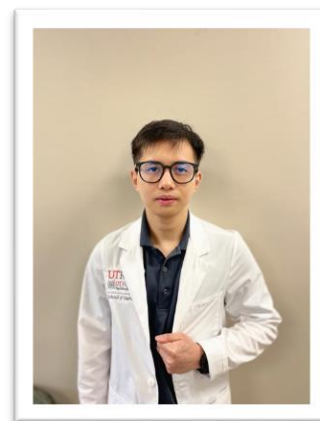
## Lloyd Rigney



My name is Lloyd Rigney and I have lived in the valley my whole life and is where I plan to stay for the rest of it. Growing up, I held many hobbies. Just to name a few, I played instruments, programmed stage lighting, built guitar bodies, and wired electronics. Everyone thought I would become an engineer; And though engineers can change lives, nurses save lives. Nursing became my passion for that reason. Partaking in the Student Success Mentorship Program has allowed me to share that passion with my colleagues and help guide them to success.

Greetings! I am Ryan Keith T. Gavino, a nursing student and mentor. My interest in the profession originated from my strong interest in health science as it studies the strongly interdependent relationships between the various bodily systems and how the human body's resilience maintains homeostasis in times of stress. Aside from this, I find that a few of my other passions are to help my fellow students reach their academic goals and aid their studying. Personally, I want others to recognize their own capabilities by providing them an opportunity to see their own growth, and the mentorship program allows me to achieve this dream.

## Ryan Gavino



## Valeria Gonzalez



My name is Valeria Gonzalez. In 2021, I graduated high school with an Associate Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies of Science. I began nursing school at 19 and will be graduating at 21. The Student Success Mentorship Program has allowed me to do what I like to do best: help people. In helping guide and mentor students, I hope to contribute to building great future nurses and coworkers.

Hello everyone! My name is Victoria Samantha Torres, I am 23 years old, and currently in my last semester of nursing school. In 2020, I received my Licensed Practical Nurse certification from South Texas College. Along with working as a Licensed Practical Nurse at a local home health agency in the valley. Motivating me to advance my career and become a Registered Nurse. Throughout the journey I have learned and obtained a vast amount of knowledge, skills, and memories that I will carry with me throughout my life. I am extremely grateful for everyone who has believed in me and supported me along this journey. Here's to see what the future brings.

## Victoria Torres

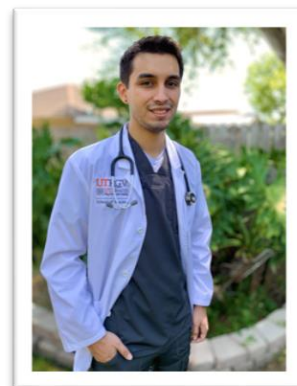


## Yaritzi Flores

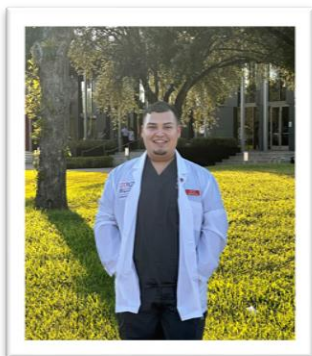
Hello everyone! My name is Yaritzi Flores, and I'm currently a 3rd-semester student mentor. Throughout my life, I have always had an interest in medicine and healthcare. Through volunteer and shadowing opportunities, I realized that the patient care involved in nursing was the perfect fit for me. Working at the university as a tutor and Peer-Led Team Learning leader helped me realize that I also enjoyed guiding others to success, especially when they are uncertain of their own skills and potentials. Regarding nursing mentoring, having once been in the mentee's shoes, I understand the challenges, stress, and uncertainties that come with pursuing a nursing career. Becoming a mentor allows me to share my knowledge and personal insight with mentees, thus hopefully enhancing their learning and confidence as they continue their nursing journey.

Hey there! My name is Lucas Carney, and I am a third-semester nursing student in the Student Success Initiative Mentoring program. Believe it or not, I wasn't always interested in healthcare. I had full intentions of becoming a firefighter and only got exposed to medicine through an EMT-Basic course I had to take to complete my firefighting certification. However, that course quickly opened my eyes. I wanted to be a paramedic. I put my career aspirations as a firefighter on pause, deciding to volunteer in Edinburg while I went through the Paramedic Associate's program at STC. I worked in EMS for some time during the COVID-19 pandemic but realized I wanted more than the pre-hospital setting. I didn't just want to stabilize people enough to get them to the hospital; I wanted to see them improve! Becoming a nurse seemed like the best way for me to be a participant in long-term health, and that's what I decided to do. My hope as a mentor is to provide other students with the resources and advice I had always wanted when I first started out. Nursing school is a big task, and it's always great to have a strong support system invested in your success!

## Lucas Carney



## Daniel Ruiz



My name is Daniel Ruiz. In 2018, I graduated from UTRGV with a Bachelor's degree in Biology. I taught secondary science for 5 years. During that time, I also pursued a master's in health administration in 2019 and a Master's in Educational Leadership in 2022. I decided to pursue UTRGV's Accelerated BSN program and switch careers, and it has been quite the ride ever since, but I have enjoyed the journey. The Student Success Mentorship program has allowed me to use the skills I learned in education to help build the future nurses of America. I hope I can help others find the confidence in their own knowledge and abilities to achieve the goals and dreams they set out for themselves.

My name is Gonzalo Barrera. In 2018, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science Kinesiology and a minor in Biology from UTRGV. I have been a Certified Pharmacy Technician since 2013 and currently work in the main pharmacy department at DHR. Working in the hospital setting, I became intrigued by the Nurse's role. After my wife became an RN, I was motivated to make a career change and apply to the ABSN program. Currently, I am a third semester student, and it has been a blessing to expand my knowledge and develop skills thanks to the faculty and my classmates. Being a part of The Student Success Mentorship program, my goal is to pass on some of the knowledge I have acquired to my peers in hopes of all of us being successful together.

## Gonzalo Barrera



## JohnMarc Candelaria



Hi there! My name is JohnMarc Candelaria. I graduated from UTRGV in 2018 with a Bachelor's in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. I have a goal to build a career in the healthcare field and I am excited to be here at UTRGV again with the Nursing program. I have worked at the South Texas College tutoring center since 2018 and developed a passion for helping students succeed. I am excited about the Student Success Mentorship Program as it has given me an opportunity to share this same passion for learning to fellow students here at the School of Nursing!

## Associate Dean for Student Success & Engagement

### Dr. Eloisa G. Tamez



Eloisa G. Taméz, RN, PhD, MSCJ, FAAN is a Professor and Associate Dean for Student Success and Engagement. Dr. Taméz, teaches across programs with a primary concentration on graduate education. She is the founder of the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Post Master's Certificate. She received multiple awards for service to the profession. She is a retired Colonel of the United States Army. At present, she has an appointment from the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Disability and Compensation Advisory Committee.

## Student Success Coordinator

### Dr. Roda S. Galang



Dr. Roda Galang DNP, MSNed, BSN, RN is dedicated to planning, implementing, and evaluating student success initiatives in the BSN undergraduate program. With 15 years of experience in undergraduate nursing education at South Texas College and currently holds the position of clinical assistant professor and students' success coordinator in UTRGV School of Nursing. Dr. Roda Galang's teaching philosophy revolves around student-centered approaches. Acknowledging individual strengths, needs, and learning styles, Dr. Roda Galang prioritizes meeting students where they are and tailoring instruction to their unique requirements. By integrating active learning strategies such as case studies, simulations, and group discussions. Dr. Galang fosters an environment that enhances experiences, promotes critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the application of knowledge essential for success in the nursing profession. Dr. Galang's future goal is to secure a grant to establish a sustainable student success initiative that will not only enhance student outcomes but also contribute significantly to the future of nursing.





## CREATING A STRONG FOUNDATION

*Inaugural BSN Family Orientation -- Spring 2024*

***The journey through the UTRGV BSN program is a transformative experience, not just for the students but also their families. An audience of almost 100 students and family members made time to participate in the first BSN Family Orientation on January 11, 2024.***

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.

***Feedback from the event was positive, with students and parents chiming in...***

- “I enjoyed listening to the students talk about their experiences...”
- “It was great to hear current students and their families share their stories, [including success and hardships] ...”
- “I like how the faculty included our families [so that they can understand] how to support us nursing students

### Spring 2024

Celebrating Nursing Students' Introduction of the Student Success Initiative Program

First BSN Family Orientation

Scoop for Success

Peer to Peer Mentoring

Nursing is an Art Therapy Session in Collaboration of UTRGV The Gathering student organization

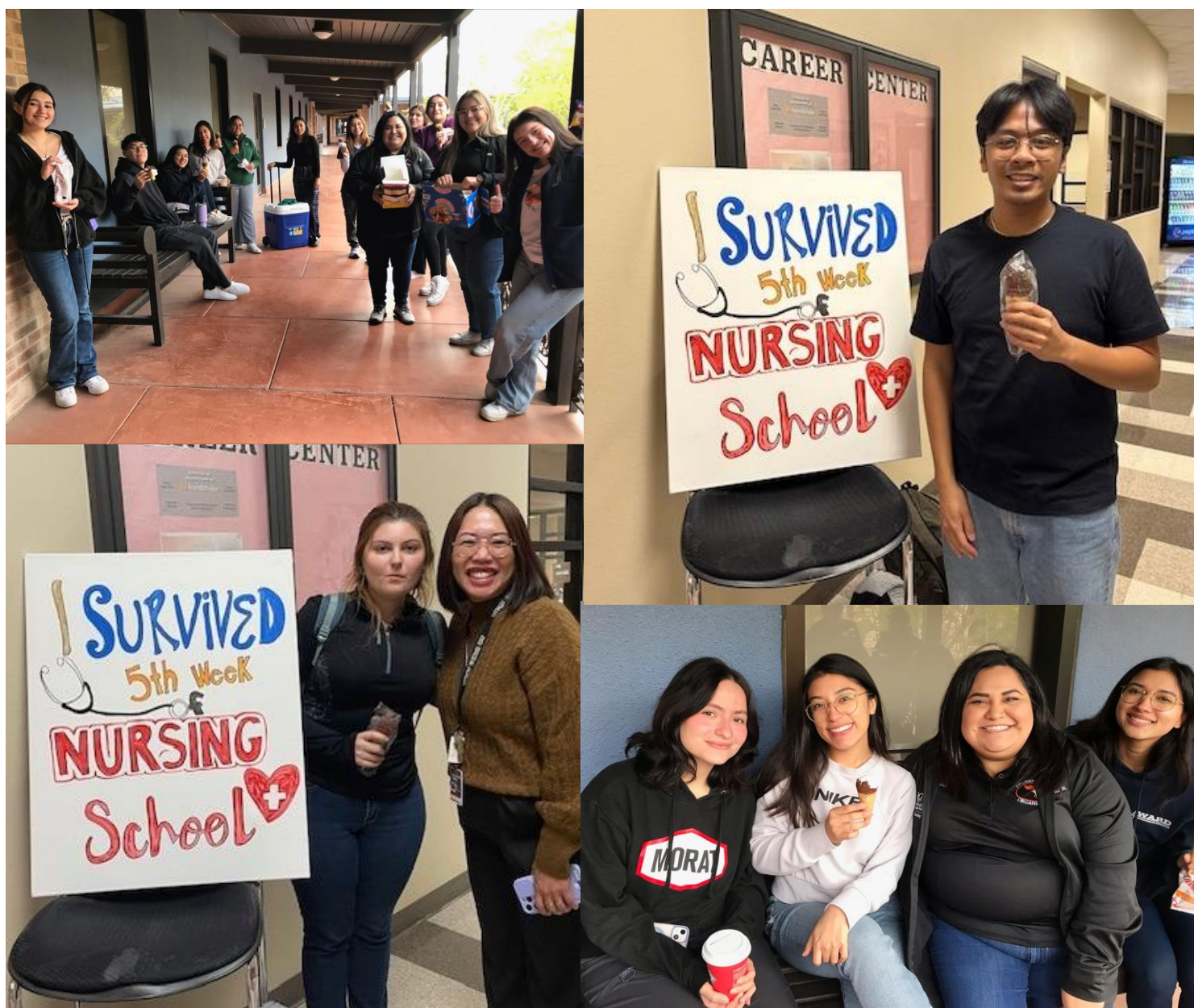
Destressing in collaboration with Fine Arts Department

End of Semester Bootcamp

Nurses' Week 2024

## Scoop for Success

First semester students were treated to a celebratory scoop of ice cream following their first exam to mark their initial five weeks in nursing school. The School of Nursing faculty recognized the students for their hard work. Both the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses participated in the event!



## Student Success Programs Testimonials

### *Feedback from other students regarding the Mentoring program...*

- “Peer-to-peer mentoring was incredibly beneficial ... having someone readily available through both team collaboration and email made a significant difference in my learning experience...”
- “[My mentor] gave me valuable advice and listened to all of my concerns and helped in any way they could...”
- “[My mentor] was able to answer things that I had questions on and [they] always encouraged me to be confident even when I felt like it was too much...”
- “[My mentor] was always available for any questions or doubts I have or need clarification for. [They] also provided me with some visual representations of topics we were going over, which I feel have helped me a lot.

### *A word from our Nursing Tutor...*

Hi, I am Kimberly. As a former student, active nursing tutor, and new graduate nurse, I strive to use my efforts and passion to make the difference I wish to see in our healthcare system. Our nursing education is the foundation of our nursing career. It affects our values, judgments, and clinical practice. All these factors impact our RGV patient population and our healthcare system. Thus, I was happy to accept becoming a nursing tutor. Through this role, I can create a safe space for students to understand and learn content they will apply to their nursing practice.

Nursing can be challenging; I aim to be a good listener, an encourager, and a source of support. Seeing a student have a moment of growth in their learning makes it all worth it.

Hello Students,

My name is Sandra, and I am a 3rd semester nursing student. I would like to first preface this letter by acknowledging that the 3rd semester is truly the most challenging phase of the nursing program. It entails a delicate balance of time management, comprehending complex exam topics, completing numerous assignments, and juggling personal or work commitments. Throughout this semester, I have realized that the key to being successful is learning when to ask for help. Like many students, I struggle with the cardiac material presented in Exam 1 of Adult Health II. Despite my continuous engagement with the course content, I found it challenging to grasp the material due to differences in learning style and study habits. After three weeks of struggling and failing lecture quizzes, I decided to reach out to my instructor for guidance on improving my performance in the class.

**I was presented with resources available to me as a student such as the tutoring center, peer mentorship, and the opportunity to set up a meeting with my instructor to go over my notes.** This combination of resources provided me with the ability to identify any blind spots that may have been ignored. To specifically elaborate on how tutoring helped me, I would like to state that I attended tutoring twice a week, for an hour or two. The tutor helped me space out my studying to prevent last-minute preparation. She also set the tone for the pace of reviewing each topic to make sure all exam topics were reviewed before exams. Being able to talk through the material and fix any mistakes in my understanding of the course topics helped make sure those same mistakes were not repeated on the actual exam. I also found it helpful that everyone was encouraging and provided a safe learning environment for me to make mistakes and be corrected. In all honesty, I attribute my success this semester to the support provided by tutoring services and the utilization of available resources.

Respectfully,

Sandra Boadu



## NURSING IS AN ART!

*Session in Collaboration with the UTRGV **The Gathering** Student Organization*

UTRGV The Gathering student organization and the School of Nursing recently joined forces to host a transformative art therapy event centered around the dual goals of fun and stress relief. The event provided a creative outlet for attendees to explore and express their emotions through the medium of painting. Throughout the event, there were no rules or boundaries when it came to painting. Some chose to express joy and happiness through bold, energetic strokes, while others delved into deeper emotions, using subtle shades and intricate details to convey their inner struggles. As they immersed themselves in the process of painting, they found a sense of release and relief from the stresses of daily life. Nursing is an art event that has proved to be a resounding success, leaving participants feeling rejuvenated, inspired, and more deeply connected to themselves and each other. It served as a powerful reminder of the healing potential of artistic expression and the importance of self-care in maintaining overall well-being.





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### 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