

# Carolinas College

— OF HEALTH SCIENCES —

SPRING 2021



COLLEGES KEY TO CREATING  
Diverse Healthcare Workforce

# By & Large

*“Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead.”*

– Nelson Mandela



As I think about 2020 and the experiences, challenges and opportunities we faced as a college, I can't help but think about the road we have been on for so long. If not for the strong foundation of our academic programs and the excellence of our faculty, staff and students, we may have faced far more challenges than opportunities last year. But as you, our readers, have come to learn about Carolinas College in the pages of this magazine, excellence is what drives us – and our excellence is on display in the annual President's Report.

As we enter 2021, I see the road to a post-COVID world and a return to something more normal, but I also understand we must continue to strive for excellence and seek those milestones that define us. One such milestone is our continuing effort on the long journey toward diversity, equity and inclusion on our campus, as told in our feature story. I am proud of the work we are doing in this space and how this work supports Atrium Health.

Another important milestone was the retirement of our long-serving board chair C. Marcus Harris. He was instrumental in shaping Carolinas College into one of the leading health sciences colleges in the nation. Mr. Harris leaves a legacy that will be hard to follow. But it is only fitting that Ginger Walker and Dr. Carole Isom-Barnes, the new

leaders of our board, bring strength in their diversity and experience. We also achieved other important milestones such as our largest ever enrollment in the fall, the graduation of our first class of neurodiagnostic technologists, and the anticipation of additional baccalaureate programs.

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**I am proud of the work we are doing on the long journey towards diversity, equity and inclusion and how this work supports Atrium Health.**

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In addition to these important milestones, you will find amazing stories in this edition about a working mom attending our BSN program, an alumnus who graciously supports the college and the success of our students, and the important achievements of some of our faculty and staff. Additionally, program updates and important industry hot topics continue to be key features of our magazine that I hope you enjoy.

This year will certainly be one of more milestones along our continuing journey...I hope you will be along for the ride as we celebrate them.

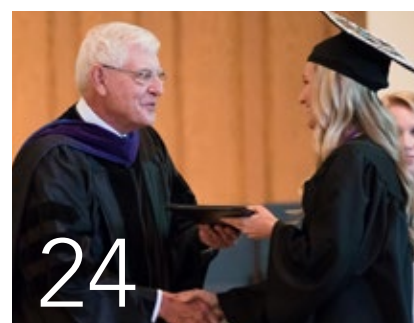
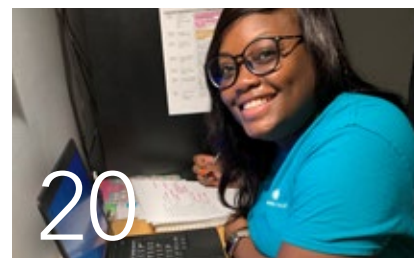
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Hampton Hopkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

T. Hampton Hopkins, EdD

# Carolinas College

## — OF HEALTH SCIENCES —

*A publication for alumni and friends of Carolinas College of Health Sciences, part of Atrium Health*



### COVER STORY

## Colleges Key in Creating Diverse Healthcare Workforce

How do we create a more diverse healthcare workforce that reflects the population it serves? That work begins at colleges and universities, and Carolinas College is proud to play a part in improving diversity, equity and inclusion.

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### SPECIAL INSERT

## 2020 President's Report

As we reflect on the challenging year that was, we also find proud moments that demonstrate our commitment to excellence, even in the face of such uncertainty. Join us in celebrating all we've accomplished in 2020.

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**Carolinas College**  
of Health Sciences

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## ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING

### Strong Program Outcomes, Faculty Changes Mark Our Journey Forward

► Despite being in a pandemic for most of 2020, the Associate Degree Nursing program continued to educate and prepare graduates for the current healthcare environment. This past year, the faculty and students adjusted fairly well to the remote learning environment. While new and different challenges affected both faculty and students alike, program outcomes remained strong. The graduation rate rose slightly to 82%, the job placement rate rose to 97% and the NCLEX first-time pass rate remained high at 97%.

2020 saw lots of changes in our faculty. Two faculty members retired this year: Dr. Susan Patterson and Karen Flaherty. Susan taught nursing fundamentals for 17 years and led the transcultural nursing course to Belize for five consecutive years (*read more about Susan in the following article*). Karen taught clinical in the behavioral health course. Tracy Hayes transitioned from her faculty role in the ADN program to become the program chair for the RN-BSN program, while Annette Fraley (ADN '06) transitioned from her part-time ADN clinical faculty role to full-time faculty in the RN-BSN program. Megan Brazelton moved into a full-time role for the child/adolescent health course, Terri Lynch moved into a part-time role in adult health II, Saundra Hammond transitioned into adult health II, Ashley Cloninger became full time for nursing fundamentals I, and Vivian Stamps took on the added responsibility of adjunct faculty for the RN-BSN program. Several new part-time faculty were onboarded as well: Sherena Samuel (ADN '06), Emily Mosko, and McKenzie Masters (ADN '13).

Approval was sought and obtained to reestablish the Nurse Aide I program from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Carmelle Belizaire was hired as the Nurse Aide I coordinator and has been preparing to start the first cohort of students in May. The program will be offered in the evenings and on

the weekends to allow opportunities for students who work during the day.

Finally, the first cohort of students who enrolled in the program under the new curriculum will complete their program in October. Moving forward, we will have students completing their program five times a year in February, April, June, October and December. Next on the agenda is planning for future nursing programs as we partner with Wake Forest University!

*By Cathy Borysewicz, MSN, RN-BC, CNE, program chair, Associate Degree Nursing*

### Longtime Nurse Educator Retires from Carolinas College

A longtime nursing educator, Dr. Susan Patterson, retired in January 2021 after many years of making a difference in the lives of so many nursing students. Susan came to Carolinas College back in 2003 with many years of experience as both a nurse and an educator. During her time with the college, she was lead faculty in NUR 101 and now NUR 120. During the summer sessions, Susan would support other courses as needed, including Adult Health and Behavioral Health Nursing. In 2015, Susan created and led the first Transcultural Nursing course, taking 10 students to Belize. Susan was the lead faculty for this course for five years and, when applicable, added a leadership component to the course, creating NUR 201. Susan has also been the first and only faculty mentor for the HotSpotting initiative, an interdisciplinary approach to improve the healthcare outcomes of patients with significant disparities in healthcare. Additionally, Susan completed her DNP while here at Carolinas College and has had several articles accepted for publication. Susan will be genuinely missed for all her contributions to nursing education, but we are excited for her as she embarks on this next journey of life.



Dr. Susan Patterson

## RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY

## New Classes, Degree Offerings in Medical Imaging

► The Radiologic Technology program has faced many challenges in 2020 due to COVID-19. However, with the great support from our Atrium Health clinical sites and Carolinas College, we were able to maintain high-quality education while meeting the needs of our students. All the May 2020 graduates passed the ARRT Registry examination on the first attempt. In addition to their success on the registry exam, all the graduates who were seeking employment were hired within a month of graduation. We could not be prouder of their hard work and dedication to the Radiologic Technology program and to the imaging profession.

During the fall 2020 term, computed tomography (CT) classes were offered at Carolinas College. Alisha Jones, Radiologic Technology clinical coordinator and faculty member, facilitated the CT classes and clinical experiences for these students. Upon successful completion of these classes, the students were eligible to take the ARRT Computed Tomography Registry examination.

The first mammography classes were offered in fall 2020. In partnership with Charlotte Radiology, clinical rotations were provided at several Charlotte Radiology locations. The didactic class was offered online while the clinical class required onsite participation. Two students enrolled and successfully completed these classes. Upon successful completion of these classes, students were eligible to take the ARRT Mammography Registry examination. Both students passed the Mammography Registry exam and were hired by Charlotte Radiology.

We are eagerly anticipating the graduation of our Level II students in April 2021. This cohort has also faced many challenges during their time in the program, but their flexibility and positive attitudes have propelled them to finish strong. The students are actively engaged in completing their course work and clinical obligations while applying for jobs within the profession. In conjunction with their capstone project, the students are attending the NCSRT Annual (Virtual) Conference in March 2021.

The Level I students continue to learn imaging procedures and are immersed in radiation physics. This cohort started with 20 students and all 20 students are still actively engaged in the program. During the summer

term, these students will participate in robust critical thinking experiences. Students will also participate in Phlebotomy, which will enhance their clinical skills. Upon the successful completion of the Phlebotomy class and clinical rotations, students will receive a Phlebotomy certificate.

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We are excited about the new degree offering: Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging (BSMI) beginning fall 2021. Applications are being accepted now.

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The Radiologic Technology program is continually evolving and growing programs in medical imaging. We are excited about the new degree offering: Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging (BSMI). Beginning fall 2021, Carolinas College will begin its first cohort of BSMI students. Applications are being accepted now for the fall 2021 start.

As always, the program faculty want to thank each of you for your continued support of the Radiologic Technology program and its students. Scholarship support through donations to the Susan Stricker Scholarship and the Dan Dubick Memorial Scholarship make a huge impact on the students. To those of you who mentor students in the clinical setting, thank you for your dedication to their success. We have a great team at Carolinas College and Atrium Health. We could not do this without each of you!

*Jodie Huffstetler, EdD, program chair, Radiologic Technology*

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## Teammate Accomplishments

**Jodie Huffstetler**, Radiologic Technology program chair, received her EdD in Higher Education Leadership and Management from Walden University after successfully defending her dissertation entitled “Students’ Perceptions of Persistence in 2-Year Radiologic Technology Programs.” Congratulations to Dr. Huffstetler!



Dr. Jodie Huffstetler

# COVID-19, Vaccines and the Science Behind It All

*General Studies faculty members Wesley Shover and Dr. Tracy James look beyond the rhetoric and explore the science behind the COVID-19 vaccines.*



## The importance of immunity

Our immune systems are learned and built over a lifetime by being exposed to pathogens or from falling sick. Like a SWAT team, the immune system is constantly surveilling the body for invading pathogens and launches a tactical attack when it encounters the enemy. Pathogens have distinct components called antigens (antibody generators). Antigens aren't recognized and trigger our immune systems to produce antibodies against them. Antibodies are like the elite special forces of the immune system. They are specially tailored to antigens (like a lock to a key) and can specifically neutralize them.

The first time the immune system encounters a foreign antigen is called the primary exposure. It stimulates an immune response over seven to 10 days, which ends in the production of millions of specific antibodies. But during this time, the invading antigens can spread. That's why you may have symptoms of the disease, or it may result in specific illness. Once antibody production ramps up, they get to work quickly to target and systematically destroy the antigens. The body then goes into healing, leading to the resolution of symptoms, convalescence and eventual recovery.

The residual antibodies provide short-term immunity against



the pathogen. But what is most significant is that the primary immune response leads to the production of the long-lived “memory cells.” Like the smaller troops that remain behind after combat, these memory cells persist in the body for decades, and may even provide lifelong immunity to diseases.

When the same pathogen invades again, the memory cells trigger a secondary immune response. It happens faster and produces more antibodies that are also stronger. The antigen can be eliminated before it can cause illness. This is why getting mumps or measles as a child immunizes you against getting those diseases again.

### What are vaccines?

Two ways of acquiring immunity to a pathogen are by natural infection or by vaccination. From the standpoint of the immune system, regardless of where the antigen comes from, it will be targeted as foreign, and the immune system will be primed to produce antibodies against it. Vaccines are a simple and safe way to be immunized against disease by artificially introducing antigens to stimulate a primary immune response so that the body is on standby in case of an actual infection. It is considered safe because vaccines contain only inactivated antigens or weakened forms of the bacteria/viruses (rather than the live, active pathogen), and do not cause the full-blown disease.

### The COVID-19 mRNA vaccine technology

Instead of antigens, mRNA vaccines involve injecting specific RNA messages (mRNA), which



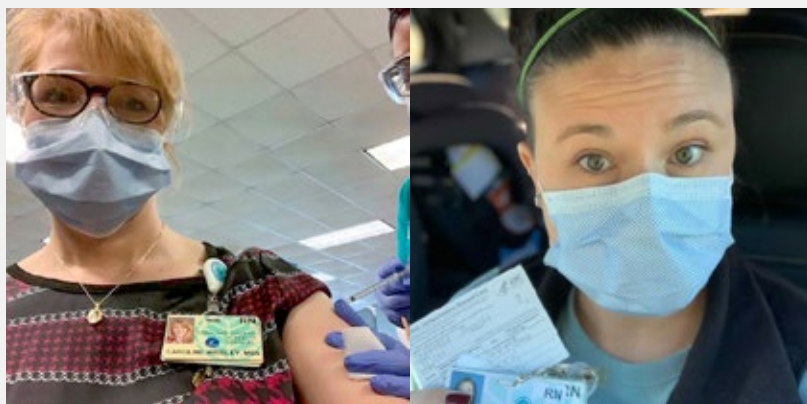
## Faculty, Alumni Get Vaccinated, College Continues Phased Reopening

“I feel a sense of relief and am happy to be part of the solution. Believe in the power of science!”

– DR. HEENA NAGARJI, ADN '11

It's hard to believe it's been more than one year since Carolinas College closed its campus, moved to online classes and adjusted to the new COVID-19 era. Today, we continue to see the impacts of this pandemic, although signs of progress are becoming more and more evident. In mid-January, Atrium Health opened vaccine appointments to all teammates, allowing many members of our Carolinas College family to receive their doses.

Meanwhile, Carolinas College continues to take a phased approach to reopening its campus. Many classes remain online, while students are still able to safely take part in the important hands-on component of their clinical education. We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our students and teammates as we evaluate any changes in our reopening plans.



(L-R) “This was such an exciting moment for me and my family,” said Caroline Wrisley, ADN faculty. Amanda Jones Shackelford (ADN '10) shared, “It wasn't a decision I took lightly, but I am choosing to protect my family and friends.”

direct the body's own cells to produce the needed antigenic proteins. The COVID-19 vaccine contains the mRNA that encodes the spike protein, found on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2. The resulting antigen stimulates an immune response, resulting in antibody and memory cell production. There are some advantages to this approach:

- **Safety:** The overwhelming consensus among the scientific community is that since mRNA is non-infectious and inherently different from DNA (our genetic material), there is no risk of infection or incorporating into our DNA.

economics and human crisis can accelerate science.

First, let's illustrate our point with a fun engineering example. The Ford F-150 is one of the best-selling vehicles. Customers will pay more because of its reputation. But did you know Ford rolls an F-150 off the production line every 53 seconds? Manufacturers spent years perfecting the process. Even when a new vehicle is designed, they can swap out a few parts and plug in new ones. The process is repeatable, minimizes waste and improves consistency and quality. These same principles are being applied to other industries including healthcare.

Fortunately, a new vaccine process was already being tested for other therapies using mRNA to teach our bodies how to respond to other recently concerning viruses and even some forms of cancer. This mRNA vaccine had the ability to swap parts and insert new ones – just like Ford does for new cars and just like genetic tests using PCR. The world had a new process that was repeatable and allowed for parts to be easily exchanged.

- **Cost and scalability:** mRNA vaccines have the capacity for speedy, inexpensive and scalable production compared to conventional vaccines.
- **Ease of manufacture:** mRNA is easily produced in laboratories using readily available materials in a fraction of the time.

### How were COVID-19 vaccines developed so quickly?

While the speed of this vaccine development may give people pause, the reality is the science simply moved faster. Technology,

If you've taken a COVID-19 test, you may have heard the term PCR. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) was first demonstrated in 1983. It was an amazing tool, but very expensive and not easy to perform. That changed as the technology improved.

New PCR-based tests are developed using the same repeatable process. DNA is heated and goes from a double strand into two single strands. The temperature is lowered and raised again to make a copy of the strand. This process gets repeated

20 times or more. New PCR-based tests are developed using this same repeatable process.

For many scientists, COVID-19 was the realization of their worst fears. The scientist credited with publishing the first genome for the SARS-CoV-2 virus completed it in less than 40 hours after receiving the virus.

This was the necessary spark. Many scientists had a head start from working on vaccines for related viruses. They quickly went to work to rebuild them from the ground up with the modifications for the new virus. But these methods didn't have an easily repeatable process.

Fortunately, a new vaccine process was already being tested for other therapies using mRNA to teach our bodies how to respond to other recently concerning viruses and even some forms of cancer. This mRNA vaccine had the ability to swap parts and insert new ones – just like Ford does for new cars and just like genetic tests using PCR. The world had a new process that was repeatable and allowed for parts to be easily exchanged.

### Finding hope

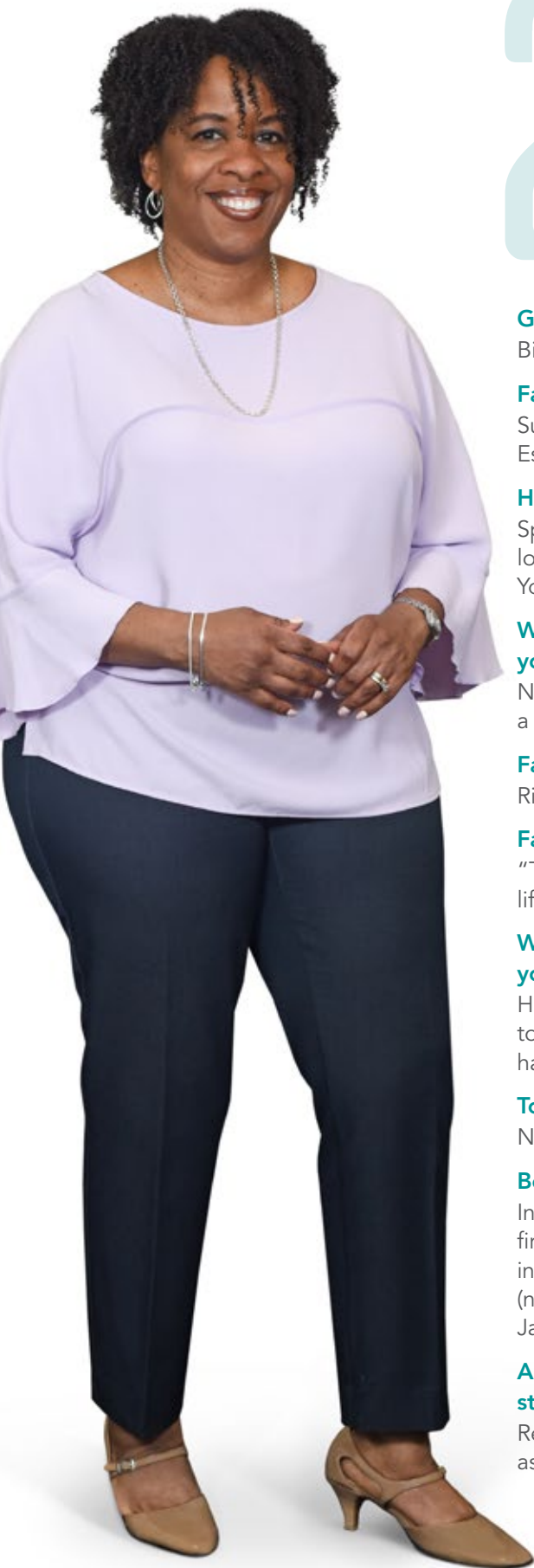
The reality is that this will not be the last pandemic. We still don't know what the future holds for COVID-19, but we can find hope in a new technology that can quickly switch out parts to combat new variants and even new viruses that may emerge in the future.

### Still have questions?

Visit the CDC website or Atrium Health website for answers.

*By Tracy James, PhD, and Wesley Shover, MS, (MLS '13)*





# 20 THINGS *you may not know about*

Diahanne Holandez, MSN, RN  
ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING FACULTY

## **Guilty pleasure?**

Binge watching HGTV.

## **Favorite meal?**

Sushi – I can't get enough!  
Especially from Asian Café.

## **Hometown?**

Spring Valley, NY. It's a small town located 30 miles northwest of New York City.

## **What you miss most about your hometown?**

Nothing like the NY-style pizza and a good old neighborhood bakery.

## **Favorite TV series?**

Right now, "Bridgerton."

## **Favorite book?**

"The Shack." Reading it was life changing.

## **When you were a kid, what was your dream job?**

Honestly, there were two – either to teach or be a nurse. TRUTH! I have the best of both worlds.

## **Toughest lesson learned?**

Not advocating for yourself.

## **Best moment professionally?**

In January 2010, being hired as the first Black full time nursing faculty in Carolinas College for NUR 152 (now NUR 180). Thank you, Jane Binetti, DNP!

## **Advice to new Carolinas College students?**

Read your textbook, ask questions, ask for help!

## **Cats or dogs?**

Dog person. My baby, Mercedes, is a 9-year-old German Shepherd.

## **Family?**

Married to my husband, who is also an RN, for 22 years. Mom of three boys including a set of twins...I'm the Queen of the castle.

## **Favorite holiday?**

Thanksgiving – family and food.

## **Best advice you've ever received?**

"Everything you want is outside of your comfort zone."

## **Favorite thing about Carolinas College?**

Lifelong friendships I have developed.

## **First job?**

Cashier. "Welcome to Burger King, can I help you?"

## **Accomplishment you're most proud of?**

Professionally: Being a first-generation American and first in my family to graduate college. Personally: family that my husband and I have created.

## **I'm most scared of:**

Not fulfilling my purpose in this life.

## **Hidden talent?**

My husband says I'm excellent at cooking Filipino food. Pretty cool considering he is Filipino!

## **Favorite part about my job is:**

Witnessing my student get their "a-ha" moment!



# COLLEGES KEY IN CREATING

# DIVERSE

## HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

Establishing a diverse healthcare organization is about more than numbers. It's about practicing good medicine.

**“F**or all.” Carolinas College of Health Sciences students and Atrium Health teammates hear these words often. They’re the last two words of the healthcare organization’s mission statement, which is invoked regularly as a call of ethical responsibility and professional duty: “To improve health, elevate hope and advance healing – for all.”

Those last two words have become shorthand for the entire mission. “For all” is the impetus and inspiration for the work being done to increase diversity within the organization – diversity of race, of background, of thought, of gender, of sexual orientation. The goal of this work extends beyond hiring practices and application strategies. It strives to create a healthcare system in which providers reflect the patient populations they serve and understand the challenges they face.

Greater diversity can bring greater understanding and empathy. Greater understanding and empathy can create more effective providers and improved outcomes.

But the work of transforming a mission statement into daily practice throughout a healthcare organization entails intentional work. That work begins well before healthcare professionals begin their careers. It starts in higher education.

Looking across higher education, student bodies seem to be getting more diverse, but the progress is slow and not always equal. According to the

National Center for Education Statistics, white students made up 70% of all undergraduate students in 2000. By 2016, that percentage dropped to 56%. During that same time, the percentage of Black students increased from 12% to 14%, while the Hispanic student population increased from 10% to 19%.

At the same time, diversity among medical school graduates has grown in the last 40 years, according to data from the Association of American Medical Colleges. Data from 2019 show the number of female medical school graduates surpassed the number of male graduates. But gains in diversity were not shared equally, as the growth of Black applicants lagged other groups.

For nursing schools, data from a 2017 survey done by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing showed that nurses from minority groups made up only 19% of the registered nurse workforce. But minorities make up 38% of the United States population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Colleges and universities across the country have taken notice of the vital role they play, not only in educating students about these crucial issues, but in working to create diverse bodies of students that will ultimately lead to more diverse workforces.

Some higher education institutions have hired chief diversity officers, whose sole focus is to



address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) on campus. Some institutions have created new academic programs focused on DEI. Other schools are creating new courses that explore racism and racial inequality, with some schools requiring these classes for new students.

Like many others, Carolinas College also has a renewed focus on diversity and inclusion. The college's Diversity and Inclusion Committee provides resources for teammates and holds events that include frank discussions about race. The college's Student Leadership Council hosts a book club for students and teammates who come together to discuss the book "How To Be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi.

Beyond that, there are deep efforts to examine how the college thinks about student admissions. Student Affairs staff reviewed and changed the application process to draw from a more diverse pool of students entering healthcare professions. The college has reviewed ways that higher education application practices inadvertently exclude qualified, promising students, and staff have researched methods to evaluate students more equitably.

As with many colleges and universities, the application process at Carolinas College has evolved to rely less on numbers and more on students. The college has adopted a more holistic application review process to ensure staff are evaluating the whole student – not just test results – without compromising standards of rigor.

"The holistic review isn't about minimizing test scores and GPAs – those things are still important to give us an indication of a student's potential for success academically," says Karen Lewis, EdD, Carolinas College dean of student affairs and enrollment management. "It expands the lens to look at the depth and the breadth of the experiences of that student, the road they have traveled."

If an applicant has worked full time to support a family during school, then it's unreasonable to compare that student on an apples-to-apples basis with a student who attended school full time without extra responsibilities.

If an applicant has served as a caretaker to a sick relative, they have experience that is pertinent to their application to Carolinas College.

The goal is to design an application that captures students' relevant stories. Open-ended questions ask Carolinas College applicants about their motivations for choosing a healthcare profession. They ask about experiences that have guided their ambitions. In addition, the application seeks to capture not just successes, but failures. Dr. Lewis says that a question about overcoming challenges offers insight into resilience, a vital quality for anyone entering a challenging curriculum at a healthcare college.

The key here is that these questions allow qualified students of more diverse backgrounds to enter the college. A classroom that puts these students together will foster discussions and awareness that will lead to better healthcare providers.

"We all have a narrow view of the world based on our own experiences, and the only way that any of us grow is when we meet people who have different backgrounds

and the different perspectives that come from those backgrounds," Dr. Lewis said. "If you grew up and you never thought twice about where your next meal was coming from or having a roof over your head, you're limited in your ability to understand someone who has those same fears. When you have a diverse student body, they bring those life experiences and different perspectives to the table. They can say, 'Maybe this patient didn't fill their prescription because they don't have the money,' or 'Maybe this person didn't go to the doctor because they'd been mistreated before.'"

Today, Carolinas College is more diverse than ever. Nearly one-third of the college's student population is a minority, up from 26% just four years ago.

After 10 years of working in a variety of sales, advertising and consulting jobs, Taylor Hall decided it was time to move on. She hadn't found her true calling yet. There was always a feeling she could be doing more, having a greater impact.

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I feel I can better communicate and empathize with that part of the community to have a positive impact on their overall health and understanding.

– Taylor Hall, ADN Student

Healthcare was always something that stuck in her mind, but not always for good reasons. Growing up, her parents had a variety of health issues and were in and out of the hospital. The experiences made a lasting impression on her, she said, because she saw how the experience of a Black patient wasn't always the same as that of a white patient. As she got older, the racial disparities in healthcare became even more obvious to her. Black women are three to four times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related complication compared to white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Certain health conditions such as cardiomyopathy and hypertensive disorders are more likely to cause death in Black women.

“As a young Black woman with friends and family this has personally affected, this is something that hits close to home and I am certainly very passionate about it,” Taylor said.

Now in the Carolinas College Associate Degree Nursing program, Taylor is working toward her goal of becoming a traveling nurse. But her career aspirations are much bigger. As much as she sees herself tending to patients, she sees herself as their advocate – a champion for people of color.

“I want to be able to educate and help communities of color to receive the healthcare they need from people who look like and can relate to them,” Taylor said.

“I feel I can better communicate and empathize with that part of the community to have a positive impact on their overall health and understanding. I'd like to bridge that gap in communication between the community and their healthcare providers. I want to continue having these conversations with





(L-R) Jaspal Singh, MD, Atrium Health pulmonologist; Ify Osunkwo, MD, hematology and sickle cell disease specialist, Atrium Health

providers to improve care and open some eyes. But more importantly I want to continue connecting to my patients more, not just from a medical perspective, but on the human side of things and from a cultural perspective. By doing this I hope to reduce health disparities within the community.”

This diversity is crucial for creating a healthcare system that reflects and understands the patients it serves. The exposure to different experiences and backgrounds can increase the awareness that providers have for how patients’ lives may affect – or even interfere – with their care.

According to a 2016 Johns Hopkins Medicine report, studies showed that students trained at diverse schools are more comfortable treating patients from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. When the physician was the same race as the patient, patients reported higher levels of trust and satisfaction. The visits even lasted longer—by an average of 2.2 minutes.

“If you’re not aware of a patient’s social status, economic status or challenges, then you’re going to have a harder time being successful in your community and in your job,” says Jaspal Singh, MD, an Atrium Health pulmonologist. “Having a diverse team and a diversity mindset will allow our system to really engage our patients for better outcomes. It’s so much more complicated than simply saying, ‘I know what’s best for this patient.’ We have a paradigm shift toward more patient-centered care. That means we need to understand our patients and families where they’re at.”

Racial and social disparities in healthcare have been high-profile topics over the past year due to the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19. Yet these disparities long preceded the pandemic.


“I’m Black. I’m used to being treated as less-than [in a hospital], and when they find out I’m a doctor, they pivot,” said Ify Osunkwo, MD, who specializes in hematology and sickle cell disease at Atrium Health. “Sometimes I don’t tell people I’m a doctor just because I want to see.”

She mentions an experience when she arrived at an emergency department with intense abdominal pain. She wore jeans, a hoodie and no makeup. The nurse who approached her in the waiting room looked at her but instead addressed her husband, who wore a suit. The nurse asked her husband if Dr. Osunkwo spoke English, instead of asking Dr. Osunkwo – the patient – how she was doing. The lack of empathy in the nurse’s voice and actions were apparent.

Dr. Osunkwo says that everyone who enters a hospital should be treated with empathy and respect, regardless of their color, their name or style of dress. When faced with such judgments, patients’ trust decreases in the system, which can negatively impact their outcomes.

Racism and bias in medicine aren’t new, of course. Given the history of systemic racism within the field of healthcare, it’s understandable that some minority patients feel mistrust of healthcare systems. And if patients enter a healthcare environment and don’t see

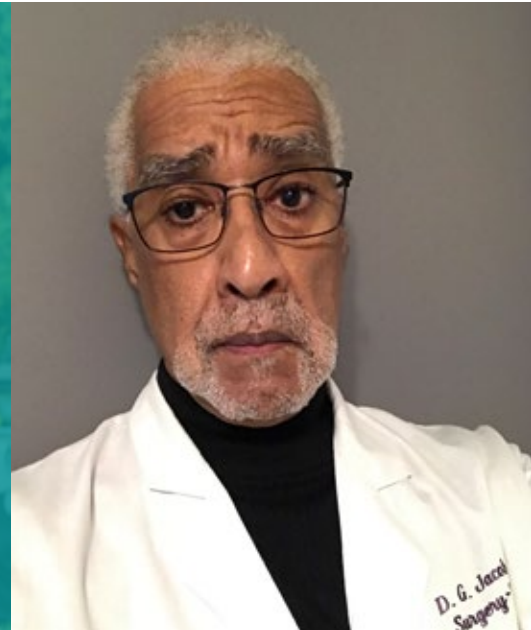




**“There is an obligation by virtue of the seat we sit in to know how to mitigate those unconscious biases so that they don’t adversely affect care.”**

That is why I’m glad that Atrium Health has been an adopter of this work and that we’re making implicit bias tests readily available.

– Fernando Little, chief diversity officer, Atrium Health



Fernando Little, chief diversity officer at Atrium Health; David Jacobs, MD, Vice-Chair of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Department of Surgery, Atrium Health

anyone who looks like they do, or if they feel negatively judged or misunderstood, that distrust can be reinforced. The root of many of these disparities lies in unconscious biases – those snap decisions we make without even realizing we make them.

The bad news about unconscious biases? We all have them. And sometimes, our biases are as invisible to ourselves as they’re harmful to others.

For Fernando Little, chief diversity officer at Atrium Health, understanding our implicit biases necessitates a perpetual education. Atrium Health offers a diversity certification, which includes implicit bias testing.

“There is a science to this work, and we all have blind spots,” Little said. “But there is an obligation by virtue of the seat we sit in to know how to mitigate those unconscious biases so that they don’t adversely affect care. That is why I’m glad that Atrium Health has been an adopter of this work and that we’re making implicit bias tests readily available. The blind spots are not really the issue for me. It is when there is no effort or concern to understand the blind spots and to mitigate the unconscious bias.”

David Jacobs, MD, Vice-Chair of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Department of Surgery at Atrium Health, says that much of this training was not available at hospitals and healthcare colleges just five or 10 years ago. But they’ve been rapidly adopted as a way to help providers deliver better care and improve outcomes.

“Diversity programs are intended to provide information

and awareness about how different racial and gender groups react to the care that they have received, so we can all be a little more aware of how patients perceive us,” Dr. Jacobs said.

It’s hard to acknowledge our own biases, however, so the prerequisite for this work is often humility and the willingness to look within oneself to find what we don’t want to see. Without that humility, however, we remain ignorant of our own biases.

“It can be preaching to the choir. The people who really need exposure and training on inclusivity and diversity are just not necessarily primed to do this training,” Dr. Osunkwo says. “But those who did the training will tell you: It’s transformative. You can learn a lot. We need to be reeducated and reeducated until it becomes a normal process, opposed to a one-and-done thing.”

It’s not enough to have diversity within an organization. Even if an organization is diverse by its numbers, it’s not inclusive until everyone feels heard and respected.

“Just having physicians and teammates of color doesn’t necessarily achieve the goal of improving the communication and awareness of that entire team,” said Dr. Jacobs. “The issue of diversity depends upon whether people on that team feel empowered to speak up, feel empowered to call out instances of unintentional bias and micro-aggressions when they see them.”

To work toward this, Atrium Health not only leans into difficult conversations but initiates them.

After the May 2020 death of George Floyd, Little and his team created a racial justice toolkit to help supervisors guide conversations with their teams about Floyd's death, police brutality and racial injustice. Little wanted all teammates to feel open to discuss their reactions and to know they didn't need to compartmentalize their personal lives from their professional lives. Organizations across the country soon requested the Atrium Health racial justice toolkit for use with their own teams.

"How do you have a conversation like this? How do you help people connect with what happened to George Floyd to what this means for them personally?" Little asks. "Multiple realities existed in our organization. There was some introspection that needed to happen. We needed to talk about why there were multiple

realities. How am I impacted as a Black man with two teenage boys? That may not be someone else's reality, but we still had to talk about that and create communities of support so that everybody could channel their emotion to a productive purpose."

In addition to the toolkit, Atrium Health hosted a Courageous Conversation about Floyd's death. All teammates were invited to the Zoom discussion, and Little expected about 200 or 250 teammates to participate. That day, more than 1,700 joined.

"Whatever affects one of us affects all of us," Little said. "And we're going to commit to creating a community of support to get through it together."

*By Jen Tota McGivney, contributing writer & Justin Moss, marketing manager*

The benefits of having a more diverse workforce go way beyond better patient care. A 2020 Provo College report explores other benefits:

#### Higher Employee Morale

Diversity creates a stronger feeling of inclusion and community for healthcare workers, which makes the workplace feel safer and more enjoyable.

#### Higher Employee Retention

This goes hand in hand with improved morale. The happier and safer healthcare workers feel in the workplace, the longer they will stay.

#### Better Recruitment

A commitment to diversity helps when recruiting new healthcare workers and administrative staff. It allows you to cast a wider net to attract new talent, and it offers a stronger hiring proposition for candidates who may consider working at your hospital or clinic.

#### Stronger Individual Motivation

When there is a lack of diversity, minority healthcare workers may feel stifled or unable to express their unique talents and personality traits. This is a natural inclination for people when they are more concerned with fitting in as opposed to "being themselves." That added pressure can lead to increased stress and reduced morale. It may even inhibit them from speaking up when their perspective is needed most. A diverse work environment sends the message that a worker's cultural and ethnic background is an advantage that should be respected, if not celebrated.

#### Better Problem Solving

A wide range of perspectives can lead to more creative solutions when solving problems during an emergency or even during routine

patient care. Allowing for new ideas and diverse perspectives can also lead to greater innovation and operational excellence.

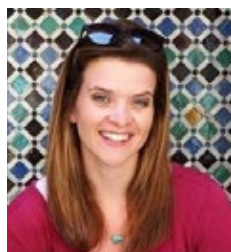
#### Better Results

Diverse healthcare teams get better results, period. The data show us that medical teams who embrace diversity provide better healthcare.

It's worth mentioning that while diversity is important, diversity without inclusion is ineffective. Not only do healthcare teams need to represent a variety of backgrounds, but each member needs to be given a voice.

# NEW FACES AT CAROLINAS COLLEGE

As Carolinas College continues its growth in enrollment and new programs, that also means we're hiring new faculty and staff to support our increasing student population. Below are just a few of the new faces that we've welcomed recently to the Carolinas College family.



Megan Koranksy

**Megan Koranksy**, Instructional Technologist and Developer

Hometown: Gainesville, VA

*What Brings You to Carolinas College?* I am passionate about utilizing educational technology to create streamlined and efficient practices in teaching and learning.



Robert Gay

**Robert Gay**, Admissions and Recruitment Coordinator

Hometown: Thomson, GA

*What Brings You to Carolinas College?* I enjoy having a small part in each student's journey to Carolinas College. It is incredibly fulfilling to watch someone follow their dreams and knowing that you had a small role in helping them.



Sherena Samuel

**Sherena Samuel**, Associate Degree Nursing faculty

Hometown: Dillon, SC

*What Brings You to Carolinas College?* As a Carolinas College alumna (now faculty), I want nursing students to see themselves in me. I'm looking forward to shaping the minds of our future nurses.



Carmelle Belizaire

**Carmelle Belizaire**, Program Coordinator, Nurse Aide I

Hometown: Boston, MA

*What Brings You to Carolinas College?* I believe working in healthcare is a calling. I am eager to help my students make a positive impact on the lives of patients.



McKenzie Masters

**McKenzie Masters**, Associate Degree Nursing faculty

Hometown: Charlotte, NC

*What Brings You to Carolinas College?* As an alumna, the school has been a part of my life since I can remember. I come from a family of nurses, including my mother who introduced me to Carolinas College and the joy of caring for others.

## Other new faces:

Felicia Hodge, Financial Aid Staff Assistant  
Paige Levesque, Director of Records and Registration  
Emily Mosko, ADN Faculty  
Lauren Pineda, ADN Adjunct Faculty  
Solim Tchadre, ADN Adjunct Faculty  
Savannah Thompson, ADN Adjunct Faculty



Due to COVID-19, this year's annual Scholarship and Awards event was all virtual, with college leadership delivering remarks via video. With more than 70 students receiving scholarships, recipients each recorded a video as well, thanking donors and giving some insight into their background and studies. A huge thank you to all the donors who made this event possible. Your generosity and kindness are unmatched! You can visit the college's page on YouTube to view the virtual celebration.



# College Increases Enrollment, Breaking with National Trend

While many colleges and universities across the country are seeing a decline in enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic, Carolinas College of Health Sciences welcomed its largest class ever during its last semester of 2020.

For fall 2020, Carolinas College enrolled 514 students, an increase of 8% when compared to 476 for the fall 2019 semester. Nationally, the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 contributed to a drop in undergraduate enrollment of 3.6% during that same period, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

During times of uncertainty, students often consider a more reliable career path, such as healthcare. Carolinas College saw a similar enrollment increase during the uncertainty of the Great Recession in 2008.

“We’re thrilled to be an option for people who are looking for a stable career that’s both reliable and rewarding,” said T. Hampton Hopkins, EdD, president of Carolinas College of Health Sciences. “At the same time, we’re continuing to provide a pipeline of well-trained workers who can contribute to the continued success of Atrium Health at such a critical time.”

Ashley Fields, a mother of five children (ages 17, 15, 7 and 6-month-old twins), lost both of her jobs as a bartender and bus driver last year when the pandemic started to escalate. Ashley, who had previously graduated from a medical assistant program in 2005, decided it was time to turn back to healthcare to provide stability for herself and her family. In August 2020, she enrolled in the Phlebotomy program at Carolinas College and graduated a few months later.

“I figured I would use the opportunity while not working to go into the medical field,” Ashley said. “The program’s not that long – it’s only 14 weeks. It’s something I could get into and out of, but I could also have job security while the pandemic is going on.”

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*

## 2020: A year that brought out our best

**2020 was a year to remember.** In the early part of the year, as COVID-19 was beginning to escalate, the college’s Emergency Response Team met for the first time to discuss the growing pandemic. It wasn’t long before the college closed its doors to all students and the majority of teammates, moving classes online and asking everyone to pivot during uncertain times.

When we think about 2020, it’s hard not to think about those challenges that we had to overcome. But in the midst of such uncertainty came a strength and resilience that made our Carolinas College family even stronger. Faculty showed unmatched creativity and adaptability as they worked quickly to transition to their new online learning environment. Students pushed forward with their studies, swiftly adjusting their learning and continuing to succeed in their academics.

There are other reasons to look back at 2020 with a tremendous amount of pride. Despite national undergraduate enrollment trending down during the pandemic’s uncertainty, Carolinas College had its highest enrollment ever. This speaks to the quality of our programs and the reliable and rewarding career paths that await our graduates.

We’re also proud to say that nearly one-third of our new students coming to Carolinas College are students of color. We have worked hard to increase our diversity at the college, and the percentage of students of color has increased 5 percentage points in the last four years.

Our job placement rates and first-time certificate pass rates remain incredibly strong. An astounding 92% of our graduates are placed in their field within six months of graduating, many of them within Atrium Health. Our low student-to-faculty ratio shows the kind of individual attention our students receive while they’re at our institution. And we’re proud to say that 97% of employers would hire another Carolinas College graduate.

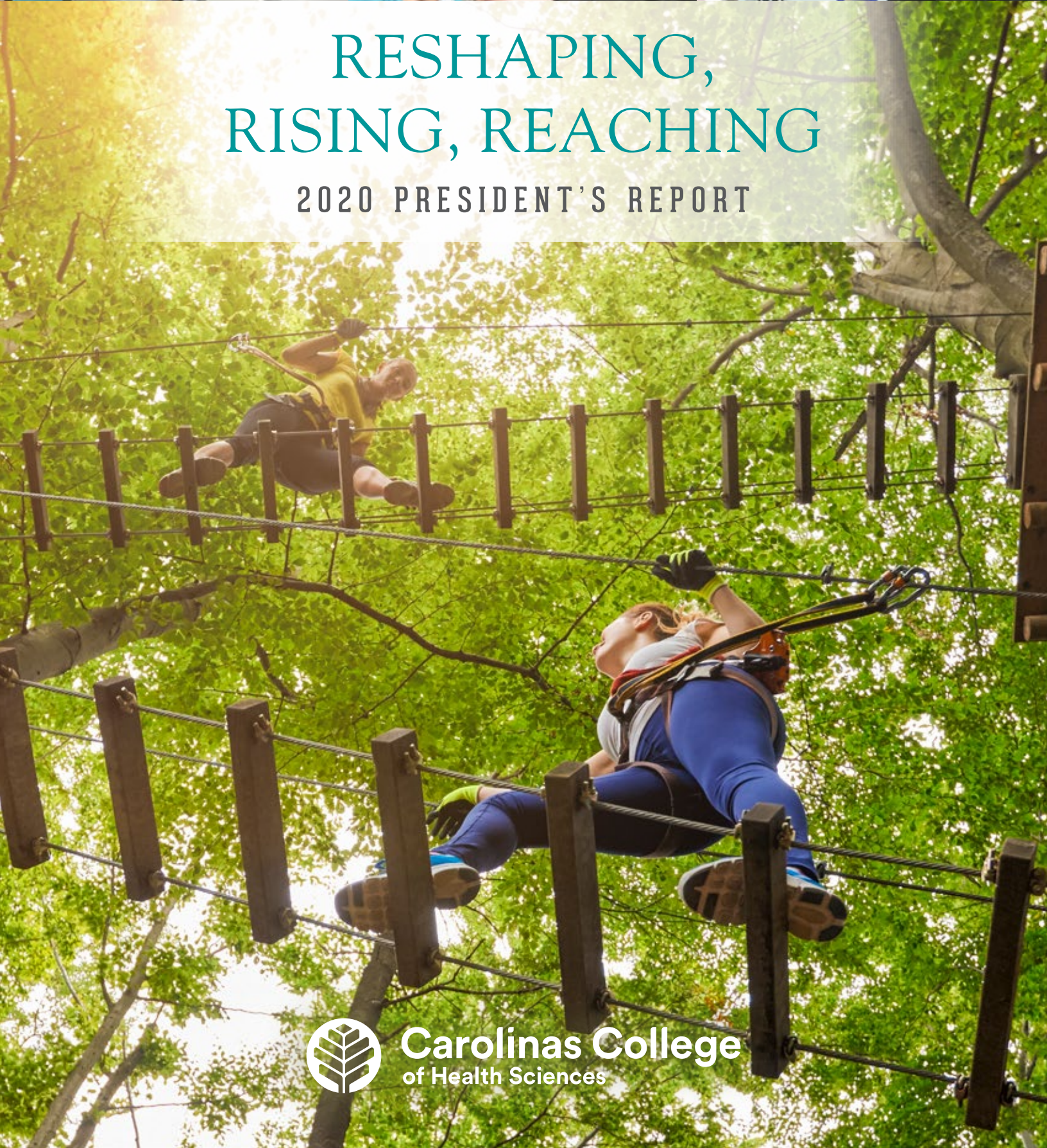
2020 will forever be remembered as a time of uncertainty. But at Carolinas College, one thing’s for certain – 2020 made us stronger.





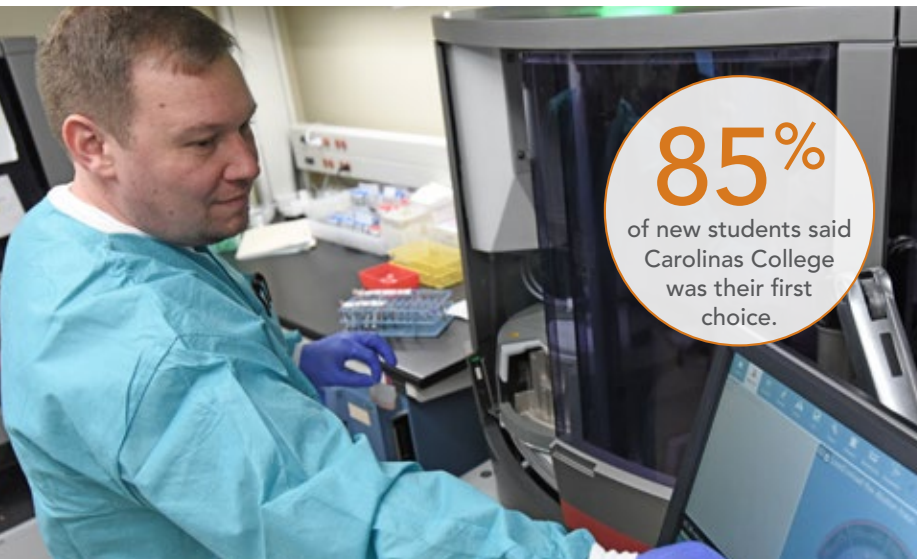
# RESHAPING, RISING, REACHING

2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT



**Carolinan College**  
of Health Sciences





## GROWTH

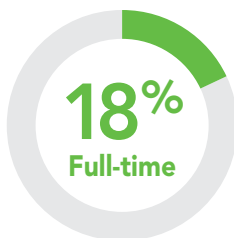
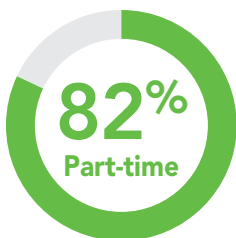
## VALUE

667

Total individual students  
enrolled in 2020  
(4% increase from 2019)

Students enrolled Fall 2020  
(8% increase from 2019)

514



31% Minority  
12% Male  
25 Median age

77

Total number of  
faculty and staff

52 Faculty (68% of total)  
52% Full-time | 48% Part-time/Adjunct

7:1

STUDENT TO  
FACULTY RATIO



GRADUATION RATE

84%

Healthcare programs  
62% for all Carolinas College  
including General Studies

100%

GRADUATION:

Histotechnology

80%+ Graduation:

Associate Degree Nursing,  
Medical Laboratory Science,  
Radiation Therapy

Programs with 100% pass rate for first  
attempt licensure/certification exam:

Medical Laboratory Science,  
Radiologic Technology,  
97%: Associate Degree Nursing



# CKING OUR PROGRESS



**96%**

PASS RATE for first attempt licensure/certification exam

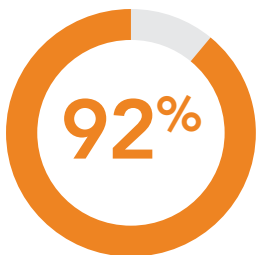


**68%**  
of students receive financial aid

**\$103,000+**  
Awarded in scholarships

## AFFORDABILITY

All degree and certificate programs' pass rates are above the national average.



**JOB PLACEMENT**  
in field within 6 months

Of those, 87% placed within Atrium Health.



**Atrium Health**

## SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF CAROLINAS COLLEGE EDUCATION:

Graduates: **4.7 out of 5**

Employer satisfaction:

**97%** would hire another Carolinas College graduate



## ONLY 4.6% of students

Defaulted on federal loans within 3 years of leaving college (National average: 9.7%)

### 3-Year Financial History

	2018	2019	2020
REVENUE	\$8,884,623	\$8,779,938	\$10,813,616
EXPENSE	8,618,518	8,692,573	10,517,065
OPERATING MARGIN	\$87,365	(\$762,950)*	\$221,947

\*Expenses exceeded revenues due to \$650,984 in accelerated depreciation and other expenses associated with the relocation of the college.

### 3-Year Advancement History

	2018	2019	2020
ADVANCEMENT FUND	\$749,990	\$905,220	\$1,042,864
CAROLINAS ENDOWMENT	1,850,895	2,220,996	2,644,099
CAROLINAS COLLEGE CAPITAL FUND	212,477	251,129	297,114
TOTAL FUND BALANCE	\$2,817,136	\$3,382,531	\$3,990,016





## Carolinan College of Health Sciences

To learn more about Carolinas College of Health Sciences,  
visit our website at **[CarolinanCollege.edu](http://CarolinanCollege.edu)**.

2110 Water Ridge Parkway • Charlotte, NC 28217  
704-355-5043



# Nursing Grad Gives Back to Those Behind Her

For some people, giving donations is something that often happens later in life. Not for Sara Munday. It's a tradition she's held onto for three decades, starting right after finishing her undergraduate degree at North Carolina State University. She earned a degree in textiles and moved to Virginia for a new job.

Her small church in Richmond encouraged parishioners to give a percentage of their salary to community groups. "So, I got into that habit," she said. "And I'm still in that habit."

After getting her master's degree in textile management technology, Sara had a variety of jobs, teaching in a community college and working in consulting. After losing her job in 2001, she started to think about a career in nursing. It was a career she'd considered at one point – her grandmother was a nurse – but decided at the time it wasn't a good fit. Now, without work for the first time in her career, her attention turned back to nursing.

"I decided to go back to school and find out if it was right for me or not," she said. "Now, I cannot imagine doing anything else."

After graduating from Carolinas College in 2005, Sara went to work at Atrium Health in gynecology oncology. Eventually, she moved to the maternity center at University Hospital. It was part of her plan to also pursue another passion – lactation consulting for breastfeeding mothers.

"They took me on, and I've stayed there ever since," said Sara, who works in dual roles as a postpartum

and neonatal nurse in addition to her work as a certified lactation consultant.

While Sara's now spent more than 15 years caring for those in need, she's continued her tradition of giving back in another way – through donations.



"What I started realizing after graduation was that I loved being a nurse, and it was the school that made that possible. I wanted to make that possible for other people behind me."

– SARA MUNDAY, ADN '05

"What I started realizing after graduation was that I loved being a nurse, and it was the school that made that possible," she said. "But I wanted to make that possible for other people behind me, and I wanted maternity education specifically to have whatever resources they needed."

Sara began donating to Carolinas College not long after graduation. She's focused her giving on helping aspiring nurses improve their education.

"I know it's made a difference for maternity education. I think they've been able to use a fair bit of that money in the nursing simulation lab, which has made teaching easier and better for the students," she said. "I think the college does a beautiful job with it. I want to support them because I believe in nursing."

Sara also tries to lead by example – encouraging others, especially younger alumni, to help give in whatever way they're able to.

"Don't be afraid to give, because giving to others, giving to the college and giving to the organizations ultimately enriches your own life, even if it doesn't directly benefit you. You make the world a better place for the people around you and yourself, too. I don't think individuals recognize their power."

By Justin Moss, marketing manager



# WORKING MOM

## WORKS TOWARD BSN

**E**bone Roberts sure knows how to keep life interesting. Between her nursing job at Atrium Health Urgent Care – University City and caring for her four children (and a puppy), you wouldn't think there'd be time for much else. But desire to advance her career was so strong, she decided to add just one more element to her life: a bachelor's degree.

She started her healthcare journey as a certified nursing assistant in 2003, became a certified medical assistant in 2006 and then became a registered nurse after graduating from the (former) Mercy School of Nursing in 2010.

In 2019, she decided it was time to take that next step forward in her career and settled on the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program (RN-BSN) at Carolinas College of Health Sciences. She enrolled in August of 2019.

Launched in 2018, the RN-BSN is the college's first bachelor's program, and the first cohort of students graduated in May 2020. The program is completely online and includes a mix of nursing courses and upper-level general education courses to prepare nurses for an evolving healthcare environment.

Plus, Atrium Health teammates may be eligible for financial aid programs such as Educational Assistance or Loan Forgiveness, which means nurses can get their BSN at a low cost.

For Ebone, the entire experience has added up to a challenging, yet rewarding experience. "This program has required me to think critically and forced me to look at things from different perspectives. It has given me a broader outlook as a person and as a nurse," she said.

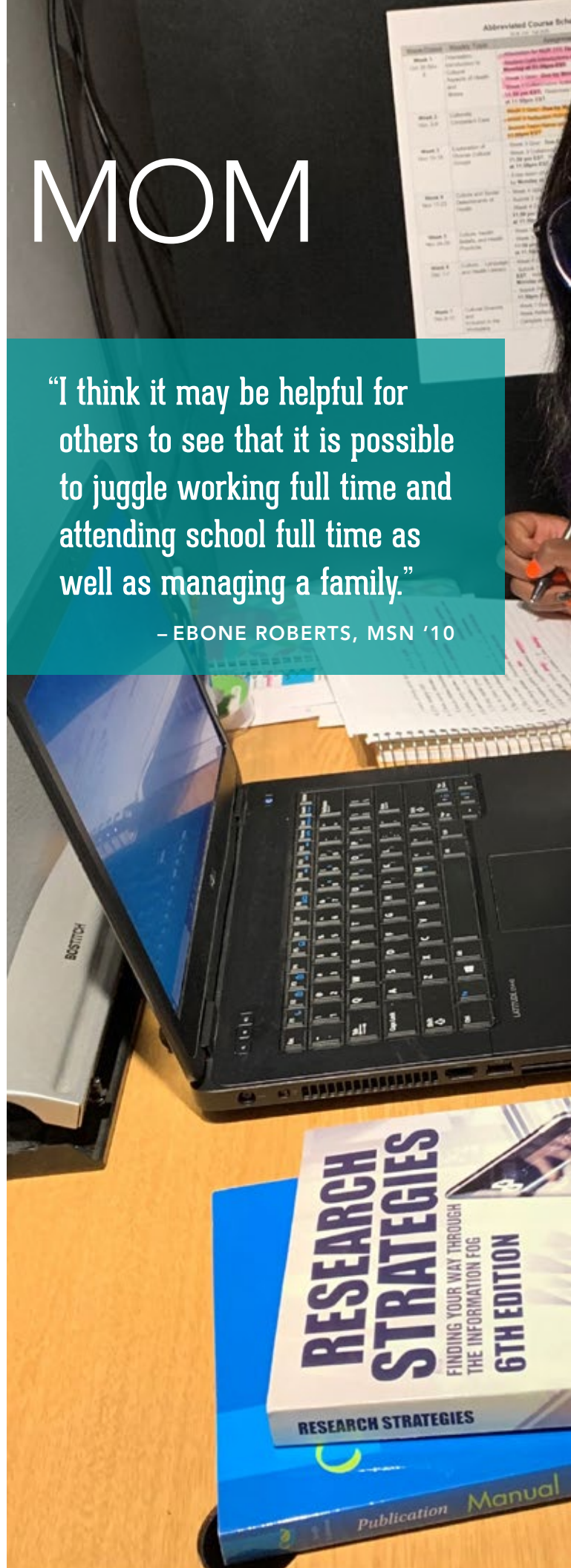
Set to graduate in the summer of 2021, Ebone can't wait to reap the benefits of her new degree, knowing it'll mean even bigger and better things for herself, her family and the people she works with and cares for.

"I love the people! I have some of the BEST coworkers and manager in the system," she said. "I also love being able to care for so many diverse patients that trust coming to a well-respected hospital system."

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*

**"I think it may be helpful for others to see that it is possible to juggle working full time and attending school full time as well as managing a family."**

**—EBONE ROBERTS, MSN '10**



## Clinical Laboratory Sciences

Phlebotomists play a vital role in healthcare and have been crucial members of the frontline since the early fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Phlebotomists are responsible for the collection, handling and processing of patient blood specimens. It's a small but intricate procedure that is essential to the discovery of a patient's overall health and wellness. The samples phlebotomists collect must be of the highest quality, as the results produced will be trusted by physicians to monitor, treat, diagnose and care for their patients.

The Phlebotomy program offered at Carolinas College of Health Sciences is a 200-hour NAACLS (National Accrediting Agency of Clinical Laboratory Sciences) accredited program which propels an individual toward a career in healthcare in just 10 to 14 weeks. The program is offered three times a year with start dates in January, May and August, accepting up to 12 students per semester. The Phlebotomy program has been uniquely designed to include an engaging in-class didactic portion as well as a robust clinical rotation during which the student will encounter a wide variety of patient populations and environments. This program will fully prepare and support the student on their track to becoming a successful entry-level phlebotomist.

The pandemic has created a surge in laboratory testing, putting phlebotomists in high demand to meet the needs of the healthcare community. Carolinas College was tasked by Atrium Health's laboratory leaders to rapidly fill phlebotomy positions that were newly created to accommodate increased testing. Past graduates of the program were contacted and recruited to apply to vacant positions within Atrium Health. Refresher workshops were also held on campus to allow those who have graduated in past years to brush up on their phlebotomy techniques before re-entering the work force. There are still positions left to be filled, and the spring 2021 phlebotomy students are ready to answer the call. Some students have already applied to positions with anticipation to join the frontlines and be amongst the many Atrium Health teammates and healthcare heroes who have already risen in the fight against COVID-19.

*By Ali Winter, MLS (ASCP)<sup>cm</sup>, Phlebotomy education coordinator*





Adriahna Caldwell, an NDT student who graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Neurodiagnostic Technology, received an offer to work for Atrium Health as a neurodiagnostic technologist at Carolinas Medical Center.



Ashley Hastings, NDT program chair, and Erika Land, NDT faculty, celebrate the first cohort's graduation.

## *First* NDT CLASS GRADUATES ALL STEP INTO JOBS

"Because NDT is such a growing field, there are many opportunities for students once they graduate. Our first class is a perfect example – every one of our nine graduates stepped into roles," said Ashley Hastings, BS, R. EEG T., NDT program chair.

Commencement is always a special time for Carolinas College students, but this year's December 2020 graduation held extra special meaning for the nine students who received their certificate or associate degree in Neurodiagnostic Technology (NDT). It was the first time the college had graduated students in NDT. This first cohort began in January 2020, right before the COVID-19 pandemic challenged them in new ways. Not only did they meet these challenges head-on, but all nine graduates would eventually land jobs in their field of study, half of them within Atrium Health.

"It was an interesting year," said Adriahna Caldwell, an NDT student who graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Neurodiagnostic Technology. "I have to say my instructor and the college were so helpful about transferring to online. I had two amazing instructors and an amazing cohort, and I'm glad that I was able to be a part of such an amazing group. I wouldn't have wanted to spend this year with anyone else."

Like many students in the NDT program, Caldwell stumbled upon the field. She'd been working in healthcare for a while as a nurse



aide at Atrium Health Levine Children's Hospital. "Working in the hospital I saw an EEG (a test that detects electrical activity in the brain) being performed," said Caldwell, who already knew about Carolinas College because she'd attended the Nurse Aide program there. "When I saw the NDT program being offered, it really sparked my interest."

Neurodiagnostic technology is focused on recording neurological activity that is used in the diagnosis and treatment of brain diseases. It's a rapidly growing and exciting field for students looking for a rewarding healthcare career.

"Because it's such a growing field, there are many opportunities for students once they graduate. Our first class is a perfect example – every one of our nine graduates stepped into roles," said Ashley Hastings, BS, R. EEG T., NDT program chair. Hastings and NDT faculty member Erika Land taught the first cohort of students.

"While our students had a few months in the classroom before the pandemic hit, we had to pivot in March. Everyone adjusted well, and eventually we were able to get our students back into the hospital setting to receive their clinical education," Hastings said.

During clinicals, students were able to spend time practicing their learned skillset while under instructor supervision. They were able to interact with patients and physicians, perform EEG hookups and studies, and even observe various special procedures such as a Wada test and intraoperative monitoring for epilepsy surgery patients. Interactions and participation at the clinical site prepared students to graduate and step into EEG technologist roles immediately, with little to no additional training.

"Partnering so closely with the NDT program provides the students with hands-on experience the entire time, whether it be in

lab with the instructors or in the hospital settings with the techs," said Mallory Schmidt, manager of Neurodiagnostic Services at Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center. "Compared to other programs, the Carolinas College student experience is more intensive and prepares them to step into a future job role right out of school. We were very excited to be able to offer positions to five of the first cohort and look forward to having future students join us for their clinicals."

One of those students who received an offer to work for Atrium Health was Caldwell, who is thrilled to put her new skills to work as a neurodiagnostic technologist at Carolinas Medical Center.

"I feel so honored to be a part of the first cohort that has graduated from the NDT program," she said. "I am so grateful for all the people in my cohort as well because they made it a better year."

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*



## DECEMBER DRIVE-THRU *Commencement*



**W**hile prioritizing the health and safety of Carolinas College students and teammates, the college once again held a drive-thru commencement ceremony to honor its December graduates. In all, 101 graduates from Associate Degree Nursing, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Neurodiagnostic Technology, Medical Laboratory Science, Histotechnology, General Studies and Nurse Anesthesia drove by the college one by one to pose for a photo and receive their degree or certificate. Congratulations to all of our newest graduates!

*"It's just a feeling of pride and admiration for these students for what they've done over their time at Carolinas College. To be able to shake their hands and hand them their diplomas – that's what kept me coming back."*

– Marc Harris, Former Carolinas College Board Chair

## College's First Board Chairman Steps Down After 27 Years

For more than 25 years, C. Marcus Harris held one of the most important roles in the eyes of Carolinas College students. As each soon-to-be graduate walked across the commencement stage, Harris would be waiting for them at the other end to offer a handshake, a smile and – most important of all – their diploma.

"The first time I did it and the last time I did it was almost no different," he remembers. "I just love our students and our graduates."

That's what kept Harris, known to most as Marc, coming back as chairperson of the Carolinas College Board of Directors every year, serving as chairperson when the board was founded in 1990s until he retired in 2020.

While conferring and handing out degrees was one of the most memorable and rewarding parts of his role, Harris also played a pivotal part in creating Carolinas College as we know it today – a highly respected academic institution that continues to grow and thrive, while

preparing students to work in a modern healthcare environment.

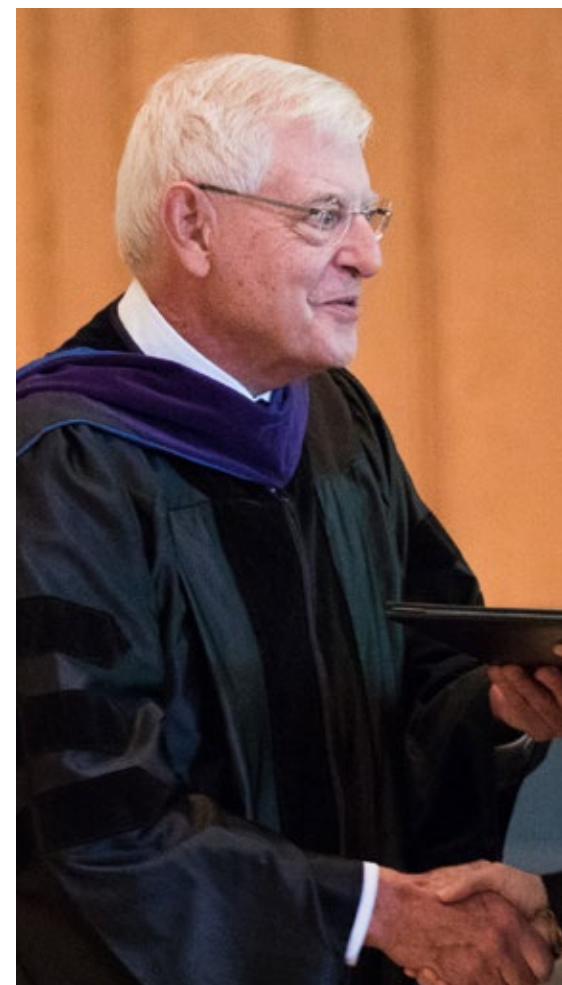
Being a college board chairperson wasn't something Harris had planned on, essentially happening "out of the blue," as he remembers. Harris grew up in Greensboro, where both of his parents practiced law. They were both graduates of Duke University School of Law, and Harris decided he'd follow in their footsteps. After graduating from Duke in 1972, he went into law practice focusing on employee benefits and corporate and business law. In the mid-1990s, he'd been working on executive compensation for Atrium Health – then Carolinas Healthcare System – and knew some of the system's leadership. In fact, the CEO at the time, Harry Nurkin, was one of Harris' fraternity brothers at Duke.

At that time, Carolinas College was working on initial accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, or SACSCOC. Part of the accreditation process involved forming the college's first board of directors. According to Harris, Nurkin and other members of the



Atrium Health leadership team encouraged him to join. He did and was immediately elected chair.

Throughout his many years on the board, Harris and fellow board members oversaw plenty of changes for Carolinas College. Those included the addition of new programs, a



state-of-the-art simulation center and gaining the ability to grant baccalaureate degrees.

“It was a significant change,” Harris said. “It was certainly something we needed to do, and the hospital needed us to do it, too.”

One of his most memorable moments came when a publication recognized Carolinas College as the top-ranked two-year college in the country. Another memorable moment, Harris said, happened during the tenure of then-president Dr. Ellen Sheppard. She came to a board meeting and read a letter from a recent graduate who had just started her nursing job.

“The student said, ‘I realized after a fairly short time that I knew more about being a nurse than anyone else there.’ I can’t tell you how much that warmed my heart,” Harris said. “It wasn’t surprising, but it warmed my heart. That’s the kind of job our faculty does with our students.”



All while serving as board chairperson, Harris continued to practice law, focusing much of his work in healthcare. His work included representing physician practices in mergers with other practices and advising practices on the full range of legal needs, including employment agreements, compensation arrangements and operational issues.

While he spent much of his life in Charlotte, Harris moved to Pinehurst for a few years but commuted back and forth to Charlotte so he could attend board meetings in person.

“The relationships and friendships among the board members and administration at the college were something you didn’t want to walk away from,” he said. “Just to be with those people, learn from them, do things with them, see what good things were happening. I never even thought of leaving that until last year.”

In 2019, at the age of 76, Harris retired from law after 47 years, ending his career with the firm Poyner Spruill in Charlotte. Not long after, the thought of retiring from the college board also started to weigh on his mind.

“We’ve always had a very strong board, and it’s as strong as it’s ever been, which was another reason I felt very comfortable leaving at this time because we have such good board members,” he said. “Being on the board was one of the most fulfilling and enjoyable things I’ve ever done.”

Now retired from both work and his board duties, Harris spends much of his free time reading and playing golf, sometimes three or four times a week. He often reflects about all those years he spent serving his community – he served on multiple boards over the years – but calls the Carolinas College board his most memorable.

While much of a college board’s work happens behind the scenes, Harris says his most rewarding moments were attending commencement and seeing the new graduates in person, wishing them well, and, of course, handing them their diploma.

“It’s just a feeling of pride and admiration for these students for what they’ve done over their time there,” he said. “To be able to shake their hands and hand them their diplomas – that’s what kept me coming back.”

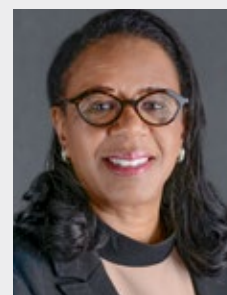
*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*

## Alumna Walker Steps into Chair Role

With the retirement of Marc Harris, Carolinas College alumna and former vice chairperson Ginger Walker (RAD ’76) stepped into the role of chairperson. Walker has served on the board since 2007. Dr. Carole Isom-Barnes was elected as the vice chair. She’s served on the board since 2017.



Ginger Walker



Dr. Carole Isom-Barnes



# New Programs Help Fulfill College's Mission, Fill Needs Within Atrium Health

**2021** is shaping up to be an exciting year for growth at Carolinas College, as we welcome the return of the Nurse Aide I program. In addition, the college will be launching two new bachelor's degree programs that fulfill the college's mission of preparing students for an evolving healthcare environment, while also filling needs with Atrium Health.

## Nurse Aide

The Nurse Aide I program returns to Carolinas College with students starting in May. This program offers a reliable and rewarding career for those looking to quickly step into healthcare. Students will learn everything about providing personal care and basic nursing skills while in a structured healthcare setting under the supervision of a registered nurse.

"Our students will get hands-on training to make sure they're ready to hit the ground running when they begin their careers," said Carmelle Belizaire, program coordinator for the Nurse Aide program.

Students will be able to finish the program and have the opportunity to get credentialed as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) in as few as two to three months.

"Many of our students start their healthcare careers as a CNA and go on to pursue their associate degree or even bachelor's degree in nursing," said Cathy Borysewicz, program chair for the Associate Degree Nursing program at Carolinas College. "There's never been a better time for students who've been thinking about a healthcare career to get started."

## Bachelor of Health Sciences – Healthcare Simulation Concentration

This program is one of two new bachelor's degree programs being offered at the college. This unique program focuses on healthcare simulation, and students will get hands-on training in Atrium Health's state-of-the-art Carolinas Simulation Center.

The demand for realistic hands-on training has never been higher. Healthcare simulation is a unique and

The Bachelor of Health Sciences – Healthcare Simulation Concentration program focuses on healthcare simulation, and students will get hands-on training in Atrium Health's state-of-the-art Carolinas Simulation Center.



# GRADS *on the go!*

emerging field that combines technology, education, research and leadership skills. Students will be creating safe spaces in which healthcare professionals can learn and grow in a low-risk training environment. They'll learn to manage everything about healthcare simulation, from creating curriculum to running a state-of-the-art center using patient simulators and virtual reality.

There are multiple pathways for completing this program, with options for students who already have an associate degree or bachelor's degree in another field or those without any prior college credit. The first cohort for this exciting new program begins in August.

## **Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging**

This new bachelor's program is perfect for an imaging professional looking to advance their education and move up in their career. Students will have plenty of flexibility by taking most of their courses online while still having an important hands-on clinical education in world-class healthcare facilities. Along with imaging courses, students take courses in leadership, healthcare policy and ethics, making for an incredibly well-rounded learning experience.

Just like our simulation program, the BSMI also has multiple pathways for completion, and previous graduates of the Carolinas College Radiologic Technology or Radiation Therapy programs would be the perfect fit. The first cohort begins in August.

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*

Atrium Health's regional footprint and its partnership with Carolinas College has provided our teammates with improved access to radiation therapy education. Such was the case with Chesanie Beam (RTT '14).



**Chesanie Beam (RTT '14)**

Beam completed her radiography training at Cleveland Community College in Shelby, NC and upon graduation began working as a radiographer for Cleveland Regional Health, now Atrium Health Cleveland. Beam excelled in her role with the system and was offered opportunities to cross-train in Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). After acquiring the experience needed, she successfully completed her second ARRT certification in MRI, and for the next 15 years she continued to serve the system and her local community as a radiographer and MRI technologist.

When Beam heard that Carolinas College was home to a radiation therapy program, she began to consider how her years of experience might benefit patients battling cancer. In the fall of 2012, she decided to apply to the Radiation Therapy program and was selected into the class of 2014. During her time in the program, Beam proved to be a dedicated learner both in the classroom and in clinic. She worked diligently to apply her knowledge, and as anticipated, her years of experience were extremely beneficial to her colleagues and the patients she encountered.

"The program has dedicated professors who are committed to providing services to their students," Beam said. "It's a huge benefit having knowledgeable professors with positive attitudes who encourage students on a daily basis on campus and in clinic."

After graduating from Carolinas College, Beam secured a therapist position at Blue Ridge Cancer Center in Valdese. While working at Blue Ridge, she also completed additional training in medical dosimetry and subsequently provided dual-capacity support as a therapist and dosimetrist until March of 2020.

Beam was offered a position with ViewRay Medical as application specialist for their new MRIdian (pronounced meridian) Linear Accelerator. The MRIdian Linac represents a technological shift that is likely to help revolutionize the field of radiation therapy in years to come. The MRIdian is designed to leverage the unique advantages of MR imaging to facilitate adaptable radiotherapy delivery and improve patient outcomes. Beam's extensive MRI experience, in combination with her therapy training, made her the perfect candidate for this role. She currently oversees training for four facilities in the southeast with plans to add six additional sites by 2022.

Beam's professionalism, tenacity, and dedication are representative of what we observe from so many of our students at Carolinas College. Her hard work has opened many doors professionally, but most importantly, has earned her the opportunity to impact the lives of patients on a global scale. The Radiation Therapy faculty are pleased that Beam chose us to be a part of her story and we congratulate her on all of her many accomplishments.

*By Lee Braswell, MPH, RT(R)(T), CMD, program chair, Radiation Therapy*



# Respected Atrium Health Doctors Pass Away

*Many of our Carolinas College faculty and alumni may remember Dr. Francis Robicsek and Dr. Bryant Galusha. Both were longtime professionals with Atrium Health, and both will be remembered for their dedication to their craft and their giving spirits.*

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*This article first appeared in the Atrium Health Foundation Momentum Magazine.*

## Dr. Francis Robicsek

Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD, founder of the Sanger Clinic (now known as Atrium Health's Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute), passed away peacefully, April 3, at the age of 94. Known worldwide, Dr. Robicsek was an extraordinary person who dedicated his life to improving medicine and the world in ways both small and large. He asked to be buried in his scrubs, a symbol of his lifelong commitment to caring for others.

Born in Miskolc, Hungary on July 4, 1925, Dr. Robicsek graduated from medical school at Pazmany Peter University in Budapest in 1949. At just 28 years old, he became chief of the University of Budapest Department of Cardiac Surgery. Dr. Robicsek and his wife, also a physician – who was six months pregnant at the time – fled Hungary during the Hungarian revolution, escaping from Soviet control before they were able to fly to America. The young family settled in Charlotte, where Dr. Robicsek's uncle – a local building contractor – helped arrange visas for the couple.

In 1957, Dr. Robicsek began his career with Atrium Health (where he holds the record for longest serving employee), and so began a new era of cardiology and surgery. He and his partners performed the region's first open heart procedures and first heart transplant. After performing 35,000



in 1957, Dr. Robicsek began his career with Atrium Health (where he holds the record for longest serving employee), and so began a new era of cardiology and surgery. He and his partners performed the region's first open heart procedures and first heart transplant and went on to perform 35,000 surgeries.

surgeries, Dr. Robicsek set aside his scalpel but remained involved with Atrium Health and his other areas of passion as a philanthropist, writer, art aficionado, academic – and so much more. He also helped tens of thousands – close to home and abroad – as the President of Heineman Medical Outreach, Inc. His commitment to providing care for all is one that lives on through his legacy.

In 2017, a group of generous colleagues, patients, and friends came together to recognize Dr. Robicsek in a special way, establishing an endowed chair in his honor. Their remarkable contributions helped establish The Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD Endowed Chair in Cardiovascular Surgery at Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute.

*For more information on supporting this endowment, please contact Mark Griffith at 704-355-4048.*

## Dr. Bryant Galusha

Bryant L. Galusha, MD, nationally recognized by his peers as an innovative leader in the fields of pediatrics, medical education and medical licensure/

discipline died at his residence under the care of his daughters and sons-in-law on November 5, just shy of his 93rd birthday. He graduated from Case Western Reserve Medical School in Cleveland, OH in 1952 and served two years as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. He eventually went to work in private practice, but throughout his entire time in private practice he actively participated in

the teaching of physicians in residency training at Charlotte Memorial Hospital. It was Dr. Galusha's love of teaching and learning that led him to accept the position of Charlotte Memorial Hospital's first full time medical director in 1962. Under his leadership, Charlotte Memorial Hospital (later Carolinas Medical Center, now Atrium Health) became recognized as one of the nation's finest and most competitive community teaching hospitals. He played a pivotal role in obtaining legislative approval to expand the AHEC program statewide, that was later adopted by many other states.

Dr. Galusha was the recipient of numerous honors, including the establishment of the Bryant L. Galusha Award, presented annually to a resident physician who has best displayed medical professional excellence at Carolinas Medical Center.

*Obituary courtesy of Carolina Funeral Service & Cremation Center*



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Our 2020 trip has been rescheduled to 2022



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Check out photos from past trips, traveler comments, trip announcements and more on Facebook.

# ALUMNI PATHWAYS



WE LOVE HEARING FROM OUR ALUMNI!  
SHARE NEWS BY CALLING OR EMAILING  
Pat.Lewis@CarolinasCollege.edu (704-355-2029)  
or Ruthie.Mihal@CarolinasCollege.edu (704-609-1542).

## Class of 2001

**Cerese Feagans (ADN)** decided to follow her heart instead of her head and retired for the last time in December, six weeks after her 68th birthday. Said Cerese, "It was hard to give up the profession that changed my life, but it was time." Tom is glad to have her home from Virginia.

## Class of 2009

**Frances Sanford Platock (ADN)** completed her MSN (AGACNP) at the University of South Carolina-Columbia and passed her boards in May 2020.

## Class of 2010

**Erica Brinkley (NUR)** joined the Nursing Professional Development Team at Medstar Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, MD in November 2020, as a nursing professional development specialist. I am responsible for nursing professional development as well, as well as nursing education for four cardiovascular procedural units.

**Anna Willard (ADN)** married Erich Weigner in 2018 and is expecting their second child in March 2021.

## Class of 2015

**Daniella Sanchez (ADN)** is working as the assistant director of nursing for the Mecklenburg County Jail.

## Class of 2017

**Summer Nunn (ADN)** graduated from UNC Wilmington with a BSN in December of 2020.

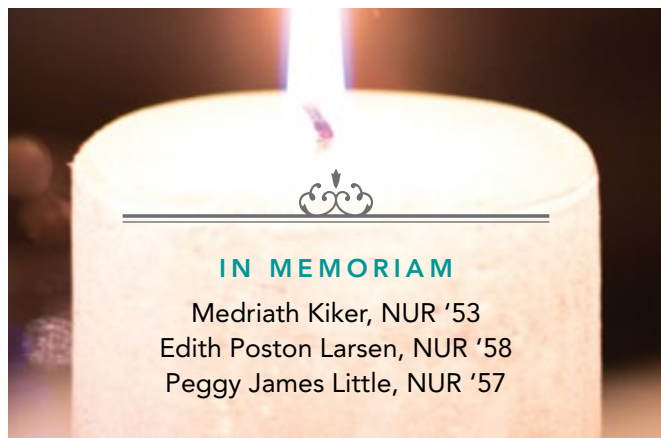


## College Remembers Doris "Jeannie" Sanders

Our Carolinas College family was devastated to learn about the passing of General Studies student Doris "Jeannie" Sanders in early December after a brief and sudden illness. Doris started in the pre-nursing track at Carolinas College in January 2020. She was active and engaged in the context of our virtual world, and passionate about learning and moving toward her goal of becoming a nurse.

She is survived by her mother, siblings, 9-year-old son and many other family members and friends.

During the holiday season, Carolinas College students and teammates collected donations that were given to her son. It was heartwarming to see the outpouring of contributions and gifts during an incredibly difficult time.





# LIFETIME GIVING

*Lifetime Giving Levels have been established to recognize the generous, cumulative contributions of the college's donors. Lifetime giving levels are earned through cumulative gifts made to Carolinas College of Health Sciences.*

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*The college recognizes, appreciates and honors the generosity of these individuals. If your name is not listed or listed incorrectly, please contact Pat Lewis at 704-355-2029 or Pat.Lewis@CarolinasCollege.edu.*



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*Annual Giving is the lifeline for building and sustaining Carolinas College of Health Sciences. Each year, hundreds of gifts from alumni and friends, come together and go to work immediately to deliver extraordinary opportunities for learning and discovery. The list below includes those who donated to Carolinas College of Health Sciences from January 1 to December 31, 2020. The college recognizes, appreciates and honors the generosity of these individuals. If your gift is not listed or listed incorrectly, please contact Pat Lewis at 704-355-2029 or Pat.Lewis@CarolinasCollege.edu.*

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*Stroll down memory lane through photos from Carolinas College's history dating back to the 1940's.*



2004 Student orientation





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of Health Sciences

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