

# Carolinas College

WINTER 2020

— OF HEALTH SCIENCES —



## ON THE RIGHT PATHWAY:

How Carolinas College is Personalizing Healthcare Education

# By & Large

*“If you’re not excited about it, it’s not the right path.”*

– Abraham Hicks



I have thought a lot about, and written in this space about, pathways – a defined route or way forward. The pathway for Carolinas College has been clear over the last four years as we worked toward our Destination 2020 strategic plan. We have accomplished much in that time as we have expanded enrollment, created new programs, and graduated our first baccalaureate nurse. But there’s a funny thing about paths – they can sometimes be rocky.

COVID-19 has been our rocky path in 2020. Even though we seek to understand what the new normal of healthcare education looks like, we have not veered off the path that has brought us to this point.

As you will read in this edition, our teammates, graduates and students continue to do great things. Jameson Donnell, our director of admissions, shares a powerful and inspirational poem, and our new Diversity and Inclusion committee continues the important work of hosting courageous conversations. You will read about several graduates who maintain our tradition of excellence. And we are starting Charlotte’s first chapter of the American Association of Men in Nursing thanks to the efforts of Bryn Williams.

Our feature article focuses on how we are creating personalized

pathways for students seeking healthcare careers or looking to expand on their existing skills. You will see how the Pathways program

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**In our Winter 2020 issue, Jameson Donnell, our director of admissions, shares a powerful and inspirational poem, and our new Diversity and Inclusion committee continues the important work of hosting courageous conversations.**

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is helping Eliel Gimenez and Patricia Blackwood achieve their goals. Despite the rocky times of 2020, our programs continue to excel, and we continue to offer great value as measured in first-year earnings of graduates.

While our path has been set for many years and we continue to build on the solid foundation set by those before me, I know we are on the right path because I have never been more excited about what’s to come.

T. Hampton Hopkins, EdD

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hampton Hopkins".

# Carolinas College

— OF HEALTH SCIENCES —

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



## COVER STORY

### On the Right Pathway: Personalizing Healthcare Education

At Carolinas College, the Pathways program is helping students reach their end goal by setting out clearly defined steps along the way. Meet two students who show how they're able to personalize their education to achieve results.

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## INSPIRING ALUMNA

### Surviving the Silence Documentary

A new documentary is making waves and shedding light on the life story of Pat Thompson, a Carolinas College alumna who is hoping the new film will help spread her important message.

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of Health Sciences

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# PROGRAM Updates

*News of note from  
Carolinas College programs*

## NEURODIAGNOSTIC TECHNOLOGY

### First Cohort Clinical Preceptorship & Program Approval

► COVID-19 has challenged us but will not define us.

This is something the Neurodiagnostic Technology leadership and faculty has had at the forefront of their minds since the start of the pandemic. Our program and student challenges have been unpredictable and tough, but we have pulled together and pushed through.

In August, our students began their final semester, which included their clinical preceptorship. For a student new to the healthcare field, entering the clinical site is scary. Now imagine doing it during a global pandemic! Our students have stepped up and embraced the challenge with positive

attitudes and unmatched professionalism. They have shown compassion, empathy and even grace when needed in the ever-changing clinical world.

In addition to the beginning of clinical preceptorship, the NDT program received programmatic approval through ABRET, the neurodiagnostic credentialing and accreditation agency. This will allow our students to sit for the national registry exam for electroencephalography once all necessary requirements are completed.

The inaugural Neurodiagnostic Technology cohort is slated to graduate in December, and we could not be prouder of our students. We hope you all keep in touch as you graduate and begin your careers. I will forever remember all of you and this crazy, unpredictable, amazing year that we have had together.

*By Ashley Hastings, BS, R. EEG T., program chair,  
Neurodiagnostic Technology*



## RADIATION THERAPY

## Congratulations, Class of 2020

► The Radiation Therapy faculty would like to congratulate the class of 2020 for their hard work and dedication during this unprecedented time. The nine August graduates had to complete requirements at an accelerated pace and met the challenge with great success.

Eight of the graduates have passed their national certification exam, and we expect the final graduate to report success in the weeks to come. I would also like to personally thank faculty members Beverly Martin and Nichole Bohannon for their flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of our students. Without hesitation, both quickly modified their schedules and revised their teaching to ensure everyone's success.

The program submitted its four-year accreditation interim report to the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT) in May. The board of directors commended the quality of the report and voted to maintain the current accreditation award of eight years.

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

## Accomplishments

**Caroline Wrisley**, ADN faculty member, is an Atrium Health Pinnacle Award finalist for 2020. The Atrium Health Pinnacle Award recognizes, rewards and honors the accomplishments of teammates who demonstrate extraordinary attention to our core values of caring, commitment, integrity and teamwork. Congratulations also to Dr. Jared Smith, who was a 2020 nominee for the Pinnacle Award.

**Andrea Nielsen (ADN '17)**, a clinical nurse at Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center, competed in the "Atrium Health Has Talent" grand finale and won the Executive Council Award.



Caroline Wrisley



Andrea Nielsen



Students from the Medical Laboratory Science program wear masks, eye protection and practice social distancing during class.

## College Remains in Phase II Reopening

Throughout the fall semester, Carolinas College of Health Sciences continued its phased reopening approach in order to maximize the health and safety of all teammates and students. In October, the college's Emergency Response Team made the decision to remain in Phase II throughout the fall semester, which maintains most instruction online while allowing programs to return students to campus for essential skills and lab courses. The total population in the building remains limited in order to maximize social distancing, while all of the precautions taken under Phase I remain in place: Masks are required on campus, only essential staff are working on campus, temperature checks are conducted upon entering the building and all teammates and students are asked to self-monitor for COVID-19-related symptoms.

In addition, college leadership decided to adjust this month's commencement activities and hold a drive-thru celebration along with a virtual portion that will be available to all graduates and their families.

While the college remains in Phase II, the college's Emergency Response Team continues to meet regularly and make adjustments as needed to protect the health and safety of all Carolinas College teammates and students.

# ON THE RIGHT PATHWAY:



# How Carolinas College is Personalizing Healthcare Education

**E**liel Gimenez knew he wanted to work as an oncology nurse since high school. Back then, his mom was a breast cancer patient. She couldn't speak English, so Eliel joined her at appointments to translate. As he watched the nurses work at the cancer hospital – with equal parts compassion and expertise – he knew that would be the job he'd do one day, too.

“My love for healthcare started by seeing the nurses at Levine Cancer Institute where my mom was being treated,” he says. “They helped out with everything.”

Eliel began his healthcare career by working at Atrium Health Levine Cancer Institute's call center. His eye remained on nursing, so he took his next step at Carolinas College of Health Sciences to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). But earning his CNA was just the first step of an even bigger goal. Eliel earned admission into the college's Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program. In December, he will graduate from the ADN program and be eligible to be licensed as a registered nurse (RN).

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“There are so many people in our student body who are already looking at their next step. I think it's up to us to tell them, ‘Here's how you get there,’” says Lori Bequette, PhD, provost at Carolinas College. “And that's where Pathways comes in.”

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Eliel is also a recipient of the Atrium Health CNA-RN scholarship. Atrium Health launched a CNA-RN scholarship program along with other workforce development programs to provide opportunities for existing teammates in entry-level positions (such as environmental and nutritional services, healthcare

technician and nurse aide positions) the opportunity to pursue next-level clinical training in nursing.

As a scholarship recipient, Eliel works as a nursing assistant with Atrium Health, gaining experience and earning money as he completes classwork. Atrium Health supports his education by providing paid time off each week to study for his RN classes. After graduation, Eliel will continue to receive financial support through the scholarship program as he goes on to complete the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN) degree, giving him even more professional options.

It's this multi-pronged approach that is the essence of the redefined Pathways program at Carolinas College of Health Sciences. In this case, Eliel invests in his career, Atrium Health invests in a valued teammate and Carolinas College offers the education paths to advance.

“Getting paid time off to study was super helpful, especially since I've been working 40 hours a week and have never let up,” Eliel says. “The CNA to RN program gets really fast paced, and I thought I'd have to back off. I still have to pay bills and help my family. Without getting that time off, I wouldn't have had time to study and be able to pass the tests.”

In October, he completed a round of tests. He passed them all.

Eliel's story is representative of so many students at Carolinas College – planning for what's next and keeping an eye on what's further ahead, all while juggling families and jobs in the meantime.

“There are so many people in our student body who are already looking at their next step. I think it's up to us to tell them, ‘Here's how you get there,’” says Lori Bequette, PhD, provost at Carolinas College. “And that's where Pathways comes in.”

The Pathways program at Carolinas College honors the different experiences and goals of its students. The college has a long history of providing entry-level clinical training programs that give students a baseline from

which to start their healthcare careers: programs like Phlebotomy, Nurse Aide (returning next year), as well as Pre-Nursing and Pre-Radiologic Technology tracks.

But in recent years, Atrium Health's workforce needs have grown, job requirements have become more demanding, applicant demographics have changed, and students' needs have grown more complex. Carolinas College seized the opportunity to redefine multiple pathways for students to realize their academic and professional goals.

The time is right for the redefined Pathways program. When the college added its first bachelor's degree in 2018, options increased for academic programs, which grew a new population of students. It was time for the mission of the college to evolve.

"The purpose of what we're doing here is evolving. It's no longer about just preparing students for a job," says Dr. Bequette. "It's about supporting their educational needs so we can prepare them for a career."

The addition of the RN-BSN program in 2018 further enabled the college to expand the Nursing pathway in particular. With the return of the Nurse Aide program in 2021, a student can progress seamlessly from nurse aide, to licensed registered nurse, to a bachelor's degree in nursing – all at Carolinas College. And with Pathways, the school can work with each student to recognize their unique entry point, learn their ultimate end point, and create a path that gives that student the best chance for success between the two.

"One of the advantages of being a small college is that we have the flexibility to design nuanced pathways to provide multiple entry points to meet students right where they are, as well as multiple end points to empower students to identify their immediate, short-term and long-term goals with Carolinas College partnering with them every step of the way," says Karen Lewis, EdD, dean of student affairs and enrollment management at Carolinas College.

Another example is for students interested in imaging, who can enter through conditional or direct admission to the Radiologic Technology program. Once they successfully complete the associate degree in radiologic technology and obtain licensure, they can follow multiple pathways to radiation therapy or complete additional coursework in mammography and/or computerized tomography (CT) to be certified in those additional modalities. Ultimately, those students will be able to pursue a bachelor's degree in imaging services.

"A lot of times, other institutions have a cookie-cutter format," says Dr. Lewis. "We have found a way to

honor the integrity and the rigor needed to produce great healthcare providers while honoring individual experiences. Those individual journeys and perspectives enrich the educational process for everybody."

This is no simple task. Carolinas College attracts students with a broad range of experiences. Some students come to the college with a high school diploma, some come with years of healthcare experience and others have master's degrees in other fields. Yet Dr. Bequette sees a similar trend in the students who've come to the college in recent years. They have an immediate plan that's part of a bigger goal. They're students like Eliel Gimenez who want a job in the near term with a plan for advancement in the long term.

Pathways creates a personal action plan to get them there. Some students deal with family and job responsibilities, like Eliel. Others haven't been to school in years and could use help navigating the educational system.

"A lot of our students come to us while they're balancing family and work. They're wondering, 'Can I really do this?'" Dr. Lewis says. "With these different pathways, we can help students stagger their steps in a way that creates balance in their lives. Plus, it helps build up their confidence so that they know they can really do this."

When Patricia Blackwood had to pick a job for her eighth grade career day, she knew exactly what to choose: a nurse. Her aunt was a nurse, so she came to school that day wearing her aunt's nursing hat and uniform.

Life guided her in another direction. After high school, Patricia decided to pursue business, thinking it would offer her more paths. Then she took time off from work to raise her children. After 19 years as a full-time parent, Patricia decided it was time to return to school to pursue the nursing career she wanted long ago.

"I just feel like there's more to do after the kids are gone," Patricia says. "There are other ways I can help."

Returning to academia for a new degree after nearly two decades wasn't easy. Patricia considered several colleges but ultimately chose Carolinas College. There, the Pathways program could guide her to her goal in stages. She began with a phlebotomy class at Carolinas College. Because the college intentionally combined the onboarding and orientation processes for non-credit programs like phlebotomy, students got a chance to interact with peers from other programs. The goal was to increase students' awareness of other opportunities at the college beyond their current program and to see the college as a partner in designing an individualized pathway for success.

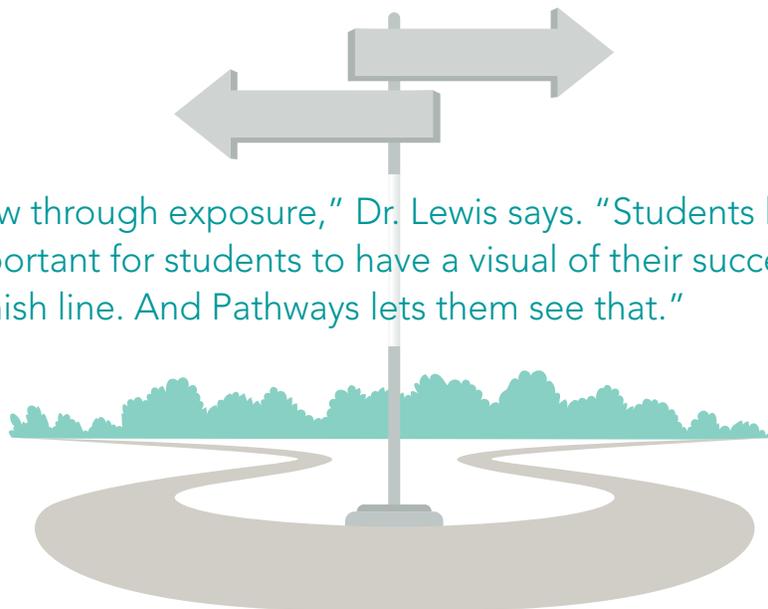


(LEFT) Eliel Gimenez began his healthcare career by working at Atrium Health Levine Cancer Institute's call center. His eye remained on nursing, so he took his next step at Carolinas College of Health Sciences to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). But earning his CNA was just the first step of an even bigger goal. Eliel earned admission into the college's Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program. In December, he will graduate from the ADN program and be eligible to be licensed as a registered nurse (RN).

(BELOW) After 19 years as a full-time parent, Patricia Blackwood decided it was time to return to school to pursue the nursing career she wanted long ago. She began with a phlebotomy class at Carolinas College followed by Pre-Nursing coursework toward a nursing degree. Now in the RN program, Patricia can study while working as a nurse aide in a long-term care facility.

"A lot of our students (like Eliel and Patricia) come to us while they're balancing family and work. They're wondering, 'Can I really do this?'" Dr. Lewis says. "With these different pathways, we can help students stagger their steps in a way that creates balance in their lives. Plus, it helps build up their confidence so that they know they can really do this."





“Aspirations grow through exposure,” Dr. Lewis says. “Students know they have choices. It’s important for students to have a visual of their success, to envision crossing that finish line. And Pathways lets them see that.”

With Pathways, students create long-term relationships with the college as they pursue their careers – no matter how many degrees they already have or how many they want to earn. They don’t have to wait for their final goal to be achieved before their healthcare career can begin, and they don’t have to navigate the system alone.

After her phlebotomy class, Patricia then took Pre-Nursing coursework toward a nursing degree. Because she completed this coursework with a 3.23 GPA, the college gave her automatic acceptance into the ADN program.

Now, Patricia can study in the RN program while working as a nurse aide in a long-term care facility. Just recently, she had a meaningful moment with someone who was unable to speak after a stroke. As Patricia offered the patient care, the woman smiled so wide that Patricia could see the smile in her eyes, despite the mask concealing her mouth. The moment was simple, but monumental. Patricia finally became the nurse she always wanted to be, and that special feeling of helping was just what she hoped.

Personalization is nothing new to healthcare, of course. Recent years have brought more individualization to patients than ever – a trend that advanced even more quickly in 2020 when virtual care expanded during COVID-19. Patients can choose between urgent care centers, primary care doctors, clinics, concierge care or virtual visits. Now, healthcare education offers a similar approach to students.

“Our college is operating in a parallel zone to the healthcare profession by asking, ‘How can we do the same thing for our students as we do for our patients?’” says Dr. Bequette. “How do we create a unique path for a student so that wherever they are when they come to us, we can guide them through?”

Pathways can also encourage students to continue their education longer than they may have initially intended. Dr. Lewis has seen students choose a certification program at the college, such as Phlebotomy or CNA, with the intention to finish classes and to begin a job as soon as possible. But when they arrive to Carolinas College, they learn they have more options than they realized – and many realize that going to a small healthcare college as an adult student can be a much more enriching educational experience than their previous educational encounters. Some decide that they’re not done with their education after all, and faculty can show them how an immediate goal can evolve into a bigger one.

“Aspirations grow through exposure,” Dr. Lewis says. “Students know they have choices. It’s important for students to have a visual of their success, to envision crossing that finish line. And Pathways lets them see that.”

With Pathways, students create long-term relationships with the college as they pursue their careers – no matter how many degrees they already have or how many they want to earn. They don’t have to wait for their final goal to be achieved before their healthcare career can begin, and they don’t have to navigate the system alone.

“When students leave here, it doesn’t necessarily mean that’s their end with Carolinas College,” says Dr. Bequette. “They can come back, and we can continue to work on advancing their education.”

*By Jen Tota McGivney, contributing writer*

# 20 THINGS *you may not know about*

## Lee Braswell

RADIATION THERAPY PROGRAM CHAIR

### **Favorite quote?**

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself but rather thinking of yourself less."

– C.S. Lewis

### **Guilty pleasure?**

Ice cold can of Coca-Cola.

### **Hometown?**

Princeton, NC.

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

The faith and strength of the people.

### **Salty or sweet?**

Sour.

### **Favorite TV series?**

"Chicago P.D."

### **Favorite movie?**

"The Pursuit of Happyness."

### **Phone call or text?**

Under most circumstances, phone call.

### **Favorite sport to play?**

In the early years it was football, out of necessity it's now golf.

### **Early bird or night owl?**

I've always been more of a night owl.

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

A recording engineer.

### **Who taught you the most about life?**

My parents.

### **Cats or dogs?**

Dogs.

### **Favorite place in the world?**

Home.

### **Favorite holiday?**

From Halloween to New Year's.

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

"Work your mind, not your back. You'll last a lot longer."

– My father

### **First job?**

Cutting yards and washing cars in the neighborhood.

### **Favorite meal?**

Chicken parmesan and a Caesar salad.

### **I'm happiest when...**

Everyone is home.

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

I'd like to think I'm helping people build careers and achieve a better life.





# ALUMNA'S LIFE STORY, FIGHT FOR EQUALITY

FEATURED IN DOCUMENTARY

In the seven years since coming out as a lesbian, retired Col. Pat Thompson has been on a mission that's much different than the ones she experienced during her 30 years in the military. Today, Thompson is a social justice activist fighting for equality, for acceptance and for an end to discrimination. Now, thanks to a new documentary, Thompson has another platform from which to share her story and continue to inspire new generations.

In "Surviving the Silence," Thompson and her wife, Barbara Brass, open up about keeping their relationship hidden for so many years while Thompson rose through the ranks of the United States military. The new film chronicles Thompson's life, including her time as a decorated army nurse. Thompson joined the Air Force Nurse Corps not long after graduating from Charlotte Memorial Hospital's School of Nursing in 1954. The film also focuses on the difficult time in 1992 when Thompson was asked to preside over a military review board overseeing proceedings for Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer, who was eventually dismissed from the military for coming out as a lesbian.

Thompson didn't come out as a lesbian until many years later, during a California speaking engagement in 2013.

Then, she and Brass intensified their activism and became loud voices in the fight for equality and social justice. Filmmaker Cindy L. Abel just happened to be in the audience that night and was inspired by their courage. She knew right away she wanted to tell their story.

"Working with Col. Pat Thompson and her wife was a rare and delightful opportunity," Abel says. "The people you see on film are the people they are when the cameras weren't around. They were so generous to relive sometimes very painful periods of their lives so we could experience those with them, and they also shared their joy and laughter. I am so honored they entrusted me with their story."

The documentary was featured in September at the Charlotte Film Festival. So far, it's been shown at

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CINDY L. ABEL





# SIMULATION:

## A GROWING TOOL TO ENHANCE EDUCATION

24 festivals in seven countries, earning eight awards along the way, according to Abel.

“Many LGBTQ couples can relate – military or not – and many currently continue to have to live in the shadows to protect their employment or housing or families and even simply to not get beat up on the streets (which is on the rise in the past few years). Our film helps give voice to those who have been voiceless,” Abel says.

For Thompson and Brass, the film is yet another way they can spread their message of acceptance, hope and love – a mission they’ve been on since revealing their relationship in 2013. In 2015, Thompson was selected as the Carolinas College Distinguished Alumnus, and she and Brass flew in from California to accept the honor during the May commencement.

For more information, visit [survivingthesilence.com](http://survivingthesilence.com).

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*



As healthcare continues to evolve, radiologic technology education must keep up or stay ahead of the curve. To aid in this endeavor, the use of technology is proving beneficial. In recent years, the use of simulation in radiologic technology education has provided alternative means of bridging classroom learning and clinical experience.

The use of interactive simulators allows students to review anatomy, practice collimation and practice patient positioning. In addition, the simulators demonstrate clinical procedures, evaluate knowledge and competency, and provide students with instant feedback. Not only does the use of simulation challenge students to connect the dots between theory and application of concepts, it is a very effective method for building confidence and testing preparedness without risking patient care.

As a radiologic technologist, one must provide holistic care to all patients. Although simulation should not replace the hands-on learning of the profession of radiologic technology, it complements both the didactic and clinical aspects of the student’s educational experience. The use of simulation moves the education process past rote learning and promotes the development of critical-thinking skills.

The American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) is the professional association that helps promote the professions of medical imaging and radiation therapy through education, advocacy, research and innovation. The ASRT partnered with Ziltron, an education software company, to provide simulation access to medical imaging programs. This proved advantageous for many radiologic technology programs throughout 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of simulation in the education process allowed students to continue practicing their skills in medical imaging even when they were not physically in the clinical environment.

Although the use of simulation in medical imaging has not been widely used in the past, the education and medical communities are realizing its importance in achieving meaningful learning, which is an essential component of critical thinking. As educators, we must leverage the available technology whenever possible and provide students with an education that extends beyond the textbooks and the classroom.

*By Jodie Huffstetler, MAEd, RT(R), program chair, Radiologic Technology*



## Effort to Help Mom with Cancer Gains National Attention

When Carol Daley Cook (ADN '10) posted her message to a Charlotte moms Facebook group, she never expected that a simple act would spark such an outpouring of support, in addition to gaining national media attention along the way.

Daley Cook, a Carolinas College Associate Degree Nursing faculty member, posted in response to a story that her friend had shared. Dana McSwain, a mother of two daughters, had posted a message to the group about her courageous battle with breast cancer.

“Dana and I met two years ago when our daughters were in preschool together,” Daley Cook says. “With



## Student Hopes to Encourage More Men in Nursing

Bryn Williams knows that when most people hear “nurse” they think of a female. Rightfully so, as women dominate the profession – men make up only 12% of nurses nationwide, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. But Bryn hopes that doesn’t discourage men like himself from pursuing nursing as a career.



Bryn Williams

“I want people to see a male in a healthcare setting and not just assume he’s a doctor,” Bryn says.

Now, Bryn is harnessing his passion for diversity and creating a way for male nursing students to come together and support education, research and leadership for men in such a female-dominated industry. He, along

with support from faculty advisor Rodney P. Duke (ADN '99), is working on starting a new chapter of the American Association for Men in Nursing (AAMN) based at Carolinas College. They decided to name it the Greater Charlotte Chapter of AAMN, in hopes of eventually expanding their reach to schools beyond Carolinas College.

“My inspiration to start the organization was based on a feeling of isolation in a female-dominated industry,” Bryn says. “I wanted a way to bring other males in the program together to further discuss how this may be impacting them and how we can push forward with being minorities in this field. I began researching for an organization in the Charlotte area and found none, so I decided this was the best opportunity to make a change.”

The new chapter will have several areas of focus, including supporting

male nurses in their professional growth and advocating for research and education around men’s health issues.

Bryn says they’re currently recruiting Carolinas College students to join the organization, which students can do at no cost.

“Luckily, Carolinas College has fully supported the idea of the AAMN on our campus and has agreed to purchase the charter,” Bryn says. “With this being the first AAMN charter in the Charlotte area, it has plenty of room for growth and expansion. In the future, I’d love to see the chapter grow and make a difference in the community to help other males see a future in the nursing profession.”

For more information, contact Bryn at [brynowill10@icloud.com](mailto:brynowill10@icloud.com).

By *Justin Moss*, marketing manager

Dana's permission I posted a question to the group about how we could potentially help her."

The idea was to create a wig for Dana, who was suffering hair loss after her cancer treatments.

"One mom had referred me to an organization in Florida called Chemo Diva that makes wigs from human hair," Daley Cook explains. "Some women choose to cut

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"The media coverage was certainly unexpected, but I'm so thankful to be part of an uplifting story that hopefully encouraged others during this difficult year full of one challenge after the next," Carol Daley Cook says.

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their hair prior to chemo and have their own hair made into a wig for themselves. Since Dana had already lost hers, we had the halo wig made with our hair." Halo wigs are an alternative to full wigs, which can get hot and itchy. The halo wigs are worn with caps to provide extra comfort.

Six people, including Daley Cook and Sara Curry (ADN '13), donated hair for the wig, while 15 others made financial donations to support the project.

"It was an honor to get to help my friend this way," Daley Cook says. She adds that McSwain has finished her chemotherapy and underwent surgery in October.

The amazing acts of kindness caught the attention of local and national media, including ABC's "Good Morning America." Daley Cook was interviewed and then featured in the national story.

*By Justin Moss, marketing manager*

## GRADS *on the go!*



Graduates of the Histotechnology program at Carolinas College of Health Sciences are sought after in the profession and consistently excel in the labs that hire them. One graduate with a particularly noteworthy career after graduation is Marina Barankevich (HTL '17).

Before beginning the Histotechnology program in January 2017, Marina was already working in the field of histology as a research associate II in the Histology Core Lab at the Maine Medical Research Institute, in Scarborough, ME. In this lab she discovered her love of histology and decided to enroll in a program to gain certification.

Soon after beginning the Histotechnology program, the Anatomic Pathology Lab at Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) hired Marina as a PRN histologist. She balanced working in the AP lab throughout her time in the Histotechnology program. Upon graduation, Atrium Health immediately offered Marina a full-time job where she was a valued member of the lab.

After working for a year, Marina felt the urge to travel, and she left to become a traveling histologist with Aureus Medical. Traveling histologists spend 13 weeks at an assignment of their choice. During the next year, Marina spent time in Oregon, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

She returned to Charlotte in 2019 and Atrium Health's pathology lab immediately hired her again. In October, Marina accepted the position of research technician III – OPR Histology Confocal Core. She now manages the Research Histology Core Lab at Cannon Research Center at CMC.

Marina has already fit an entire career's worth of jobs into her few years after graduation. Atrium Health is fortunate to have her for the next several years.

*By Tracy Walling, Histotechnology program coordinator*



*Our hope is that those who engage in the culture of Carolinas College of Health Sciences are free to be authentic without judgement or discrimination.*

## Continuing Our *Courageous* Conversations

Carolinas College of Health Sciences has a long-standing history of academic excellence that far exceeds the national standards for two-year institutions. The graduates of Carolinas College experience the very best education with exceptional clinical experiences. To support excellence in our ability to educate, Carolinas College has long reflected on its core values in a holistic way to ensure that diverse and inclusive practices are implemented within our institution. The most meaningful goal has always been to reflect the highest valuation of teammates and students with respect to ethnicity and cultural traditions. While we are extremely proud of our progress, we aspire to grow to be better for our future.

Carolinas College has demonstrated passionate engagement in diversity and inclusion through its designation of Diversity Champions who have not only dedicated service to committees exclusively committed to the work of diversity, but to communities of interest within the greater Charlotte regions. Under the guidance of college leadership, teammates and students

are presented with opportunities to engage in relevant discussions that promote awareness of social justice and equity. Carolinas College has intentionally implemented diverse practices regarding its recruitment processes through access to diverse applicant pools to further exemplify that excellence exists in many hues. Our admissions process has been progressive regarding efforts to view student applicants in a holistic way. The result has been the most diverse student body the college has witnessed to date. Our curriculum has been intentional to include a diversity and inclusion course, emphasizing the importance to understand cultural practices to better serve our surrounding communities. These practices have enriched our college culture and created an inclusiveness that is palpable within our work environment.

To streamline the college's mission regarding diversity and inclusion, Carolinas College Diversity and Inclusion Committee will begin its official work in January 2021. As committee chair, I am excited to help align the goals of the college to ensure that we remain forward-thinking in evaluation of

our approaches to recruitment, program admissions, program curriculum and cultural inclusion. Our purpose is to bring definition to these practices and to measure our progress along the way.

The overarching goal of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee is to do our part to end systemic racism through the promotion of equity for all. We pledge to bridge the gap for those who have been marginalized for centuries based on their heritage. We condemn the use of police brutality and support justice for those who have been victimized by such. Our hope is that those who engage in the culture of Carolinas College of Health Sciences are free to be authentic without judgement or discrimination. With the intent to effect change in our own microcosms, we truly believe that our work will not only benefit the communities that we serve, but our world.

*By Shannon W. Sloan, MBA, RT(R) (MR), faculty, Radiologic Technology program and Diversity and Inclusion Committee chair*



# What do you see?

By Jameson Donnell, director of admissions and recruitment, Student Affairs

### What do you see?

You see a black kid, dressed up, playing white  
Uneducated until he speaks; unworthy but accepted,  
Gentle in his own, emotional at times, moving  
through life oblivious to what's at Stake

### What do you see?

You see your own; estranged, with no rights  
With a vernacular that is foreign only to those  
with boundaries  
Held back with constraints, not shackles,  
only never to be freed

### What do you see?

Your son, your brother, your nephew, your grandson;  
Elevated beyond a vision that has not yet been seen

### What do you see?

A path that has not yet been created  
A Star is born,  
shining through what is dark and ominous Situations.

### What do you see?

A lost little boy that was given everything but at the  
same time nothing  
A grown man seeking attention  
Social, but really ... Social?  
A professional that has busted his behind in this  
world, stepping on everyone, risking everything,  
even family.

### What do you see?

I see myself walking amongst white  
I see myself standing with black  
I see my family but at a distance  
I see myself afraid of my light  
I see me!

## Recent Nurse Graduates Stepping Up During Unique Times

Every new nurse graduate looks forward to that incredible moment when he or she can finally add two very important initials to the end of their name: RN. Taking that next step in your career path is always a bit daunting, but taking it during the COVID-19 response can be downright overwhelming.

"There are so many new things and protocols you learn when actually performing under your own license," Bailee Carter (ADN '19) explains. "Everything is so different, so it almost feels like completely starting over."

After graduating in December 2019, Bailee was studying for the NCLEX when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

"I have talked with so many veteran nurses that have never experienced anything like this, so in a way we are all 'new' nurses," she explains. "We all are trying to get through this together and that's the most important."

Working in the Emergency Department at Atrium Health Union, she must be prepared for anything, including the possibility of treating a COVID-19-positive patient.

"I have talked with so many veteran nurses that have never experienced anything like this, so in a way we are all 'new' nurses," Bailee explains.

"We always make sure we are following protocol and maintaining the safety of ourselves and our patients," she says. "It has been very stressful during this time, not only for the nurses, but the patients as well, so we're also working to inform and educate them properly."

She wants the community to know all healthcare workers are doing their part in battling this new disease.

"We are all a team working to achieve the same goal. No matter if it's a new nurse or a veteran nurse, we all learn from each other and help in any way we can."

And she has some advice for others who are beginning their careers during this uncertain time.

"With every day, you will get more and more comfortable in your new role and it will continue to get easier."

By Dana Ellison, Atrium Health Enterprise Communications

## Alumnus Returns to Join Biology Faculty

**W**esley Shover (MLS '13) is a former Carolinas College student turned biology faculty member. He first came to the college as a student in our Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) program and has since returned to become a full-time faculty member in the General Studies program.

Wesley is originally from the small town of Elkin, NC, where he grew up in what he calls “the old fashioned way,” playing in creeks and woods. He always had a passion for science, which led him to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he completed both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in biology. During his time at UNC Charlotte, he worked in the Goodliffe genetics lab as a student and a research manager trying to characterize the Oncoprotein dMyc in *drosophila melanogaster*.

After completing his degrees at UNC Charlotte, Wesley came to Carolinas College to study in the MLS program. When asked to describe his experience as a Carolinas College student, Wesley used one word: “amazing.”

“Classes were hard, but that was because the MLS instructors knew they could push us and make us better techs,” he says. “I am thankful for that now.”

Upon completing the MLS program, Wesley started his first job with Atrium Health as a microbiologist at Carolinas Medical Center. Wesley remained in microbiology and became the lead tech when the lab moved to the Core Lab. He was eventually promoted to group leader/manager over Microbiology and Molecular Pathology, which is where he remained until he accepted a full-time faculty position as a biology instructor in the General Studies program.

When asked what it was like returning to teach at a college where he was once a student, his response was,

“It was a little bit nerve-wracking. I knew the reputation of the college and the expectations that came with the role. However, coming from the college, I also knew how to not only bring a higher level of instruction, but also how to encourage the students through it.”



Given Wesley’s experience and credentials, he could have arguably chosen any number of colleges, but he chose to teach at Carolinas College. When asked why, he responded, “The family atmosphere. Carolinas College has top-notch students graduating and making an immediate impact in the community. If any of the students come back to visit, faculty recognize them. That is a lifetime connection you don’t get at many colleges. I absolutely felt that walking back into the college as a member of the faculty versus as a student.”

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“There’s a lifetime connection you don’t get at many colleges. I absolutely felt that walking back into Carolinas College as a member of the faculty versus as a student.”

– WESLEY SHOVER (MLS '13), BIOLOGY FACULTY

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When Wesley isn’t teaching, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Courtney, and their four children, Penn (8), Croft (7), Story (4) and Copeland (2). They also have an 11-year-old watch dog Zaire (named after the filovirus ebola zaire) and a farm cat, Everest. Wesley’s family has turned their property into what he calls “an urban homestead.” They raise chickens, rabbits, and a large variety of crops, and they are big Brie Arthur fans.

By *Andrea Phronebarger, PhD, program chair, General Studies*



# A COVID-SAFE *Commencement*



To safely celebrate our August 2020 graduates, Carolinas College hosted a drive-thru commencement ceremony on campus. Congratulations to graduates from our RN-BSN, Medical Laboratory Science, Radiation Therapy and Histotechnology programs! A similar drive-thru ceremony will be held for our December 2020 graduates.

A new study from Georgetown University is once again shedding light on the incredible value that institutions like Carolinas College of Health Sciences offer students, especially in the form of the salary they'll earn after graduation.

## Carolinas College Ranks High in First-Year Earnings

In a new study called "Buyer Beware: First-Year Earnings and Debt for 37,000 College Majors at 4,000 Institutions," Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce looks at specific majors and the monthly earnings a graduate might expect to receive in the first year following graduation. The authors also factored in monthly debt payments for student loans.

When looking at the associate degree programs across North Carolina that are examined in the report, the Carolinas College Associate Degree Nursing program ranked first in the state in terms of net median earnings at \$4,556. That figure even outranks some bachelor's degree programs.

The study is just one more example of the difference that a major – and not necessarily the level of degree – can have on a graduate's earnings. The study's authors point out that graduates with fewer years of education can often earn the same salary – or even more than – workers with more years of education. For example, the study reveals that a graduate with an associate degree in nursing from Santa Rosa Junior College in California can earn more than someone with a graduate degree from some programs at Harvard University.

"Future earnings can depend more on the major pursued than on the level of the degree," the report's authors write. "Employers' increased focus on specific skills is contributing to the large variation in earnings



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among different graduates in different programs of study. Higher education is now our nation's largest job training program, and its role in building the workforce following the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis will only increase."

Another study from Georgetown University earlier this year, highlighted in our spring 2020 magazine, showed that Carolinas College ranked at or near the top of the list in North Carolina when looking at earnings over a worker's entire lifetime 10, 20, 30 and even 40 years after enrollment – further proof that Carolinas College students and alumni should feel confident knowing their education is providing them highly valued skills that will continue to pay dividends for years to come.

By *Justin Moss*, marketing manager

# THIS EDITION'S DONOR SPOTLIGHT IS YOU!

**B**ecause of each and every one of our generous 2020 donors, Carolinas College has been able to not only award more than \$131,000 in scholarships among 67 students, but we were also able to address the exceptional need of more than 70 students facing financial crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With financial support from alumni, teammates and constituents, Carolinas College has been able to award more than \$50,000 to students in need from the newly established Student Emergency and Assistance Fund.

All applicants are required to provide detailed documentation to support their requests. The Carolinas College Scholarship Committee meets weekly to review each emergency fund application and make award determinations. Student Emergency and Assistance Fund applications continue to be processed weekly.

### Students like...

**Emily:** A single mom who was laid off from a restaurant due to COVID-19, but when called back to work she was unable to go because she had no childcare options since schools went to remote learning and her daughter was too young to be home alone. On top of it all, her car broke down as did her home air conditioner in the middle of summer.

**Helen:** Who stated that, "The year 2020 has been the hardest year I have ever had to face financially. I have had to swallow my pride and reach out for help in ways I never thought I would have to do." Due to COVID-19, she lost her job as a nanny and has been unsuccessful finding part-time work. She started having some health issues, and now has a medical bill that she cannot pay off. She adds, "I am almost at the finish line and I am trying my hardest to stay afloat so that I can finish the nursing program and reach my dream of becoming a nurse. This situation has been extremely painful, embarrassing, as well as eye opening." Helen received assistance to pay bills and get the resources she needed to transition to virtual learning.



**Louie:** Already dealing with reduced income due to decreased hours at work, Louie's car caught fire in September and was destroyed. Ever the optimist, he explained in his application that it was "not too bad, it was fully insured, and my father and I have a vehicle we can share. I don't need too much, just enough to pay for Uber/Lyft rides for a few weeks until another vehicle can be purchased and all the registration costs."

### YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

**\$131,000**  
for  
**67 Scholarships**



**\$50,000**  
for  
**70+ Students Covid Crisis Relief**



### Why Give? Why Now?

#### 1. DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

**Your gift will be matched!** Thanks to Lou & Jackie Pfeiffer, year-end gifts will be matched dollar for dollar (up to \$20,000).

#### 2. Donation Deduction\*

Due to COVID-19, this year you can deduct 100% of charitable gifts.

#### 3. COVID Relief

Your donations will help Carolinas College support students impacted by the coronavirus.

#### 4. Make a Difference

Donations of all sizes strengthen our programs, facilities and faculty initiatives. They also provide a legacy that lasts for future generations of students.

Gifts can be made online at [AtriumHealthFoundation.org/CCHS](https://AtriumHealthFoundation.org/CCHS) or by mail:

Carolinas College  
Advancement Fund  
c/o Atrium Health Foundation  
PO Box 32861  
Charlotte, NC 28232-2861

\*The tax information provided is general and educational in nature and should not be construed as legal or tax advice. Always consult an attorney or tax professional regarding your specific legal or tax situation.

# 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 1990

**Melissa Barton Monteith (MT)** and husband Bill welcomed grandson Luke Wyatt Blejski, born April 2020, joining granddaughter Evelyn (Evie) Hazeleen Blejski, born January 2018.

## Class of 2004

**Kelly Cunningham Carlisle (ADN)** recently earned her CCTC (certification as a transplant nurse).

## Class of 2006

**D'Anna Helms (ADN)** graduated from Gardner-Webb University in May with an MSN in Nursing Education. She will begin a position as nurse educator at Wingate University.

## Class of 2008

**Shannon Pope Pohl (ADN)** received her BSN from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in May 2020. Said Shannon, "The foundation gained during my ADN education at Carolinas College prepared me well for the rigors of the RN-BSN program."

## Class of 2009

**Sarah Goldberg (MT)** and Mike Corrigan welcomed baby girl Sage Alivia Corrigan on July 29.

## Class of 2011

**Kim Tweedy Goodman (ADN)** graduated from Frontier Nursing University with an MSN and passed her WHNP certification boards. She also had a baby girl (Abigail) in October 2018.

**Heena Nagarji (ADN)** earned her doctorate from Grand Canyon University in December 2019.

## Class of 2012

**Ali Winter (MLS)** and David Gies II were married October 2, 2020.

## Class of 2013

**Katie Swisher Reaves (MLS)** and husband Jesse welcomed baby boy Asheton Ray Reaves on September 7.

**Joy Williams (MLS)** and Dr. Mike Shealy were married October 10, 2020.

## Class of 2014

**Alison Stroh (ADN)** completed the requirements for a DNP from UNC Chapel Hill.

## Class of 2015

**Georgia Kontos (MLS)** and Alex Hollowell were married October 10 at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Winston-Salem, NC.

## Class of 2015 (continued)

**Hana Munkittrick Cayton (ADN)** is pursuing a DNP FNP at East Carolina University and will start clinical rotations this fall.

## Class of 2016

**Suzanna Payne Holzinger (ADN)** welcomed Helen Drew Holzinger into the world on May 2.

## Class of 2017

**Zanquavia "Zannie" Browne (MLS)** and husband Lamont welcomed baby girl Ari Ellyse on October 4.

## Class of 2018

**Yancy Guzman (ADN)** earned national certification in electronic fetal monitoring.



## IN MEMORIAM

Lila Gilbert Kuehnert, NUR '47  
Wanda McDonald Pospahala, NUR '48  
Virginia Stuart Cloer, NUR '51  
Margaret F. Ware, NUR '51  
Mary Frances Carroll Morton, NUR '53  
Barbara Christopher Honeycutt, NUR '56  
Edith Poston Larsen, NUR '58

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*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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Elizabeth & Donald Anderson  
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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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**M**ake an investment in our students and in the future of healthcare. Your tax-deductible gift ensures that Carolinas College students continue to benefit from scholarships, small classes, superior faculty and a state-of-the-art simulation lab – things tuition alone cannot cover. Gifts can be made online at [AtriumHealthFoundation.org/CCHS](http://AtriumHealthFoundation.org/CCHS) or by mail.

**Mailing address:**

Carolinan College Advancement Fund, c/o Atrium Health Foundation, PO Box 32861, Charlotte, NC 28232-2861

*Alumni gifts DO make a difference at Carolinas College of Health Sciences!*