ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Partnership with VA expands reach  p. 8
- From football to pediatrics  p. 12
- Olson returns to the college  p. 16
Dear College of Nursing Alumni and Friends,

Core values are the heart of nursing. The most frequently requested manuscript I have authored over the decades is titled, “Teaching Core Nursing Values,” coauthored by College of Nursing colleagues and published in the Journal of Professional Nursing. Leaders and educators from other disciplines are intrigued by the notion of imbedding core values in the preparation of future health-care professionals. For a very long time, a U.S. Gallup survey identifies that nurses are the most highly trusted of all professionals. These survey results are not surprising. In multiple research studies, nurse scientists report that people want two things from a nurse: 1, technical and knowledge-based competence, and 2, a trusted caring relationship. Nurses have the requisite knowledge required to provide care from preconception to the end of life. Our graduates and alumni are also prepared to meet the trusted, caring aspects of health care. Caring is demonstrated by our ability to embody five core values: human dignity, integrity, autonomy, altruism and social justice.

This issue tells the story of how our faculty and students embody core nursing values. The ANEW grant, funded by the USDHHS, HRSA in 2017, is a collaborative project with Sanford Health that models social justice in its focus on preparing family nurse practitioners and their preceptors for rural primary care roles. Our partnership with the Brookings Health System and the new SDSU student room as well as our partnership with the VA Medical Center in Sioux Falls exemplify the altruistic relationship between education and practice. It has been said of undergraduate student Kylee Essen that “she recognizes the value of service for herself and helps others see the benefits of serving the community.”

Alumnus Mallory Weiss Buxton exemplifies the core value of integrity, which is realized by practicing within a code of ethics and standards of care. Her work as a concierge nurse advocate puts the people served in the center of health care and is addressing an unmet need. Alumni who completed one of SDSU’s graduate education programs or specializations are examples of professional caring nurses who pursued advanced education in nursing in order to prepare the workforce, translate research into practice and lead.

We are delighted to tell the story of SDSU football player and May 2018 graduate, Charlie Harmon, who models human dignity in his respect for the worth of every person. He shares his passion for pediatric nursing. You will enjoy the story of Emma Thordson, an Army ROTC student whose participation in an ROTC physical challenge program highlights how nurses are goal-oriented and tenacious, not to mention physically strong.

This issue includes news of my transition to another leadership role in nursing. I extend my sincere appreciation to SDSU, the College of Nursing faculty, staff and students, as well as our alumni and friends for an unforgettable and rewarding 23 years of service at this great university. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as dean of this great College of Nursing and I treasure the five years I have served as your leader.

Our core values drive us to improve health, increase the quality of health care, and assure that all people are respected and treated with human dignity. Our altruism, social justice, advocacy and integrity must persist as we protect and serve people all over the world. May you find strength for the journey and deep meaning in your work.

Best regards,

Nancy Fahrenwald, Ph.D., RN, APHN-BC, FAAN
Dean and Professor
SDSU College of Nursing (BS ’83)

ON THE COVER:
Graduate student Kyle Anderson ’08 meets with a patient during his time at a clinic in Estelline. Anderson and other graduate students got to experience rural health care thanks to a grant.

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Kyle Anderson ’08 was looking for a new experience when he signed up to be placed in Estelline. The College of Nursing placed Anderson and three other graduate students in rural areas for the 2017 fall semester. The college was able to provide these immersive clinical opportunities through a two-year, $1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. SDSU has partnered with Sanford Health to recruit, engage and develop new clinical preceptors and practicum sites, and design innovative skills workshops with the Sanford mobile simulation unit.

The grant covers tuition, fees, books and a stipend for up to 22 family nurse practitioner students each year. Other students participating in the fall semester were
Nakayla Burnham, who was in Winner; Jamie Kingma in Chamberlain; and Stephanie Davis ’09, who worked in Sturgis.

“Our first cohort of trainees identified the experience as priceless. The students have come back talking about how they were able to see firsthand another side of the potential factors that may impact rural care and practice.”

Victoria Britson
Assistant Professor, Principal Investigator of the Grant
Davis said. “Some of the content has included available rural health-care resources, rural transportation issues and facilitation to higher levels of care when needed, and hands-on training in skills such as eye emergencies, advanced suturing, EKG interpretation, and splinting and casting.”

While Davis was placed in her hometown, Anderson wanted to experience health care somewhere beside his hometown.

“Because I grew up in Sioux Falls and have spent my entire nursing career here, the ANEW grant seemed like a fantastic opportunity to experience something different,” said Anderson, who will graduate in August 2018. “Although I care for many rural patients in an urban setting, I felt that a more immersive experience would be substantially more beneficial.

“I enjoyed virtually every aspect of my experience, which is in a large part due to my fantastic preceptor (Tonya Benson ’03/M.S. ’09) and clinic staff,” he continued. “The community of Estelline continues to impress and surprise me through their passion for education, community engagement and support for one another.”

Benson, who has been a preceptor for several years, said Anderson and other students who will participate in the ANEW grant program, will experience providing care to individuals from newborns to those into end-of-life care.

“This care includes wellness visits and acute/chronic care type of issues,” Benson said. “We also see residents at a local care center as well as perform home visits to those who may not be able to travel to the clinic for care.

“Kyle has been very open-minded and has really embraced the Estelline community. He has been exposed to all ages across the life span for providing care,” she continued. “He has had experience in managing chronic illnesses as this community has a larger geriatric portion and with this, management of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes is commonly encountered in a workday.”

Anderson said he had to adjust to the workday in Estelline after working in Sioux Falls.

“I’ve also enjoyed that the pace of the clinic is a little more relaxed than many of my urban experiences, allowing me to spend more time with patients and discussing cases with my preceptor,” said Anderson, who chose to get his degrees at State because of the combination of in-person class time, self-directed study and placement for clinicals.
“I’ve gained a greater appreciation for the importance of access to health care in rural settings, the unique health needs of rural dwellers and the opportunities that exist for me to provide care in these types of settings in the future.

“Overall, my time in Estelline has helped to make me a more well-rounded future provider by forcing me to hone my interview and assessment skills as access to advanced diagnostics or a second opinion are limited,” he continued. “Nursing is unique in the field of health care, as we function as personal liaisons and advocates for our patients as they navigate the complex intimidating world of health care. I enjoy partnering with patients as they make this journey and look forward to expanding my role in this process in the future as a nurse practitioner.”

Davis, who will also graduate in August, is open to practicing in a rural setting.

“I loved being back home and being able to get a firsthand feel for what it would be like as a provider in a rural setting. It was eye-opening in that we saw patients who would travel 50 to 100-plus miles to be seen, and ones who were reluctant to leave to receive care,” she said. “I saw how this affected patient-care decisions, making it at times challenging in regard to management and coordination of care. I have learned that rural health-care providers are kind of a like a jack-of-all trades, they have to be very knowledgeable and skillful in many different areas. The best part has been getting an experience I didn’t think was going to be a part of my graduate education and how it has enhanced my learning.”

Kingma, who is in her third year of pursuing a doctor of nursing practice degree with a family nurse practitioner specialization, chose SDSU because it provides a variety of clinical experiences and opportunities for students to take part in additional learning experiences such as this grant.

“Though I do not yet know where I will start my FNP career after graduation, I feel better prepared to work as a provider in a rural community after participating in the ANEW grant,” Kingma said. “The grant provided a rich learning experience and the opportunity to learn from both rural providers and rural patients. Throughout the semester, I gained a greater understanding of the complexities of rural health care, the unique needs of rural patients and the diverse skills of rural providers.”

— Matt Schmidt
While there have been many benefits to the Brookings Health System’s expansion and renovation, it has also paid off for South Dakota State University students. Students in the College of Nursing and in the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions now have their own room on the inpatient floor.

“One of the challenges we always had was that we had a lot of SDSU students in various places,” Brookings Health CEO Jason Merkley said. “As Karen (Weber, the medical surgical and emergency department director) started planning the inpatient floor, we talked about collaborating with SDSU and finding a spot in which education and training could happen; an area that was much better for the students and self-serving for us, too, because we have other uses for the areas they used to be in.”

When the first patients were treated after the 16-month project was completed in February 2017, the students found their space on the facility’s second floor.

“The designated SDSU classroom has definitely made an impact on my clinical experience,” said Jourdan Tuttle of Sioux Falls. “Having a room to learn and share our experiences in with my clinical group has allowed me to connect with my peers and instructor. This room shares many purposes with many health-care members from the hospital, which allows everyone to come and work together.

“One aspect of the room that I really like is that the room is only a short distance from the nursing stations and patient rooms,” Tuttle continued. “It is a very open, welcoming environment that makes me feel more connected with everything that is going on around me. Within the room, its layout is designed to promote communication among us, which I feel is very important in helping to develop ourselves as nursing students.”

Tuttle and seven other nursing students
meet with Jaclyn Rauen ’10, a temporary clinical assistant in the college and a registered nurse at Brookings Health, twice weekly in the room. “It helps us to have a private room where we can complete our assignments, charting and have post-conference meetings,” said Abby Drew from Sisseton. “It is nice to have our own little area so that we are not invading the Brookings Health System’s staff break room or nursing stations. It also makes us feel extremely welcomed to know that we have a room designed specifically for SDSU students.”

Rauen said the room has already made an impact on the students’ clinical experience and serves “as our classroom off campus and provides students with a safe environment to connect theory to practice. Students often use this space to look up information, analyze patient data and engage in problem-solving with peers. As an instructor, it allows me to collaborate with students and facilitate more group discussion throughout the day instead of only during post conference at the end of the day.”

Those comments are just what Weber wanted to hear. “In our old setting, we had a circular unit and the nurses’ station was in the center. It wasn’t a place for the students to talk about their patients and learn about their disease process without being overheard by many other people, whether they were other staff or patients,” Weber said. “It’s really nice for them to have a space away from the unit’s general flow so they can have that dialogue either with each other, their instructor or our staff.”

Merkley would love to see more students take advantage of the space. “We see it as a two-way street. We benefit from them as much they probably benefit from us,” he said.

“This is about helping the students get their necessary training and clinicals, but it is also about us because we believe in investing in them ...”

-- Jason Merkley
Brookings Health CEO

FEATURING

“This is about helping the students get their necessary training and clinicals, but it is also about us because we believe in investing in them ...”

-- Jason Merkley
Brookings Health CEO

Matt Schmidt
At first glance, one might not view the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System as a leader in integrative health practices. The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System recently entered a memorandum of understanding with the South Dakota State University College of Nursing to not only show the effectiveness of those practices but also how to incorporate them into the college’s curriculum.

In addition, the VA is looking at providing clinical experience in psychiatric nursing. The college will provide training for VA staff, collect and analyze data regarding the VA’s integrative health practices and work with the organization on an application (for the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Pathway to Excellence designation.

“We’ve worked with the university on having graduate students experience other aspects of the VA through clinicals and our goal is to have integrative health tag onto it,” said Scott Dover, coordinator of the VA’s integrative health program. The program uses techniques such as healing touch, acupuncture, massage and aroma therapy.

“in addition, we’re looking for insights from outside research. When you’re caught in the day-to-day operations, there is not a lot of time to look at outcomes, which are incredibly important to drive a program forward and show its progress. We’ve seen how integrative health practices have improved or maintained our patients’ health, but we’d like to have some data to support it, too.”

Robin Arends, a clinical assistant professor who serves as the college’s doctor of nursing practice specialty coordinator and advanced practice registered nursing curriculum coordinator, plans to obtain data that proves the effectiveness of integrative health. She hopes to use graduate students to help her collect and analyze the data.

“As a nurse, I became interested in integrative health because I saw firsthand patients who used integrative health to better their own health,” Arends said. “The VA performs many of the integrative health therapies. I’m really looking forward to showing our nurse practitioner students how integrative health practices can couple with Western medicine practices to create optimum health for our patients.”

Libby Pasquariello, a lecturer, is working on how to incorporate integrative health, or holistic care, into the college’s curriculum. After conducting a faculty survey on teaching integrative modalities, she learned that many already mention the various methods when discussing pain. As a result, she hopes that these techniques can be taught across the college’s four sites.

In one of her classes, Pasquariello has students visit other practitioners of holistic medicine. While they have typically found chiropractors or acupuncturists, she will make them aware of the holistic practices offered at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System.

“There are times when the students think it’s not going to apply to them, but I want them to see how close this is coming to home now, that this has become more realistic in the Midwest,” she said. “I don’t think many people think of the VA as necessarily promoting alternative health care or different ways of doing things and being progressive. After talking to Scott, I found that it was quite the opposite.”

She would also like to see a two-sided card containing holistic interventions for pain management produced by the American Holistic Nurses Association be used in clinicals or simulations.

“It’s really user-friendly and something nurses and our students can have on hand during any clinical or simulation,” Pasquariello said. “They’re not interventions somebody found anecdotally, but have gone through research and been proven to work. And these techniques just give us another way to improve health outcomes.”

Scott Dover
VA Integrative Health Program Coordinator

Matt Schmidt
Kylee Essen knew she wanted to make the most of her college experience. A self-described introvert, she wanted to get out of her comfort zone.

Essen, a third-semester student in the College of Nursing, is involved in Alpha Xi Delta, State A Thon, the Van D. and Barbara B. Fishback Honors College and serves as an ambassador for the College of Nursing all while being named to the dean’s list multiple times.

“If I’m not busy, I get bored and then I feel like I’m not using my time wisely,” Essen said. “I’d rather do a bunch of stuff and enjoy my college experience than be cautious and not get as much out of it as I could.

“I really don’t know how I do it; it just seems to always flow, I’ve gotten used to it,” she continued. “I’ve gotten really good at time management. I have a sticky note, an internet sticky, on my computer where I write out my week to make sure everything works out. Luckily, for the majority of the time, my activities don’t overlap. However, I know when I’ve reached my limits. I do know when to step back and say I can’t do anymore.”

For example, Essen has cut back on some of her extracurricular events in spring 2018 due to academics.

“I think it’s pretty easy to get involved. I think a lot of people get scared and think that being involved in an organization is going to require all of your free time, it doesn’t,” Essen said.

She was part of the first cohort in the college’s direct admit program. Direct admit students are high school seniors admitted to SDSU as prenursing students based on ACT scores. They are also required to be enrolled in the Fishback Honors College. If the students maintain eligibility (number of credits, honors courses and GPA), they are guaranteed admission into the major.

“When Kylee was the service chair for the Fishback Honors College Student Organization, she was great at involving other students in service opportunities,” said Hanna Holmquist, the Fishback Honors College’s academic advisor and student services specialist. “She recognizes the value of service for herself, but perhaps more importantly, she helps others see the benefits of serving the community by engaging her peers in meaningful service opportunities. Engaging others in service also helps Kylee make a bigger impact while still balancing her academic work, campus involvement and all of the other demands on her time.”

Essen was attracted to nursing after taking a job shadow class at Rosemount High School. She got to experience life on the admit floor at the VA in St. Paul, Minnesota.

“I learned I liked the social aspect of nursing as well as the science part,” she said. “I thought nursing would be a good fit because it had all of the different aspects.”

Essen did not plan on joining Alpha Xi Delta, a women’s fraternity based on social integration and community involvement. She is glad she did as it has given her several role models. As the sorority’s philanthropy chair, she planned a flag football tournament that raised more than $1,000. Essen also coordinated program sales at Jackrabbits’ football games and a pancake feed.

“I was like, maybe I’ll like Alpha Xi Delta, maybe I won’t, but at least I tried. I ended up really loving it,” she said. “There were a lot of people I looked up to there who were in leadership roles within the organization, and I think that’s what motivated me to take it a step further within Alpha Xi Delta. I felt that role gave me a lot of leadership experience while being able to contribute to a greater cause.

“There is a lot of free time at college, and I can’t do just school all of the time—it would drive me nuts,” Essen continued. “It was part of me needing something extra to get me to be satisfied with my college experience.”

Part of that experience is State A Thon, a student-led organization that raises funds for the Children’s Miracle Network. The proceeds go to the Sanford Children's Hospital in Sioux Falls. The yearlong event culminates in a 12-hour dance marathon held April 7 where participants meet the families impacted by the fundraising efforts.

Essen is now on State A Thon’s executive board, serving as a fundraising co-chair. Her efforts in the fall helped raise nearly $5,000.

“It’s really fun,” she said. “The best part is meeting the miracle child the day of the dance marathon and being able to contribute to a greater cause.”

Matt Schmidt
Being involved with the U.S. Army ROTC, much less competing and winning Ranger Challenges, was not part of Emma Thordson's college plans.

The native of Marshall, Minnesota, planned on attending South Dakota State University and majoring in nursing. The ROTC commitment and Ranger Challenges were later additions.

Thordson was part of the university's ROTC battalion that won a Ranger Challenge at Camp Ripley in Minnesota in October.

“I looked at South Dakota State a couple of times when I was a senior in high school and just knew it was where I wanted to be. It was close to my family and had a very good nursing program,” Thordson said.

The thought about joining ROTC came later when attending a College of Nursing career fair. After talking to several nursing students who were staffing a ROTC recruiting table, Thordson was intrigued and kept thinking about it.

“I realized it would be a really great way to build my leadership experience and to be part of a team because in college you’re trying to find your place and where you belong,” she said. “Once I felt the support I got from the fellow cadets and the cadre, it was nice to be a part of something that supported you and your future. I knew this would be the best way to get some expanded opportunities as a nurse and get college paid for, which in this day and age is really important.”

In 2016, Thordson was approached about being part of a Ranger Challenge team.

“Unfortunately, we weren’t able to compete last year. This year, I really wanted to compete because I didn’t get
The Task Force Ranger Challenge at Camp Ripley Minnesota had in a 6-mile road march, a marksmanship challenge, weapons qualification where they disassemble and assemble three guns, a medical assessment and evacuation test, a grenade course, a land-navigation exercise and a one-rope bridge course.

"We didn’t go there expecting to win," she said. "As far as we know, we didn’t think we’ve had a five-man team advance to brigade. Our main goal was to work really hard, show our skills and have fun.”

After winning five competitions, Thordson and the team won the challenge and advanced to a brigade challenge at Camp Dodge in Iowa where the team finished third.

"The first thought that came to a lot of us, was, ‘Wow, we just went through all that and now we have to do it again?’ A lot of us thought we’d do really well that task force weekend, go home and that’d be the end. But then we realized we had to do it again in two weeks and needed to keep training," Thordson said. “Once we started training again, I think all of us got really excited about the opportunity. I know the tempo changed even more when we started traveling to Camp Dodge. I think we realized that we could be competitive and do a really good job. There was a lot of motivation to do well.

"I can’t think of a better program to prepare how to become a nurse than ROTC,” she continued. “There are so many things you need to be able to do as a nurse. You need to be super adaptable and ROTC teaches you how to do that. For example, we had no idea what to expect at those lanes, where they put you in a situation and expect you to make a decision really quickly. You do that all of the time in nursing.”

With Thordson and prenursing major Morgan Rohlfs on the five-man team, Lt. Col. Corey Norris was not surprised at the results.

“Nursing students are sometimes looked at as not being interested in the field stuff but ours are as capable field soldiers as any other major,” he said. “There are times when our nursing students are more capable because they’re high achievers in the classroom, they’re competitive and can be Type A personalities who thrive in this environment.”

And Thordson is already looking forward to next year’s task force competition and further building her skills as she prepares for life after her December 2018 graduation.

“The challenge is a very good team-building exercise. There’s nothing like a competition like that to bring people together and teach you how to work together,” she said. “My ability to work with people has increased because the Army is focused on communication. You can’t complete a mission without knowing how to communicate effectively. That builds into team cohesiveness and collaborating, which is super important in nursing because you can’t do nursing alone. Understanding how to work as a team is something you might not get until you’re working out in the nursing field whereas our cadets get that team-building experience in these competitions and our other activities.

“I have thought about working in the VA system,” Thordson continued. “It’s something that’s been on my mind since I have a passion for helping and working with veterans. I’ve had my eyes opened to what some of their struggles are and what they deal with, and I think that’d make me more equipped to care for them.”

Matt Schmidt
Charlie Harmon
Lineman looking after little ones

Harmon plans pediatric nursing career

B lend ing into the crowd has never been Charlie Harmon’s mode of operation. But then again, at 6-foot-6 and 300 pounds, it is hard to blend in a pediatric ward.

On the football field, he was a three-year starter at offensive left tackle and honorable mention all-conference his junior and senior years. In the classroom, he made the academic honor roll (3.0-3.2 GPA) in the Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2013 and 2017.

In the pediatric ward, the O’Fallon, Illinois, native admits “I stick out.” He graduated in May and takes his board exams this summer. Harmon plans a career in pediatric nursing.

Why pediatrics? “I guess I am a big kid at heart. I’ve always felt a connection to kids. When I’ve had a chance to work with kids at FCA summer camps or sports camps, I jump right in. I love to be around them. I like nursing with kids a lot more than adults. Kids are more innocent. They didn’t make a lifetime decision that affected their health, yet here they are with symptoms.

“My passion for pediatrics also comes from the resiliency you see in kids fighting illnesses. It is so powerful to see a kid fight off a disease and walk out of the hospital. I can’t wait to be a part of a patient’s battle and help them be able to wear a shirt like ‘I kicked cancer’s butt.’”

Harmon completed his academic career with a five-week rotation at the University of Iowa Children’s Hospital in Iowa City.

“It’s been a whirlwind,” Harmon said two weeks into the rotation. “I see so many types of patients on the floor—cardiac care, neurological, oncology. Every shift it’s been different. You see such a wide variety. (In the pediatric intensive care unit, the patients) can vary from a little babe to a 16-year-old.

“Every shift, I gain more and more confidence. We do assessments every two hours. That’s very crucial. I take a peek at them, get vital signs and administer meds. I’m progressing toward less and less assistance. I’ve progressively gotten there and with more and more things I am feeling more confident.”

Groundbreaker?

Harmon thinks he may have been the first SDSU nursing student to do a rotation at the University of Iowa Children’s Hospital.

“I remember the very first day. I was nervous about it. I’d never been to this hospital. No one really knew what to expect from an SDSU nursing student. I definitely was a little nervous. It was daunting—wanting to do my best, but unsure,” said Harmon.

He selected the Iowa hospital because Rachel Harmon, whom he married in January, is attending St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa, for a doctorate in physical therapy. That’s about an hour drive from Iowa City.

Career certain, location undefined

The Harmons live in an apartment and won’t be putting down roots for a while. In June, Rachel has a rotation at Avera-Sioux Falls. July and August is in Peoria, Illinois. In the fall, she has a rotation at Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis, which is where both their folks live. After her graduation in December, they’re contemplating moving to Colorado.

He said the rotation at the Iowa City pediatrics unit solidified his decision to work in that area.

“On my first shift, I had one of the more intense patients I’ve had in this rotation. The patient needed to go to radiation that morning. The anesthetist and other doctors were surrounding him and there were 13 or 14 IVs going into this child. Seeing this small child with all these IVs ... it was a moment—these kids are really sick. It’s sad.

“You just want to do your best to help this kid and their family.”

Dave Graves
Her career as a student, faculty member, researcher and administrator at South Dakota State, along with a few other activities, are captured on this page and the following pages.
Highlights
Nancy Fahrenwald
As the College of Nursing Dean

Celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the College

Creating the JoAnn and Eugene Goodale Nursing Faculty Scholar

Having students named Graduate Nursing Student Academy Liaisons
Developing the College’s Direct Admit Program

Partnering with CareSpan USA Inc. to use its Virtual Clinic to train students

Building the Graduate Nursing Facility and Native American Nursing Education Center in Rapid City

Being honored as one of “The 30 Most Influential Deans of Nursing in the United States”
Dean and Professor Emerita Roberta Olson, who served as the dean of South Dakota State University’s College of Nursing from 1994 to 2013, has agreed to serve as interim dean of the college. She started in that role May 1.

Olson replaces Nancy Fahrenwald, who replaced Olson as dean and will become the dean of the College of Nursing at Texas A&M in June.

“We are very fortunate and thankful to have Roberta step into the interim dean role during this time of transition,” said Dennis Hedge, provost and vice president for academic affairs. “Dr. Olson is very respected on campus and throughout the state. Her continued relationships with health-care industry leaders will allow the transition to be seamless and maintain the momentum we have had in our college of nursing for decades. That momentum has allowed our university to be a leader in educating generations of health-care professionals while conducting the type of research and outreach that impacts lives.”

Olson will serve in the interim role until a national search can be conducted and permanent replacement named, according to Hedge.

“I am honored to be invited to return to serve in this very important position,” said Olson, a Groton native and State graduate.

“I look forward to returning to a role where we experienced many successes and allowed a culture of innovation to provide opportunities for students, faculty and researchers to change and advance health care in the state and region. Many of those same people are at State, and it will be rewarding to work alongside of them again and continue to meet those challenges.”

Olson added a master’s degree from Washington University and a doctorate from Saint Louis University.

Olson returned to State in January 1994 after serving as an associate professor and associate dean at both the University of Kansas and University of Texas-Houston schools of nursing. After retiring from State, Olson served with the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education as a team leader for accreditation site visits and the Midwest Nursing Research Society Foundation.

Olson was inducted into the South Dakota Nurses Association Hall of Fame in 2017 and received the Bernadette Arminger Award, highest honor for service from American Association of Colleges of Nursing, in 2014. She was also named a South Dakota State Distinguished Alumna in 2013.

Olson’s time as dean included several accomplishments, such as:

- Establishment of a research-based Ph.D. program;
- Creation of the fully online RN Upward Mobility program;
- Establishment of a practice-based Doctor of Nursing Practice program;
- Development of the accelerated nursing program at the BSN level;
- Expansion of undergraduate admissions from 136 to 344; and
- Expansion of campuses from two to four (Brookings, Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Aberdeen).

“‘I look forward to returning to a role where we experienced many successes and allowed a culture of innovation to provide opportunities for students, faculty and researchers to change and advance health care in the state and region.’

Roberta Olson

Matt Schmidt
The South Dakota State University College of Nursing’s location in Rapid City will now officially be called the Rapid City site instead of the West River Nursing Department. Rapid City was the first off-campus site for the college in the 1980s but has been joined by sites in Sioux Falls and Aberdeen.

“We feel this change will accurately describe the location to prospective faculty and students as well as community stakeholders,” said Nancy Fahrenwald, the college’s dean. “We are proud of our graduates who have received and/or advanced their education and serve the health-care workforce. They and the other professionals provide affordable, accessible and high-quality health care to our state.”

In addition, the college’s newest location in Rapid City, which opened in March 2017, will be known as the Native American Nursing Education Center. The center supports all native students and those in the Wokunze Wicaske Alliance, a program established in summer 2015 to attract and retain Native students. The program is led by an inclusive alliance of tribal partners, community members and academic leaders. The center is also home to the college’s graduate programs offered in Rapid City.

“When we started renovating the building, our goal was to create the physical space to support the mentoring, recruitment and retention of Native American students into any of our nursing education programs,” Fahrenwald said. “We have seen the pipeline of Native American pre-nursing students quadruple as a result of the center, which offers programs and services that are in congruence with cultural beliefs and practices.”

Bev Warne, who coordinated Arizona State University’s American Indian Students United for Nursing Project and helped establish a Native American Nurses Association, has been at the forefront of support for Native American nursing students. She is a program coordinator and adviser in Rapid City.

Matt Schmidt

The College of Nursing held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house for its graduate nursing facility and Native American Nursing Education Center March 27, 2017.
Congrats Retirees!

Eileen Bruner-Halverson | Instructor

Summer at the lake and time with the grandkids will be a longer season this year for Bruner-Halverson, who is retiring May 21.

Bruner-Halverson returned to nursing in 1999, served as director of nursing at Kingsbury Memorial Manor in 2001-03 and was charge nurse/wound care nurse at United Retirement Center, Brookings, in 2003-07.

She gained her master’s degree from State in 2006, the same year South Dakota Nurses Association named her District IX Nurse of the Year. She received board certification in gerontology in 2008 and a fellowship with Minnesota Harford Center of Geriatric Nursing Excellence in 2009.

“I will always be proud, and somewhat amazed, that I could say that I was an instructor at SDSU. It was a dream that took a long time to achieve. The staff within this college was such a great group of people to work with and laugh with,” Bruner-Halverson said.

She still plans to do some part-time nursing to support her retirement plans of traveling, gardening, golfing, spending time with her grandchildren and enjoying Long Lake/Lake Madison, where she lives with her husband, Phil, a 1965 SDSU grad in agricultural science/agronomy.

Between the two, they have six children, five of which are SDSU grads, and 11 grandchildren.

Marie Cissell | Instructor

Cissell, who has spent the last 16 years teaching undergraduate classes and clinicals in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, will retire May 21, closing a 28-year career as a nurse educator. She also taught at Presentation College in Aberdeen and Medcenter One College of Nursing in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Cissell earned a diploma in nursing from Methodist School of Nursing, Mitchell, in 1973 and a bachelor’s degree from SDSU in 1984. She earned a master’s degree in nursing education from the University of Mary in Bismarck, in 2005. Before becoming a nurse educator, she worked in pediatric nursing in Kansas City and as a general small hospital nurse in Bowdle and Flandreau.

As she leaves the university, she recalls “the collaboration I had with the faculty at both the Rapid City and Sioux Falls sites has been one of the most rewarding parts of my educational career.

“It has been a privilege to be a part of the students’ education at SDSU and to experience fulfillment as the students graduate and achieve in their professional careers. I have been honored to be a part of such a progressive and respected nursing program,” Cissell said.

In retirement, Cissell plans to travel, do volunteer work with children in Sioux Falls and at her church, and spend time with her family—daughter Amy and grandson Liander in Portland, Oregon; daughter Elizabeth in Sioux Falls, and her 93-year-old mother in Lake Norden. Her husband, Jim, died from cancer in 2012.

Howard Wey | Associate Professor

After 21 years of research at SDSU on bone density, nutrition and biostatistics, Wey is preparing to focus on a new research project—what to do in retirement.

Wey, who turns 65 this fall, will leave the university payroll May 21. As far as retirement plans, “I’m thinking about it,” the Ohio native said.

During his SDSU career, Wey has taught graduate classes in epidemiology and biostatistics as well as serving as co-investigator on numerous grants and contracts.

At the February 2011 SDSU Celebration of Faculty Excellence banquet, Wey was named the College of Nursing’s Distinguished Researcher and Scholar. Some of his research was with the Ethel Austin Martin Program, which is directed by his wife, Bonny Specker. That research looked at bone density and body composition, particularly among Hutterites.
After a career spent working in state and local government, with the last nine years spent in the College of Nursing, Malone will have an entirely different clientele in her retirement career.

Malone retired Jan. 19 as program assistant II in the dean’s office and in February opened Wigglebutts, a doggy day care and grooming business in a building she purchased on Main Street in Arlington, where she lives. “After 35 years of administrative work, I thought caring for pets would be a fun way to stay active in my retirement,” Malone said.

As a program assistant in the dean’s office, her role was to assist the dean and College of Nursing leadership team. She also served as the personnel specialist for the college. For six years before that she was a program assistant in the continuing nursing education office.


Her SDSU connection began as a student, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in child and family development in 1983. From 1983 to 1989 she served as training coordinator in the SDSU Division of Lifelong Learning. In 1989, she obtained her master’s degree in counseling from SDSU and was hired as assistant director of the SDSU counseling center, a position she held for 10 years.

After enjoying a 22-month hiatus from paid employment, Rosen returned to SDSU to join the College of Nursing RN Upward Mobility program in April 2001. Her responsibilities included serving as the coordinator of the first online degree completion program offered at SDSU and providing academic advising with RN students from the start of their program through graduation.

One of her lasting memories with the college is receiving a Star Quilt from her Native American RN students in 2005. “This touched my heart so deeply that I was speechless. The gift of the Star Quilt was a complete surprise and a wonderful honor. There are many, many good, kind people who make SDSU a wonderful place,” she said.

In retirement, Rosen plans to make more memories with friends and family—husband, Tom, son Tony, daughter Amie, and their spouses; three grandchildren and three granddogs.

The couple also has plans to travel in warmer climates, ride bikes and visit all the National Parks as well as explore new areas on their Harley. Rosen also relishes the luxury of being able to be spontaneous and involved in volunteer activities.

The biostatistics expert also handled number-crunching for Nancy Fahrenwald’s research on kidney disease among Native Americans. His lasting memories from SDSU are time spent collaborating with faculty on research projects in the Ethel Austin Martin, nursing, nutrition and exercise science programs.

Prior to coming to SDSU in 1997, he was a research toxicologist at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health within the Centers for Disease Control in Cincinnati. But when he arrived at SDSU with his wife, Wey decided to leave lab research behind and make the computer his lab.

Toward that end, he earned a master’s degree in mathematics and statistics from SDSU in 2006. He also holds a bachelor’s degree in biology from Wright State University in Ohio (1975) and a doctorate in toxicology from the University of Cincinnati (1980).

Wey and Specker have four children, one grandchild and another on the way.
Kelley Kruger  |  Senior Secretary
Sioux Falls

Kruger began April 2017 working with the undergraduate and graduate programs and greeting everyone at the front desk.

Previously, the Tea native worked with the 4-H program in Lincoln County.

She holds an associate degree from Southeast Tech in Sioux Falls. Kruger and her husband, Luke, have a daughter, Chloe, 7. The family spends almost every summer weekend at the Missouri River by Pease Creek.

Callie Jodozi-Molengraaf  |  Research Coordinator
Brookings

Jodozi-Molengraaf arrived at the college May 30, 2017, with a wealth of experience in working with grants at SDSU.

She had spent the past five years as a program assistant I in the Office of Technology Transfer and Commercialization. From 2010 to 2012, she was a research assistant for the National Children’s Study with the Ethel Austin Martin Program. Her longest tenure, 1999 to 2010, was as a quality control specialist with the Family Resource Network. While there, she was named SDSU Civil Service Employee of the Month in September 2004.

Jodozi-Molengraaf has nearly 23 years of experience at State, including time spent in work study at SDSU. She earned a bachelor’s degree in human development and family studies from SDSU in 1997.

In her current position, she works on program evaluation efforts with the South Dakota Department of Health, most recently with the youth tobacco survey and a survey of children with special health-care needs. She also assists faculty by coordinating activities for the college’s program grants.

A native of Oldham, Jodozi-Molengraaf and her husband, Thomas, have a daughter, Madison, 15; and two sons, Ethan, 13, and Dawsyn, 10.

In her free time, Jodozi-Molengraaf enjoys attending her children’s sporting events, spending time with her husband, family and friends, and shopping.

Amanda Mehlhaff  |  Instructor
Rapid City

Mehlhaff has been working as a clinical instructor for SDSU since 2012 and became a full-time instructor in the fall.

She teaches the first-year seminar, the first- and fifth-semester labs and the first-semester post-clinical seminar. The Rapid City native graduated from SDSU in 2009 and added a master’s from Western Governor’s University in 2017. She received the Excellence Award in Comprehensive Health Assessment while in graduate school.

After graduating from SDSU, she worked part time in the cardiac intervention unit at Rapid City Regional Hospital and part time in the pain clinic at Black Hills Surgical Hospital. She then worked full time in post-surgical care and in the operating room at Black Hills. She also did clinical teaching and handled workload assignment while working part-time for SDSU.

She and her husband, Danny, have a son, Teegan, 6, and a daughter, Harper, 4. In her free time, Mehlhaff enjoys camping, traveling and cooking.
Ovall can be excused if she walked into the wrong office the first few days after beginning work with the College of Nursing Feb. 26.

From August 2001 through Feb. 23, going to work meant walking through the door of Wagner Hall 229, the Consumer Sciences office. But on the following Monday, her job site was just a few doors down, filling the position held by Sandra Malone, who retired (see separate story).

The 2016-17 College of Education and Human Sciences outstanding support staff winner began her SDSU career in the Facilities and Services office (then Physical Plant) in April 1999.

Her current duties range from approval of payroll and recruiting student workers to purchasing and orientation of new faculty and staff.

When away from the office, Ovall enjoys reading, going to her children’s sporting events and spending time at Lake Hendricks with her family—husband, Darren, and children Kayla, 20, Chase, 17, and Karsyn, 12.

Ovall

Program Assistant II, Dean’s Office

Brookings

Ray began Aug. 14, 2017, and has a full course load, teaching first-year seminar, online courses in medical terminology and interprofessional perspectives in health care, and clinicals in gerontology, maternal/child and population health as well as the first-semester skills lab.

The Pipestone, Minnesota, native was a nursing instructor for the University of South Dakota in Pierre from 2003 to 2017. In May 2017, Ray received the student-nominated Teaching Excellence Award. In 2011, she received the USD Nursing Excellence in Service Award.

She also worked as-needed as an RN at Avera St. Mary’s in Pierre from August 2003 to June 2016. Ray worked full time as an RN at Avera St. Mary’s Healthcare Center in Pierre from June 1995 to August 2003. She also worked as a prenatal instructor at Growing Up Together in Pierre from 2010 to 2015.

Ray earned her bachelor’s degree from SDSU in 1995 and her master’s from the University of Phoenix in 2006.

She is married to Gary Ray, a 1994 SDSU economics graduate and a Farmer’s Union Insurance Agent in Brookings. They have three children—Angela Cordell, a nurse in Watertown; Robert, of Worthing, and Mark, of Brookings—and one granddaughter.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her children and granddaughter as well as fishing, jet skiing and following the Minnesota Twins and Vikings.

Ray

Instructor

Brookings

Schardin joined the faculty in May 2017 after retiring from 20 years (1996-2016) as assistant administrator and then hospital administrator in De Smet, which is a critical-access hospital.

She received her bachelor’s degree in 1976 from SDSU and did front-line nursing duties in the areas of orthopedics, geriatrics, surgical, cardiac, rehabilitation and community health nursing at facilities in Sioux Falls, Brookings, Rapid City and then back home to De Smet. She also was an instructor and adjunct faculty member for SDSU in Brookings (1986-88, 1996) and Rapid City (1995).

Schardin gained a master’s degree with a focus on geriatrics and management in 1993 from SDSU and in 2005 completed a postmaster’s nurse educator program from SDSU with a focus on online education. Schardin has been a member of Sigma Theta Tau since 1991 and member of Phi Kappa Phi since 2002.

At SDSU, she teaches online RN and LPN refresher courses and the online interprofessional issues in health care class and lectures on professional nursing concepts. She also is involved with clinicals focusing on community, gerontology and population health as well as simulation activities.

Schardin, who now lives in Baltic, has a daughter, Jennifer, of Staples, Minnesota, and a son, Ryan, of Baltic, and five grandchildren. In her free time, she enjoys scrapbooking and participating in community theater.

Schardin

Instructor

Sioux Falls

Ovall

Program Assistant II, Dean’s Office

Brookings

Ray

Instructor

Brookings

Schardin

Instructor

Sioux Falls
Marie Schmit  |  Grant Program Specialist
Brookings

Schmit joined the Office of Nursing Research in August 2017. In her job, Schmit assists faculty and staff in the College of Nursing with pre- and post-award grant management and assists with project implementation for public health contracts with the college. A key to success in this position is building relationships and collaborating with faculty and staff across the four program sites.

Schmit’s background is in health education. The Bruce native received a bachelor’s degree in health promotion in 2001 and a master’s degree in exercise physiology in 2005, both from SDSU.

She began her career as a research associate/community outreach coordinator for the University of South Dakota School of Medicine (2004-06) and served as an exercise consultant for the Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Diabetes Program (2005-09). From 2006 until taking her current position, Schmit was the diabetes program director for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe.

From August 2004 through May 2017, she has also been a temporary or adjunct instructor at SDSU in the Department of Health and Nutritional Sciences.

Cassi Severson  |  Diversity Outreach & Engagement Coordinator
Rapid City

Severson returned to SDSU in July 2017 after working one year as an admissions counselor at Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City. Before then, Severson was a secretary at the college’s Rapid City site from August 2015 to June 2016.

The Platte native earned a degree in history/education from SDSU’s main campus in 2013 with a minor in sociology. Now she is pursuing a master’s degree in student affairs administration at SDSU. Her interests are higher education policy and research, and rural, underprivileged and first-generation college student success.

Her current position offers variety—reaching out to prospective students and community partners, planning events and advising students.

In her free time, Severson and her husband, Mike, enjoy hiking and backpacking.

Allyson Stromer  |  Instructor
Rapid City

Stromer earned her master’s degree in nursing education from SDSU Dec. 17, 2017, and joined the faculty the next month, Jan. 8, to be exact.

She teaches semester one professional nursing concepts, community and gerontology clinicals, semester two nursing principles and application and is the interventions laboratory instructor.

The Rapid City native, who earned her bachelor’s degree in 2008 from SDSU, worked in clinical effectiveness at Regional Health in Rapid City from February 2014 until January 2018. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau and Phi Kappa Phi.

In her free time, Stromer enjoys traveling, hiking and spending time with her sons, River, 8, and Beck, 6, at the lake.

Megan Watson  |  Instructor
Rapid City

Watson began the new year with a new job. She officially entered the payroll Dec. 22, 2017, and is teaching principals of nursing to juniors and senior-level courses in population-centered care concepts and clinicals as well as the fifth-semester nursing capstone class and simulation.

Watson earned her bachelor’s degree from SDSU’s Rapid City site in 2012. She then began work in the intensive care unit at Rapid City Regional Hospital and continued working there while pursuing her master’s degree at SDSU, which she received in 2017, when she also received the Outstanding Graduate Award.

Watson continues to work at the hospital on an as-needed basis. Watson, a member of Sigma Theta Tau and Golden Key, is married to Evan, an SDSU graduate in environmental management. They have a son, Finley, 3. In her free time, she enjoys food and travel, exploring the outdoors, cooking, reading and spending time with family and friends.
While trying to improve herself, Jill Bormann came across something that helped her patients and, as a result, changed her entire career.

“Many years ago, I was looking for a type of daily meditation that I could commit to,” said Bormann, a clinical professor at the University of San Diego. “I found passage meditation by Eknath Easwaran. It involves the memorization and quiet recitation of inspirational passages and/or Bible verses while sitting with eyes closed, and has supportive disciplines of slowing down and one-pointed attention.”

“Easwaran and his students had created a health education program for individuals with AIDS at the start of the epidemic, and I was invited to help teach the program,” she continued. “What I learned as a nurse teaching this type of meditation was that the patients could do it during our eight-week classes, but as soon as classes ended, they stopped meditating. But, to my surprise, they loved using the other supportive disciplines for stress management because they could implement them at any time, any place and they were really effective! That observation jump-started my goal of conducting research to support her teaching.

“I knew firsthand that the portable practices gave me the tools to relieve anxiety and feel more centered, more grounded. When I saw how they helped patients, I got excited,” she said. “These practices are some additional tools for your toolbox; they’re not meant to replace everything else but to be added and used in whatever way works best for you.”

Bormann talked about her work and ways to manage stress April 5 in the University Student Union’s Volstorff Ballroom as the Helen K. Grace and Nursing Deans’ Distinguished Lecturer. It was one of her first visits to campus after having spent several Saturday afternoons as a child cheering on the Jackrabbits and watching the Hobo Day parade. The Parker native’s mother, Lois, and sister, Sharon, graduated from State while her father, Earl, had his academic career cut short due to joining the U.S. Navy.

“The tools I described are meant to be practiced daily because they can be easily implemented at any time or at any place, intermittently throughout the day and before sleep at night. And anyone can do them,” Bormann said. “There is no requirement to have a special place, special time or any particular equipment. Daily practice is necessary, however, to make these tools a habit. Behavior change is hard and generally cannot be sustained until it becomes automatic.”

She said participants should practice the skills when one does not need them but so they’re available and can be part of a routine when one does need them.

“They’re not a quick fix,” she said, noting she wanted attendees to come away feeling inspired and excited as a result of learning some new and practical ways to manage stress.

“Most of us already know the behaviors we ought to do for stress management. For example, getting enough sleep, eating healthy, daily exercise, etc., but we either don’t do them or we can’t sustain them,” Bormann said. “With commitment and daily practice, everyone experiences the benefits over time.”

Matt Schmidt
From ICU to patient advocate, grad finds niche for TLC in Phoenix area

Everybody needs a mom, especially when you've just been released from outpatient surgery.

But when mom can't be there, Mallory Weiss Buxton can be; at least if you live in the Phoenix area.

Since Sept. 22, 2016, the Parkston High School graduate has been operating Solo’s, a business she started in the Paradise Valley region of the Phoenix metropolis after observing all wasn’t paradise in the Phoenix health-care community.

“The care we were giving at bedside units was not near the care we were giving in South Dakota. There was a nurse shortage and nurses were always under the gun to discharge a patient and add another patient,” Weiss Buxton said.

Buxton and her husband, Brett, moved to the Phoenix suburb of Scottsdale in 2014 after she had worked three years at Avera Heart Hospital in Sioux Falls. She spent two years working in everything from the medical-surgical ICU to outpatient infusion at multiple hospitals in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

What she saw bothered Buxton, whose mother is a nurse at Avera Heart Hospital.

She made the decision in April 2016 to start a concierge service and had been working part time even before that as she probed “this burning desire that I am going to do something, to grow something.” She continued working part time after launching Solo’s Concierge Home Care (now Solo’s Concierge Nurse Patient Advocates) and cut back her hours to as-needed in July 2017. By September she was full time with Solo’s.

Buxton is assisted by four independent contractors, also registered nurses. “Two of the four are nurses at other doctor’s offices,” Buxton said.

Mecca for plastic surgery

She has gotten her name out by working with the dozens of specialty clinics in Phoenix, Scottsdale and the East Valley region. Her focus is on patients recovering from plastic, cosmetic or reconstructive surgery. The region is known for these surgeries.

Clients come in from out-of-state and out-of-country as well there being a strong socioeconomic base there, Buxton said.

Plastic surgery patients make up 80 percent of her customer base. Others might be recovering from a colonoscopy or orthopedic surgery.

“The typical patient is someone who doesn’t want to bother friends or family after surgery. We get them all tucked in and settled (at home). If they’re from the area, they have family and friends to check on them. But last week we had a client whom we would drop in once a day to check on her dressings, help her bathe, answer questions and call the doctor with any concerns.

“Often our service is transportation and coming by once a day or twice a day while their spouse or significant other is working,” Buxton said.

Nurses, but not a nursing service

The tasks that Solo’s nurses perform would not require one to be a nurse. “We provide home care. As a nurse patient advocate, we just happened to be nurses and have the educational background. We are not a home health-care company, which would give shots and infusions,” Buxton said of her unique service.

“There are two to three other nurse patient advocates in the valley I know of. There are nurse’s aides who market to plastic surgeons. But as far as I know, I’m the only nurse who offers these unique services and especially to this market,” Buxton said.

The business has definitely found a niche. “Last Thursday I had three different patients. I used to only have three patients in a whole month. Sometimes I get calls weeks in advance. Sometimes they’re same-day calls. I love being able to say yes to all of them. In November, I had to say no to two patients because the nurses were already booked."

At that point she added a couple other independent contractors.

Buxton has ambitious plans for 2018, hoping to make Solo’s a million-dollar business by broadening its clinic focus. That means walking into clinics and selling her company. Not exactly the training she got in the nursing simulation lab on the SDSU campus, but Buxton said her nursing training is still useful as an entrepreneur.

“Nursing school taught us how to relate to patients and clients, meeting new people, making relationships; being able to walk into an office and make them laugh.”

Dave Graves
Ehlers thought she might be a doctor or a nurse practitioner

Courtney (Johnson) Ehlers has found herself journeying on a career path she thought she would never venture upon, but she appreciates the people and situations that have guided her there.

“I am very happy where I’m at. I think I’ve found my fit,” said Ehlers, director of women and children’s services at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls.

When the Yankton High School graduate enrolled at State in fall 1998, she thought she would become a doctor. The premed major did quite well as an undergraduate, earning degrees in both chemistry and microbiology-infectious disease in 2002. Her undergraduate work included research in microbiology and animal science.

“After I finished my first undergraduate degree, I wasn’t quite sure of where I wanted to go,” Ehlers said.

She took a job in cellular biology research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. She enjoyed her study of hypertension in the kidneys. But at the same time, she realized she wanted something else. “I definitely knew I wanted to be on the front side working directly with the patient,” Ehlers said.

Career switch No. 1

She didn’t have to think twice about where to obtain her nursing degree.

“I had a couple acquaintances who had gone through the acceleration program. I had many friends and roommates from the first time who were nursing grads. SDSU had a good reputation for nursing education,” said Ehlers, who entered the 13-month acceleration program in Sioux Falls in August 2004.

“The amazing thing about SDSU, you have the exposure to all these realms of nursing. Accelerated gets you exposed to all the nursing roles,” she said.

But the only role Ehlers wanted was that of the traditional bedside nurse. “I wanted the ongoing care that you can have in a nursing relationship.” She worked in that role for five years at Avera. Her dream was to become a nurse practitioner in a rural area and entered SDSU’s DNP program in 2010 to make that happen.

“When I started my program, there was a leadership opportunity in pediatrics. Many colleagues encouraged me to apply and the Avera leadership encouraged me to continue my education,” so Ehlers proceeded in the DNP program after being elevated to manager of the children’s center and pediatric intensive care unit.

“I was doing one class a semester. I came to my last year (2014). I was about to do my clinicals when another opportunity opened in leadership.”

Career switch No. 2

This was for her current position, director of women and children’s services. “Things just fell into fruition. As a student, my path changed, but I actually had enough courses to complete my master’s in administration. While I didn’t finish the DNP, I did finish my master’s degree,” said Ehlers, noting that graduate education has been valuable.

She admits, “as an undergraduate, I thought ‘Why do we have to take these different classes in leadership and financial roles in nursing?’

“But those beginning courses really set the tone. They bring with them a care that is full circle, continuous. I think the program SDSU put forward was a vision that was bigger than just a bedside. How do you make an impact that advances the entire profession? My impact isn’t just with the patients we’re caring for, but it also helps me to impact the future of nursing.

Selected for yearlong fellowship

Ehlers finds great satisfaction in “being able to make a difference in what the nurses are doing at the bedside. My favorite thing here is being able to connect back to the College of Nursing. I’ve been a guest speaker at a couple undergrad classes. I tell them real-life stories of what we do every day as an administrator.

“For me, it’s being able to tell the story of how impactful a nurse can be. It’s a profession that is highly regarded and there are so many facets of nursing—nurse practitioner, administrator, educator.”

Ehlers was among 20 people selected for a yearlong fellowship with the American Organization of Nurse Educators. The fellowship includes several trips, including traveling to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the nursing profession, and a capstone project designed to benefit the fellows’ place of employment.

Dave Graves
Meeting led to Jenkins’ degree at State

Despite having several generations of relatives attend South Dakota State University, Larry Jenkins did not initially think of attending it.

After receiving two undergraduate degrees from the University of Kansas, Jenkins was looking to earn a master’s degree in nursing with a clinical nurse leader specialization. He inquired about getting it at KU but learned it would soon be closing the program. That led him to searching the internet and discovering State’s online program, which appealed to the resident of Garden City, Kansas.

“I had a lot of my family attend South Dakota State and all of them who went there had been successful in life so that might have been a sign for me to attend South Dakota State,” Jenkins said. “However, the main reason was a meeting with Anna Atteberry-Gustafson (assistant director of nursing student services at the college’s Sioux Falls campus). I never envisioned I’d go there but with her encouragement, I applied. I didn’t have a lot of confidence but when wrapping up the appointment, she said ‘I expect to see an application from you.’ That encouragement, that belief in me, was why I applied to South Dakota State.”

Atteberry-Gustafson said she did nothing different when talking with Jenkins than she does when meeting with other potential students. However, she was concerned that him living in Kansas was going to be an issue regarding his enrollment.

“We had to be a little flexible and were able to change his course schedule so the semester he’d have to travel would work best for him,” she said. “What really struck me about Larry was his determination and passion for wanting to get a master’s degree and be a CNL.”

Jenkins completed his master’s degree in 2017 and is now looking to add a postmaster’s certificate in nursing education from State. He recently accepted a position with Garden City Community College to be part of its nursing faculty.

He will continue working when he can fit it in at St. Catherine, where he worked for 27 years, most recently as director of the critical care, cardiopulmonary and flex teams.

Jenkins liked working at the bedside and being in an the acute-care setting, but the quest to improve processes and use everything available to improve patient care pushed him to be a CNL and pursue a master’s degree.

While working at St. Catherine, Jenkins realized an opportunity to improve care for its diabetic patients.

“When working in the ICU, I realized there was not a lot of information available to teach patients about their diabetes. We had a general idea but no formalized plan or checklist. I was frustrated and I’ve learned most CNL projects are from frustrated CNLs when working with processes,” Jenkins said. “There is so much information to teach diabetics that there can be an information overload aspect from the nursing side.”

Jenkins and an intensivist in the ICU developed a checklist for nurses on how to teach patients ways to better manage diabetes. Jenkins presented on the topic in February at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Clinical Nurse Leader Summit in Anaheim, California.

“We were able to create and print areas of education and create a checklist so a nurse could see what had been taught to a patient and what was needed to be taught,” he said. “We tried to streamline the process so the nurses didn’t have a lot of nonvalue time with a patient so they could spend more time teaching the patient.”

The 2018 AACN CNL Summit was Jenkins’s second as he first attended as a student.

“That first one was an eye-opener,” he said. “Since nurses tend to ‘boil the ocean,’ it showed me I needed to focus on fundamentals; focus on where the patient is, not where you want the patient to be when working on a project.

“In our case, we couldn’t assume patients knew they could exercise by taking the stairs or park at the back of the parking lot when shopping. Or that they could improve their health by shopping perimeter of the grocery store because of where fresh produce is located,” Jenkins continued. “We sometimes take that knowledge for granted and don’t pass that information on to the patients. The staff at St. Catherine told me that when educating the patients about these little things, they could see the lights click on for the patients, who didn’t think about how much extra exercise one could get by taking the stairs or parking at the end of the lot.”

Jenkins now looks to carry that knowledge to prepare the next generation of nurses.

Matt Schmidt
Teaching was something that Allison Mueller ‘09/M.S.’17 always thought she’d do. In fact, it was a tough decision for her to choose between nursing and education as an undergraduate at South Dakota State.

“When I was an undergraduate and trying to decide what my major would be, I went back forth between nursing and teaching, because I love both,” Mueller said, adding she always had a love of science and a desire to learn how the body works. “I chose to go into nursing with the idea to go back and teach nursing students.”

Mueller, who completed her master’s degree in nursing with the nurse education specialization in December, works as an instructor at Augustana University.

“Most of the educators I’ve worked with have always kind of known education was something they liked and there was something that always pulled them in that direction. I had the same feeling,” she said. “I’ve always liked seeing the light bulbs go on for the students. When I would work with students or new nurses, when they’d get something and you could see it all click, ‘yes, you’re getting it.’ I really liked that part of it. I like seeing people learn, grow and progress and become great nurses.”

That’s one thing Assistant Professor Heidi Mennenga noted about Mueller.

“At her final defense, Allison talked about what a privilege it was to be a teacher and to be able to guide students through the process of becoming a nurse,” said Mennenga, who is the coordinator for State’s nurse educator specialization master’s degree program.

Before starting work on her master’s, Mueller worked at Avera McKennan, starting as a bedside nurse before becoming a nurse educator and charge nurse there. She maintains clinical practice working shifts as a bedside nurse.

“I knew I’d end up going back to school and getting my master’s degree,” she said, noting she waited five years before returning to college because she wanted to have a foundation of experience before returning to the classroom. “When you’re practicing and teaching, you always want to have examples to use in lectures and patient experiences to talk about or a situation you had to deal with, that you can use to create a picture for students. I think it helps you connect with the students.”

Due to her experience at Avera McKennan, Mueller quickly adapted to being in front of a class. However, there were many things that took some time to get used to.

“I’m now the one who gets the final choices about what I want to teach, what learning activities I want to include and determine what are my test questions. It’s intimidating,” she said. “Another big thing is that my level of experience and how I practice is different from my students. I have to remember I’ve practiced for almost 10 years and they don’t have that knowledge base. I have to break it down in a way for them to understand. There are times when it’s hard for me to think about that because all of it makes sense in my head but does it make sense for them with their background? That’s been a challenge.

“One valuable thing I’ve learned from other instructors is that we always need to re-evaluate how we’re teaching and learning,” Mueller continued. “Nothing is ever perfect. If it’s not effective, we look to make changes and improve.”
AWARDS:
- Robin Arends — honored by District 10 of the South Dakota Nurses Association for her contributions to the SDNA and the nursing profession, October 2017.
- Nancy Fahrenwald — honored by Districts 8 and 9 of the South Dakota Nurses Association for her contributions to the SDNA and the nursing profession, October 2017.
- Nicole Gibson — honored by District 10 of the South Dakota Nurses Association for her contributions to the SDNA and the nursing profession, October 2017; AANPNorth Dakota Nurse Practitioner Advocate Award, November 2017.
- Roberta Olson, emeritus faculty — Hall of Fame Award, South Dakota Nurses Association, October 2017.
- Carol J. Peterson, emeritus faculty — Pioneer in Nursing Award, South Dakota Nurses Association, October 2017.
- Sylvia Pickard — Joy of Nursing Award, South Dakota Nurses Association, October 2017.
- Thomas Stenvig — President’s Award, South Dakota Nurses Association, October 2017.
- Venita Winterboer — Nurse Educator Award, South Dakota Nurses Association, October 2017.

FELLOWSHIPS:
- Arends, R. FAANP — American Association of Nurse Practitioners (2017)

PUBLICATIONS:
- Alham Abustaq
- Victoria Britton
- Patricia Da Rosa
- Nancy Fahrenwald
- Becka Foerster

Lori Hendrickx

Leann Horsley

Polly Hulme

Mary Isaacson

Jennifer Kerkvliet

Cristina Lammers

Heidi Mennenga
Stacey Tait-Goodale announced her decision to leave the SDSU Foundation after four years as development director for the College of Nursing. “I’ve decided it is time to move on and look for a position aligned to fulfill my career goals,” she said. “It has truly been my pleasure working with this team that continues to transform lives, enhance excellence and cultivate generosity. I leave grateful to have done such inspiring work and for having met so many amazing people.”

Her departure coincides with a new career opportunity for her husband, Doug, a 1988 SDSU graduate.

“We appreciate Stacey’s contributions to the Foundation and College of Nursing,” said Steve Erpenbach, president and CEO of the SDSU Foundation.

Mike Birgen, associate vice president for development, will act as interim until a replacement is hired.

Mary Minton

Mary Kay Nissen

Mary Vockrodt

Howard Wey

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SDSU FOUNDATION

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Mike Birgen
Toll-free: (888) 747-SDSU
Local: (605) 697-7475
mike.birgen@sdstatefoundation.org

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The College of Nursing would like to remind you of its football tailgate when the Jackrabbits play Arkansas-Pine Bluff in the 52nd Beef Bowl. At last year’s event was faculty member Sue Bassett (left) and friends Merritt and Pam Warren (right).