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Message from THE DEAN

Dear College of Nursing Alumni and Friends,

This past several months have been a whirlwind as I have settled into my new role as dean. I must recognize my predecessors, Dean Nancy Fahrenwald and Interim Dean Roberta Olson, for their support and mentorship during this transition period. Their expertise and knowledge have been instrumental in the success of the operations of the College of Nursing. I am grateful for their wise counsel.

The College of Nursing is in its second year of the Imagine 2023 Strategic Plan and we are making steady progress toward our goals, a few of which deserve mentioning. One of our major goals is to achieve excellence in nursing education through transformative academic and continuing education programs. The Continuing Nursing Education division’s goal of achieving provider status through the American Nurses Credentialing Center was furthered tremendously through our partnership with CareSpan and our planned certification project for their providers. In addition, the RN and PN refresher programs were completely revamped this year to reflect the continued excellence that is SDSU nursing. I am confident these programs reflect that excellence.

Diversity, inclusion and access are important goals within the college to achieve our goal to be a growing, high-performing and healthy college. This year, a holistic admission process was implemented to increase diversity within our admitted student body across graduate and undergraduate programs. Holistic admission takes student experiences into account and recognizes the diverse talents and backgrounds of our student population. The Native American Nursing Education Center in Rapid City has grown substantially over the past two years, and I am happy to report an enrollment of 38 prenursing and nursing students from our tribal communities. Through intentional mentoring, support and educational offerings, 100% of the NANEC students have remained in the program since its inception in 2017.

This has been an excellent year of success for our graduating students. The spring 2019 BSN graduates can boast a 99% pass rate on the national board exam. Our family nurse practitioner students continue to do extremely well on their certifying examination, with a consistent 100% pass rate over the past several years. These outcomes are strongly linked to the dedicated faculty and staff, and the hard work of the SDSU nursing students themselves.

To meet the strategic goal of cultivating and strengthening partnerships with educational entities, organizations and with state, regional and global communities, the College of Nursing continues to meet regularly with our academic/practice partners. We recently held our first-ever National Faculty Meeting sponsored by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and several of our practice partners joined to provide their unique perspectives on care challenges to help us to grow the critical nursing workforce for South Dakota and beyond. One example of our academic/practice partnerships is our ongoing collaboration with the Sioux Falls Veterans Affairs Health Care System. This effort has resulted in expanded simulation, provider recognition and professional development for SDSU faculty and the VA nursing team.

I am extremely proud of the work of all our faculty and staff as we seek continuous quality improvement in our educational and clinical offerings for all students.

Mary Anne Krogh, Ph.D., APRN, CRNA, FAAN
Dean and Professor
SDSU College of Nursing (B.S. ’85, Ph.D. ’11)
ON THE COVER:
Clinical associate professor Mary Kay Nissen explains to Tammy Hall, an accelerated student in Sioux Falls, how to use a stethoscope as part of the CareSpan USA Inc.’s Virtual Clinic. CareSpan and South Dakota State University’s College of Nursing announced an agreement that allows the college to use CareSpan’s technology and tools to instruct students. See page 2.

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Following a career as a reconstructive surgeon, medical device and health care IT inventor and executive, Dr. Terry Knapp became a cancer patient. As a patient, he birthed the idea of creating a "clinic-in-the-cloud" that would enable health care to scale globally, to reach the underserved, and to do it faster, cheaper and better.

That was the impetus for what is now CareSpan USA Inc. and its parent company, CareSpan Holdings, which recently extended its agreement with the South Dakota State University College of Nursing to train students in digital care delivery.

"CareSpan was inspired largely on the observation that there are vast numbers of underserved patients around the world," Knapp said. "We don’t think of CareSpan’s virtual clinic as telehealth or telemedicine but as an integrated digital care delivery platform. We integrate hundreds of digital diagnostic..."
tools. We believe from a clinical perspective that CareSpan is a comprehensive, internet-based clinic. But from a technological perspective, it’s more like an operating system for health care in that the platform can integrate a burgeoning number of software apps and hardware tools for care delivery.

“The idea with SDSU’s College of Nursing was that the CareSpan platform would be good for nurse practitioners, graduate nurses and even undergraduate nurses to really become familiar with the emerging digital technologies that can transform health care in the 21st century,” said Knapp, who founded CareSpan in 2010. “We look at our SDSU College of Nursing relationship as a public-private partnership aimed at improving medical care for all.”

Helping lead the way to improving medical care for all is JoEllen Koerner ’82 M.S., who is CareSpan’s chief nursing officer. (For more on Koerner, see page 4). Koerner, who has been instrumental in connecting SDSU and CareSpan, said the College of Nursing is the first in the nation to use the platform to train students. The college also has plans to build a postgraduate digital health certification program by using the CareSpan platform as the teaching vehicle. Other ways to use the CareSpan platform are in discussion.

In partnership with the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, the College of Nursing is already using the CareSpan platform on an opioid treatment study grant.
“With this system, and with the simulations and interactions with the other disciplines on campus, we can give our students everything that would take place during a visit,” said Mary Kay Nissen, a clinical associate professor with the college’s Sioux Falls site. “We are going to keep building on those experiences for them.”

Knapp and Koerner both said the CareSpan platform is not only a “clinic in the cloud” for remote use but is also just as useful for in-person or in-office care.

JoEllen Koerner ’82 M.S. tried to quench her untamed curiosity by driving 180 miles a day twice a week to earn a master’s degree in nursing from South Dakota State University. While she admits that curiosity is alive today, those trips created a connection to the College of Nursing.

Now serving as the chief nursing officer with CareSpan Networks Inc., Koerner has been instrumental in having the College of Nursing use CareSpan’s virtual clinical platform since December 2015.

“I learned Nancy Fahrenwald, a friend and colleague, was working on an HRSA telehealth grant while I was working with CareSpan in setting up its clinic in the cloud,” Koerner said. “I said I wanted to launch it at SDSU because it’s a land-grant university, it’s my alma mater and a quality university. Also, I knew Nancy would make it happen and South Dakota was the perfect use case for the product as it’s rural, sparsely populated, aging and has nine Native American reservations.

“I owe my wonderful career, in large part, to the master’s education I got at SDSU, as do many others,” she continued. “I have always felt that education is the key to opening ever-widening doors of opportunity … and when a school embodies the culture and values that resonate with your own, a deeper knowing and commitment are cultivated.”

Fahrenwald ’83, who served as the college’s dean from 2013-18, saw how CareSpan would enable nurses to meet the health needs of underserved communities regardless of time or distance.

“Because of my own commitment to a future where there is access to quality health care for rural and underserved populations, I must shine a light on the heart of a woman who leads, cares and serves, to benefit the population of South Dakota and beyond,” said Fahrenwald, who is now the dean at Texas A&M’s College of Nursing. “The work of transforming access to health care happens when the right teams of leaders stay the course in their pursuit of the greater good.

“Along with JoEllen, I believe that access to primary health care, and even some specialty care, is solvable through patient-centered and technology-based approaches,” Fahrenwald continued. “JoEllen is a scholar of nursing who envisioned a future where health care could be delivered cost-effectively by certified nurse practitioners and physician specialists. Through her current work with CareSpan, that vision will become a reality. I believe her leadership in building a ‘virtual clinical in a cloud’ will impact the rural and underserved across the globe.”

Mary Anne Krogh ’85/’11 Ph.D. has been impressed with Koerner’s determination and passion to serve all, particularly South Dakotans.

“JoEllen is truly a visionary when it comes to meeting the challenging health care demands of a rural state, such as South Dakota,” Krogh said. “Her
“CareSpan is much more multidimensional than anything you may find in a simple video chat system,” Knapp said.

Dean Mary Anne Krogh ’85/’11 Ph.D. agrees and is thankful for the opportunity SDSU students get to learn the CareSpan platform.

“We highly value our relationship with CareSpan because it opens up an entirely new world to our students related to accessible care and how innovative care approaches will improve the health and well-being of our rural population,” she said.

Nissen sees it as part of the future. A nurse practitioner, Nissen has a rural practice in Shenandoah, Iowa, when not in the classroom. She is asked by a 90-year-old woman there when CareSpan will be available for her.

“I think of a time when she goes to bed and hooks herself up to Alexa,” Nissen said. “When she wakes up, Alexa says ‘you had three episodes where your heart rate was 110’ or ‘you weren’t breathing’ or ‘you’re 5 pounds heavier than you were last week. I’ve monitored your blood pressure, heart rate ... and there’s a 10 a.m. opening with your telehealth provider, would you like me to put you in there?’

“Alexa schedules it and then sets a reminder for the visit,” she continued. “These things actually can all be done there and can happen; that’s what she dreams of. If we could have something like that for the elderly people at home in our small and rural communities, they can get treatment instead of just sitting at home and letting their conditions get worse. It’s the future.”

Matt Schmidt
One of Christina Plemmons’ goals as assistant dean at the College of Nursing’s Rapid City site is to get to know others, not only in the college but also in the Rapid City community. Plemmons was promoted to assistant dean this past summer.

“I see that it is part of my role to be more visible in the community. The College of Nursing is here, tied to SDSU and people know SDSU because of its excellent reputation. However, I find that people still don’t know nursing is here, and we’ve been here since 1980s,” she said.

The simulation teaching team is following her lead. Members of the simulation team took the college’s Sim Man (simulation mannequin) and several students to downtown Rapid City during Healthcare Simulation Week 2019 (Sept. 16-20) to show what the college has to offer.

Plemmons, who has been a full-time instructor in Rapid City since 2009, is also leading the college’s first cohort of the Leadership Challenge Opportunity and is using that program to meet others in the college.

But first she’s working on getting to know her staff better.

“I’m meeting with the full-time faculty first, getting to know what each person adds to the teaching team,” Plemmons said. “I see my role as facilitating the education process; I work for the team.”

“My background is business, that was my first degree, so some of the processes I’m challenging, such as how do we track this data, can we streamline this, or how can we be aware of funding available, really comes through,” Plemmons continued.

Plemmons said monthly meetings with the college’s other assistant deans as well as the overall college leadership help her feel connected to the Brookings campus.

“And Dean Krogh (who was named dean in April) has been here for two events,” Plemmons said in early October. “Our students get to see her and when the students in Rapid City feel a connection to the Brookings campus, that builds a sense of trust and makes my job easier.”

Matt Schmidt

Although born in Rapid City, Karin Emery spent most of her nursing career in South Carolina and Virginia. Her degrees came from the University of South Carolina and Virginia Commonwealth University. When she was looking to help develop new nurses, the SDSU College of Nursing was first on the list.

She made a cold call to Lois Tschetter and what started as a family vacation became a job interview and eventual position. Emery was an instructor at the college’s Sioux Falls site and was named the college’s assistant dean for undergraduate nursing in Brookings.

“I felt that with my background, many of the assistant dean job-related duties were familiar to me, which would help with the transition,” Emery said. “We also have a great team here so I knew that there would be support for my success in the new role.”

Emery’s introduction to nursing came in high school when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I helped take care of her and realized the role nurses play in the care of patients and families; it takes a team,” she said. “It was a profound experience; that was when I decided I was going into nursing.”

Emery’s nursing career started in pediatrics, moved to pediatric emergency room and then cross trained to the adult side of the ER. She also spent a year opening Virginia’s first 23-hour observation unit in an ER before becoming a nurse manager. A few years later, her administration experience led her to a leadership role with ambulatory care.

After being in an inaugural class of the nursing leadership institute in Virginia, Emery thought about working in higher education after a discussion with a mentor. That conversation started her working toward a doctorate in nursing biobehavioral research, which led a few years later to a call with Tschetter.

“I think it’s unique how my career has gone different ways. People saw things in me that showed I could be a really good fit for new opportunities that were on the horizon,” she said. “I’ve been able to impact nursing in a lot of different ways, and now to get to support the faculty who do the work to support the up and coming nurses.”
Leann Horsley, assistant dean for the college’s Sioux Falls site, was elected in June to the board of directors for International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning. She will serve as the vice president for programs until June 2021 for the approximately 2,500 members worldwide.

“Being a member of the board of directors for an international organization has provided and will continue to provide me with professional growth opportunities. Being a lifelong learner, my perspective has grown as I collaborate with stakeholders in simulation from around the globe,” said Horsley, the college’s first-ever JoAnn and Eugene Goodale Nursing Faculty Scholar. “This experience will make me a better leader at SDSU.”

In her position, Horsley will oversee committees working on INACSL’s annual conference, educational webinars and online resources related to simulation along with supervising the organization’s lead nurse planner and five nurse planners.

Horsley has been active in INACSL for over a decade, serving on various committees and subcommittees as well as serving as INACSL’s lead nurse planner from 2015-18.

Horsley also recently participated in the Professional Identity in Nursing Think Tank, held in Kansas City, Missouri. The two-day event was led by Nelda Godfrey, associate dean for innovative partnerships and practice at the University of Kansas School of Nursing.

Professional Identity in Nursing is an initiative to:
- Scientifically develop new language about professional identity in nursing; and
- Widely share this deeper understanding of professional identity in nursing so that students, nurses, health care colleagues and society in general better understand what it means to think, act and feel like a professional nurse.

Work at the 2019 Think Tank yielded the why statement for professional identity in nursing, refinement of definitions and key elements of each of the four domains, exemplars and draft work on the conceptual model.

Horsley was one of approximately 50 nursing leaders across the U.S. and Canada invited to attend. The individuals came from academia, practice and regulation. She was asked to work in a group that is connecting this work within a larger interprofessional context and expects to have other tasks assigned during the spring semester.

Horsley is reviewing articles to learn how other disciplines such as pharmacy and physical therapists have come to a consensus about their professional identity.

Matt Schmidt

2019 SDNA HONORS

Numerous individuals with the College of Nursing were recognized at the 2019 South Dakota Nurses Association Annual Convention in Aberdeen. SDSU faculty members received the following special awards:
- Lecturer Venita Winterboer ’80/’92 M.S., Joy of Nursing Award;
- Lecturer Becka Foerster ’07/’11 M.S., Nurse Educator Award;
- Associate professor Tom Stenvig ’91 M.S., President’s Award; and
- Carol J. Peterson, who was the college’s dean from 1977-87, Hall of Fame Award.

June Larson ’87 M.S. received the Distinguished Service Award while Si Issler ’18 received the Rookie of the Year Award. In addition, Heidi Pelzel ’05/’14 M.S., an instructor at the college’s Aberdeen site, was honored for her efforts in Districts 8-9. Linda Erlenbush ’93 M.S. was honored in District 4.

Save the Date

SEPT. 26

The College of Nursing would like to remind you of its football tailgate when the Jacks play Indiana State in the 2020 Missouri Valley Football Conference opener.
Associate professor Mary Isaacson of the South Dakota State University College of Nursing in Rapid City is part of a national research team that will develop culturally appropriate Native American palliative care programs. Palliative care provides support for those receiving treatment for serious life-threatening illnesses, which then helps improve the quality of life for the patient and families.

The project, which targets the Oglala, Sicangu and Cheyenne tribes in South Dakota, is funded by a five-year, $3 million National Cancer Institute grant through Avera Health's Walking Forward. The Avera research program has been improving cancer care in communities on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations for some time, but this will be its first project on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

In addition, the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Health Board, the Indian Health Service Great Plains Region and the Rural Health and Palliative Care programs at Massachusetts General Hospital will be working on the project.

“Indian country is rural and frontier, as is much of the state, but there are even greater challenges on Native American reservations because the lack of infrastructure is even more pronounced,” Isaacson said. She has been doing research on American Indian health and palliative and end-of-life care for more than 10 years.

Most recently, she worked with Oglala elders on an advanced care directive project that also addressed the need for palliative and end-of-life care on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

**Developing culturally sensitive approach**

“Palliative care and hospice are culturally relevant and supported within Lakota culture,” Isaacson said. “However, the approach used when discussing life-limiting illnesses still requires great cultural sensitivity.”

Isaacson will work with Tinka Duran, director of prevention programs for the Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Health Board and an enrolled member of the Rosebud tribe, to explore what the palliative care needs are among the three tribes, recognizing that a culturally tailored program may look different for each tribal community.

They will visit with cancer patients and their caregivers, as well as tribal leaders, spiritual leaders and healers.

“We need to make sure we are engaging with individuals in the most respectful manner,” Isaacson said. That applies to both the needs assessment and to palliative care delivery.

“In our society, we feel that quickly getting to the heart of the matter with the patient is so important, but in the Native American context, talking to the family as well as the patient...
helps build trust,” she pointed out.
In addition, “sometimes we need to speak in third person—some traditional individuals feel if you say something bad out loud that it will come true.” However, she noted, the approach must vary based on how traditional—or nontraditional—the individuals and their families are.

Engaging partners
After completing the needs assessments, the researchers will develop the palliative care programs in year two. During years three and four, Isaacson anticipates the team will use a staged delivery approach, likely starting with the Sicangu at Rosebud. That then allows the researchers to adjust the program before rolling it out for the Oglala at Pine Ridge and finally at the Cheyenne River Reservation.

Isaacson and Duran will also be working with Dr. Francine Arneson, a palliative care specialist at Avera Health, and two Massachusetts General physicians who have helped start palliative care programs in Honduras and Jamaica. “When more advanced palliative care is necessary (than can be locally provided), we will need to figure how and where patients can get more specialized care,” Isaacson explained.

In addition to providing telehealth services, Massachusetts General also has a rural health fellowship through which their physicians support Indian Health Services on the Rosebud Reservation. This provides some stability for the Rosebud Comprehensive Health Care facility, which has struggled with limited funding and high turnover rates. “It’s very impressive,” Isaacson said. “It will be an interesting partnership.”

Ten members of the South Dakota State University College of Nursing are participating in the first cohort of the Leadership Challenge Opportunity. The 18-month program is based on “The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations” and led by Christina Plemmons, assistant dean for the college’s Rapid City site.

Plans are underway for a second cohort to start in August 2020.
One of 49 national nursing faculty members selected to participate in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s 2018 Leadership for Academic Nursing Program, Plemmons likes the virtual format that allows individuals from the college’s four locations to attend.

In early October, the first cohort was in the process of receiving responses for 360-degree feedback.
“The participants also complete the survey individually so they can see if there’s a difference between self-perception versus colleague perception,” said Plemmons, who has been a full-time instructor in Rapid City since 2009 and promoted to assistant dean in 2019. “It’s a nice way to discover opportunities for growth. It doesn’t require working on areas that are weak. People can focus on an area of strength, how to play to that strength and how can one use that strength more effectively?”

“The program has five attributes; one encourages people to actively challenge the process or really look at how we do everything,” she continued. “It’s a perfect time for me now in the assistant dean role to look at how we hire, how we purchase supplies, how we track use of the copy machine or how we recruit students. Can we streamline it or create efficiencies to save people time or save resources? Can we do it differently for the same outcome or can we do it differently for a better outcome?”

While in her new role in the college, Plemmons is also using her time with the leadership class to meet others, who range from working at SDSU for one year to several decades.
“I feel more connected to the entire college. It allows me to get to know people on a different level and hopefully they get to see me in a different light,” she said. “The more I get to know people at the other sites and their expertise, they become potential resources. and they get to see me as a member of the College of Nursing team and as a potential resource for them.”

Matt Schmidt
Five years after stepping down following nearly two decades as dean of the College of Nursing, Roberta Olson returned to the office as interim dean just as the Class of 2018 was preparing for its pinning ceremony. She served until the Class of 2019 had completed its nursing board exams. She found the experience exciting, challenging and a bit more tiring than when she served from 1994 to 2013. “It was an honor to be asked to serve as the interim dean, but for the first couple of days, I wondered what I had gotten into,” Olson shared this fall.

Olson assumed the task after Nancy Fahrenwald stepped down right after graduation in May 2018 to become dean of nursing at Texas A&M. They had a few days to work together before Fahrenwald left for College Station. Olson found the coffee pot still in the same location, but quickly realized she could not operate on autopilot for other tasks. “A number of policies had changed. There was a new strategic plan. So much had changed. I wanted to make sure I was using the right document,” Olson said.

Olson became quite familiar with that process. She had four requests during her year: Kay Foland, Barbara Hobbs, MaryLou Mylant and Lois Tschetter.

When the initial search failed to bring in a replacement, Olson knew she had another semester ahead of her and some events needed to be scheduled. Hence the date for the 2020 Deans Distinguished Lecture (March 26) was nailed down as were the dates for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education visit (March 29-31, 2021).

The bachelor’s, master’s and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs are all in line for continuing accreditation, which would carry them through 2031.

**Fruitful year as interim dean**

Getting that process underway is one of eight accomplishments that Olson identified in what was an unexpectedly productive year. Another one on that list was working with Mary Minton, associate dean for graduate nursing, to gain SDBOR approval of the postmaster’s certificate in psychiatric mental health. “I expect that these nurse practitioners will help with mental health crisis in our country,” Olson said.

It targets family nurse practitioners who are looking for this specialization. This niche found a market. A cohort of nine enrolled in June for the 18-credit program.

Other accomplishments:

- For the first time in the 25-year history of taking nursing boards, all 66 May graduates from the Brookings campus passed their licensing exam on the first try. Standard graduates from the Rapid City site and the Sioux Falls accelerated graduates have accomplished 100% in past years.
- Todd Stritcherz, former head of nursing student services, and Anna Atteberry-Gustafson, assistant director of nursing student services, developed an undergraduate recruiting effort that will be implemented this year to help with enrollment on all four campuses. Brookings

**Stayed longer than expected**

When Olson took the job, she thought she would be returning to the flexible life of a retiree by December. Her initial focus, other than familiarizing herself with new policies, was to “deal with any student or faculty concerns, keep the ship moving forward and not make any major changes,” she said.
Morgan Ducheneaux, front row, was the first-ever Avera Wokini Scholarship recipient. She was recognized at an October 2018 event at the McCrory Gardens Education and Visitor Center. Also pictured are: from far left, J.R. LaPlante, Avera Health’s director of tribal relations; Bob Sutton, Avera Health president and CEO; Barry Dunn, SDSU president; Olson; Dennis Hedge, SDSU provost and vice president of academic affairs; and Lois Tschetter, who was the college’s assistant dean for undergraduate nursing until she retired in June 2019.

continues to fill at 64 students, but programs at Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Aberdeen are under capacity. “All four tech schools now have nursing programs so there’s more availability where students live. We don’t have the waiting list we used to have,” Olson said. The plan’s focus touts the superiority of a bachelor’s degree from the state’s premier nursing school, she said.

• The first year of the strategic plan was implemented. Within that was activating the marketing plan, which includes sharing the success of graduates and underscoring the program’s retention rate. “Those who start the program usually finish it. Also, the combined, first-time 2018 pass rate for all seven cohorts was 92%. All other graduates completed it on their second attempt,” Olson said.

• She oversaw the admission of seven bachelor’s classes—accelerated programs at Aberdeen and Sioux Falls, and standard programs at Rapid City (fall and spring), Sioux Falls and Brookings (fall and spring).

• The college’s organizational chart was refreshed. “Before we had dotted lines and long lines. As the programs expanded, it needed a new look. Now the four assistant deans report to the associate dean for undergraduate nursing. The two associate deans report to the dean. Also, creating a director of simulation made a much more coordinated approach across Brookings and the other three sites,” Olson said.

• The final piece of her interim role was prepping Mary Anne Krogh, who began July 1 after serving as dean of nursing at Mount Marty College.

“Dean Olson’s expertise and historical knowledge of the College of Nursing have been invaluable to my successful transition to this role,” Krogh said. “Her work over the past year and a half has allowed the deans and directors to set a vision for the future of nursing at SDSU, and for that I am eternally grateful.”

Doesn’t retirement mean sleeping in

With her assignment complete, Olson, who turns 77 in January, also is stepping away from nursing education. She had served as an on-site reviewer for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education since 2001. She didn’t have an assignment for fall semester and has resigned from future assignments. But Olson remains very much engaged in life.

In September she was elected president of the SDSU retired faculty, which meets twice a year, and in January she was elected chair of the Two Rivers Thrivent Regional Financial Board, which serves southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. She also is secretary of the Daughters of the American Revolution Brookings chapter and is involved in Brookings Women’s Club, the SDSU Foundation Council of Trustees and Ascension Lutheran Church.

On the family side, she Facetimes with her California grandchildren once a week. Thirteen-year-old granddaughter Amelia joined her on an SDSU Alumni Association trip to Norway this summer and will go to England and Ireland with Olson in August.

And the source for all this energy? Olson gives partial credit to her parents, who lived to be 90 and 99. Healthy habits also figure in.

“I’ve always been an obnoxiously early morning person. I go to bed at 8 or 9 p.m., get up at 4 a.m., go to the gym at 5 a.m. five days a week and walk 30 to 45 minutes seven days a week.”

Dave Graves
For her efforts supporting the College of Nursing’s site in Aberdeen, Rebeccah (Becca) Johnson received the 2019 Distinguished Service Award. While her title is officially the academic advisor for science and math at Northern State University, Johnson encourages interested students to seek out more information about the SDSU accelerated program. Johnson graduated from SDSU in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in economics and consumer affairs.

“Though her job is to advise NSU students through to graduation, she enjoys nothing more than for her advisees to graduate from NSU, enter the SDSU Accelerated Nursing program, and then graduate again a year later with a degree from her alma mater,” said academic advisor Sara Olson in Johnson’s nomination letter.

“In the five years she has been in her position, approximately 30 of Becca’s advisees have entered our nursing program, with even more having completed the application process. This amounts to roughly 18% of our nursing students funneling from Becca into our program,” Olson continued.

In March 2019, Johnson scheduled, organized and facilitated a pre-accelerated nursing luncheon to introduce her pre-nursing advisees to the faculty and staff of the College of Nursing.

“I am very honored to receive the SDSU College of Nursing’s Distinguished Service Award,” Johnson said. “I have enjoyed working with the faculty and staff from the SDSU Accelerated Nursing Program hosted on the Northern State University campus. I have had many advisees complete the program and have heard nothing but superior remarks about the experiences these students have gained, and I myself, have witnessed the time and dedication the faculty and staff put into each one of these students in the program preparing them to work as nurses in our communities. I would give this program my highest recommendation to anyone considering pursuing their Bachelor of Science in Nursing.”

Matt Schmidt
At 10, Susie Bohnenkamp ’86 saw firsthand what it took to be a good nurse when hospitalized for a ruptured appendix. “I was in the hospital for many days, and I needed a lot of nursing care. Some nurses made me feel loved and cared for while others made me feel like I was a bother and they did not want to be there,” she said. “As a child, feeling safe was very important to me so my mom stayed with me almost the entire time.

“Some of the nurses made me feel loved and safe and I wanted to be one of those nurses,” Bohnenkamp continued. “I loved caring for animals and eventually started babysitting where I loved caring for children. I knew then I wanted to care for people and do anything to make people feel better, so nursing was the obvious answer.”

That career choice paid off when she was named Arizona’s Distinguished Nurse of the Year by the March of Dimes earlier this year. “I was at the nursing celebration and was listening to all of the amazing things so many nurses had done. They got to the last award and when they said my name as the winner, I just sat there and was in shock,” Bohnenkamp recalled. “My husband (Jeff), son (Mitchell) and my friends were all telling me to go to the stage. I don’t really remember much. I was so glad that everyone took videos and pictures so I could look at them after the awards ceremony. I was so honored to be given this award. I felt a real sense of value and what I have done truly matters.”

Since graduating from State, Bohnenkamp has worked at the University Medical Center in Tucson. She is a clinical nurse specialist that works with the gynecological oncology and urology patient populations.

“I love the academic atmosphere and working with attending nurses, residents, nurses, nursing students, pharmacists, nutritionists, rehab staff and many more departments,” she said. “Evidence-based practice is important, and I think most decisions should be based on the research or evidence that we have.”

Her work has been recognized with hospital, state, regional and national awards, such as American Nurses Credentialing Center Certified Nurse Award for Excellence as an Adult Health Clinical Nurse Specialist in April 2018. All because of her choice to attend South Dakota State.

“I feel SDSU gave me a strong foundation of nursing. I learned you need to make sure you have the knowledge to care for patients and their families,” she said. “Safety is always a priority. You need to provide the best care to promote outstanding patient outcomes. You always need to continue to learn and excel. SDSU and the nursing program were my family for four years, and I will always cherish that time.”

Matt Schmidt
Desiree Mercer admits her competitive nature has made some games a little too intense but that drive also had her lead the U.S. Air Force ROTC Detachment 780 for the fall 2019 semester.

“She wanted the position. She presented a very good, compelling case to be the wing commander, had open ideas about what she wanted to accomplish and what her goals were,” said Lt. Col. Brian Schroeder, professor of aerospace studies. “I thought this might be a good opportunity for us to not only have a nursing student, but also a crosstown student, fit in and make this work, and she truly was the right cadet for the job!”

Mercer, a standard student from the college’s Sioux Falls site, said being named the cadet wing commander, who leads the entire detachment, is just another challenge.

“When I found out I was going to be wing commander, I decided I wasn’t going to be absent ... I was going to lead from the inside, and I’ve been doing my best to make that happen,” she said, adding she started study groups to help her balance the demands.

“My parents were enlisted in the Air Force for more than 20 years so they instilled in my sister and me the passion to want to better ourselves and always challenge ourselves,” Mercer continued. “When you look at the core values in the Air Force—integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do—and apply them to nursing, they match up perfectly. You can’t tell me that nursing students and even nurses themselves don’t want to apply integrity, service and excellence in a professional career. It seemed like a perfect way to challenge and better myself and serve people as a nurse.”

Mercer, from Sioux Falls, is already thinking about adding a master’s degree and Doctor of Nursing Practice after graduating in 2020.

“I’ve always had an interest in the human body. I used to be into art so studying anatomy was a big part of what I did to keep up my drawing and painting skills,” she said. “I’ve always had a soft spot in my heart for serving and caring for other people. Nursing just checks all of the boxes for me.”

Part of that service and caring pushed her to be the cadet wing commander.

“The detachment has given me so much already; I have some of my best memories here, some of my best relationships are here, and some of the best lessons I’ve ever learned have been from here,” she said. “I knew I needed to give back to the detachment in some way, and for me that was being the wing commander.

“Yes, it’s a challenge to try to balance stuff, it’s like that old saying that nothing worth having comes easy.”

Matt Schmidt
While there are many demands to being successful in both South Dakota State University’s College of Nursing and the U.S. Army ROTC program, Morgan Rohlfs has seen many positives.

“There are so many opportunities,” said Rohlfs, a third-semester nursing student from Avon, Minnesota, who has been named to the college’s dean’s list.

One of those opportunities was spending 30 days in Vietnam in 2018 as part of the Army ROTC’s Foreign Military, Cultural Understanding and Leadership Program.

“I learned how to better communicate with people from other countries,” Rohlfs said, noting the importance of learning another culture. “I also learned how a different military is run and if we were to work with them in the future, how that would look because it was very interesting comparing front-line infantry. Their training is much different from ours.”

A trip to Washington, D.C., is how Rohlfs spent part of her 2019 summer, participating in the Nurse Summer Training Program at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

“It was an amazing experience. It’s sad it was only a month,” she said about the NSTP. “I had an amazing nurse preceptor, and she pretty much let me do everything at one point. She said, ‘I trust you; you can do this on your own.’ I got to work with many different patients.”

Rohlfs spent time in medical/surgical and maternal while in D.C. But it was not always work for her as she and others would get together to tour the many monuments and memorials, the Pentagon and Arlington National Cemetery. However, a trip to see the White House fell through.

Trips to either place were not on Rohlfs’ mind when she started thinking about the nursing and military combination as part of her college experience.

“The first thing I was looking at was good nursing schools and SDSU is one of the nation’s top 10 for nursing, which is a big plus,” she said. “When I came here, I looked into ROTC. I really liked the cadre at the time, and still do, as there was a good community feeling.

“I wanted to be a nurse and also wanted to serve my country at the same time so it was a great opportunity overall to fill in all of those boxes.”

Combining the fields was sparked because her mother, Christine, was an active-duty nurse before starting work at the VA in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

“She always spoke about nursing; it sounded really interesting and something I wanted to do,” Rohls said. “I love being able to communicate with patients, get to know their story and get to help them throughout their care in a hospital setting. I like that one-on-one relationship and being able to help someone out at sometimes their lowest points.”

Rohlfs, an S-1 in the battalion, is unsure of what her career will be after the required two years as a medical/surgical nurse.

“Right now, I’m really interested in two completely different areas—critical-care combat nurse position or in psychiatric nursing as those areas really interest me. I’ve got a while to decide though,” she said. “Who knows, maybe I’ll get stationed at Walter Reed if they need me there.”

Matt Schmidt
Jani Lerback’s journey to degree completion in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program would have left many students on the academic shoulder of the road with their hood up. In fact, the veteran Rapid City nurse had to pull into the pits for two consecutive semesters. However, she peeled back onto the track after twice being treated for gall bladder cancer, completed her degree at age 70, passed her board certification and is anxious to begin the next phase of her career as a family nurse practitioner.

“I am richly blessed; blessed beyond words. God has guided my journey every step of the way. It’s been quite a journey, but it’s been a blessed journey,” Lerback said in November. This was less than three weeks after completing and passing her family nurse practitioner board exam Oct. 9 and six months after completing her DNP coursework in Rapid City. Lerback began the DNP program in 2013, two years after her husband died as a result of complications from diabetes. At the time, she was a traveling nurse with Hospital Corporation of America.

By this time she had served as a nurse for 31 years. In addition to serving as a traveling nurse for four and one-half years with her daughter, Lerback also has worked as a neonatal intensive care nurse, was a backup nurse manager at two assisted living centers in Rapid City and from 2008 to 2013 was a faculty member and then director of the practical nursing program at Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City.

Retire or DNP?

Lerback entered the DNP program at age 64 because “I just feel like I had more to offer. I had been caring for adults as a bedside nurse, been a NICU nurse, been in administration and nursing education. I felt I had more to offer as a provider, stepping in as a nurse practitioner.” Her schooling went routinely until Aug. 8, 2016, when her gall bladder was removed. That operation led to the rare discovery of gall bladder cancer. “It’s a rare cancer. There are only 5,000 cases diagnosed per year in the world. Normally, people are dead in eight to 11 months.” Grit and God kept Lerback from becoming a statistic, she says.

She put her textbooks aside and underwent surgery to remove cancerous tumors at the renowned Cleveland Clinic, not far from where her son lives, in September 2016. Lerback had Stage IV cancer. Her operation was expected to last six to eight hours. The fact that the surgery only lasted three hours wasn’t a good thing. “They had found spots of cancer on the colon and abdominal wall. They left those on the colon so cancer cells didn’t get a fresh blood source. On Oct. 4, I went to the oncologist and was told there is no treatment or clinical trial available. I was...
told, ‘Our recommendation is to go home and get on hospice,” Lerback shared.

**Not without a fight**
She told the doctor that her diagnosis was unacceptable and she would find treatment. With the help of her Rapid City doctor, she did so.

“I met an amazing oncologist, Dr. Renuka Iyer, with the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, New York. She only takes 300 patients per year because she also does research,” Lerback said. She met with Iyer in November 2016 and was thrilled when an exam showed “the tumors were too small to be seen.” Lerback gives God credit for that.

Iyer prescribed “a very, very doable treatment program that could be done at home.” In early December 2016, Lerback began treatments—IV chemo and oral chemo weekly for 12 months.

That persistence impressed Mary Minton, the associate dean for graduate nursing.

“She was plucky about the prognostication given her upon the first diagnosis and sought a second opinion, which opened a door for curative treatment versus hospice care. I was in awe,” Minton said.

**Round Two**
In November 2017, treatments were completed and Lerback “went into watchful waiting.” In May 2018, cancer showed up again, this time in her surgical scar. The cancerous mass was removed at the University of Colorado-Denver and she simultaneously began radiation and chemotherapy treatments, which ended in February 2019.

A PET scan Oct. 18, 2019, “showed no evidence of metastatic disease in my body,” Lerback said.

She had rejoined the Doctor of Nursing Practice program in fall 2017. “I’m so very grateful for Dr. (Mary) Minton, Dr. (Barbara) Hobbs and my committee chair, Dr. (MaryLou) Mylant. The support from all of the faculty was extremely humbling. They’ve all been so supportive of my journey. They suggested but never once said you had to step out. The goal of getting me back into my clinicals was what helped me keep going.

“My classmates never gave up on me being ‘one of them,’” she said. Lerback was encouraged by cards, gourmet chocolate, bouquets of flowers and encouragement from the faculty and students.

Minton said, “As Jani navigated her diagnosis and treatment options, I emphasized that her health and well-being were of utmost importance. To that end, I collaborated with faculty to determine feasible options for continuing the plan of study, which could allow for stop-outs as needed to accommodate her needs.

“Her faculty adviser and course faculty were consistent in their connection and communication through the phases of treatment as well as course progression.”

‘**Committed and tenacious**’
Completing her Doctor of Nursing Practice required some of the same tenacity that got her through the cancer treatments.

“Obstacles that arose in the project phase of her degree required a high level of patience and persistence as she and her committee navigated stakeholder challenges and project revisions. These things did not deter Jani, which is no surprise. She is committed and tenacious in meeting the goals she has set for herself,” Minton said.

The next goal is actually practicing as a family nurse practitioner.

Lerback hopes she doesn’t have too much difficulty securing a position.

“I just hope the age thing doesn’t keep me from getting a job as a nurse practitioner. I never even gave it a thought until it was brought up in connection with this story. Age is just a number. I feel like I have a lot to give to patients and any facility that hires me. I bring experience and wisdom. I’m hoping employers recognize what I bring to the table.

“I’m going to joyfully work where I get a job and that’s going to be where God has a need for me to be.”

Dave Graves
Shawna Malsom has always known she wanted to be a nurse, advocating for patients on their best days and their toughest days.

“I’ve always loved helping people, and I’ve always have had the patience and compassion to work with people,” said Malsom, of Aberdeen. She is pictured above on the Northern State University campus.

But her path to her dream career wasn’t a linear one. Malsom graduated from Presentation College years ago with a degree in radiology technology and then worked for more than a decade with adults with developmental disabilities at Aberdeen’s Aspire.

When she learned about the Accelerated Nursing Program at Northern State University, she found the perfect way to complete her nursing degree despite her busy schedule.

“You’re able to complete it in one year and start an actual career,” said Malsom, now a nurse on the behavioral health unit at Avera St. Luke’s Hospital. “That’s what I wanted.”

Now in its seventh year, the Accelerated Nursing Program, a partnership with South Dakota State University, is a 12-month, Bachelor of Science in Nursing program for students who already have a bachelor’s degree in another field. Academic advisor Sara Olson said the program was designed for students who decided later in life or later in their academic career that they want to pursue nursing.

Olson said the partnership between Northern and SDSU is wonderful. “We jokingly refer to our students as dual citizens because they are an SDSU student, but they get the privileges of a Northern student,” she said. That means they have access to student services, including Disability Services and the Counseling Center, and can also use the Barnett Center for exercise purposes.

Grad stayed at NSU to pursue nursing

That was the case for Thomas Haile, who graduated from Northern in May 2018 with a degree in biology, a minor in chemistry and a certificate in allied health science. His interest in health science combined with the ability to earn another degree in only 12 months sparked an interest in the Accelerated Nursing Program.

“I already knew the campus and the environment, so I decided to stay in Aberdeen and get my nursing degree,” Haile said. “SDSU is also one of the best schools for nursing and that added to...
“They’re retooling their lives. Maybe they went one direction when they were in college, and now that they’ve been working for a while they realize that they want to make a change. And nursing is the direction they want to go. We’re a way for them to meet that goal. It’s one year of their life for a lifetime of a great career.”

-Sara Olson

the factor of me wanting to stay around and pursue my dream.”

But the program is not just for Northern students. Olson said students also come from states such as California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska, where nursing programs have waitlists for up to four years.

NSU-SDSU nursing students also have a variety of life experiences, Olson said, ranging in age from 21 up to their 50s, and including single people, married people and parents.

Meeting the need for rural nursing

The program is also a good fit for students from rural South Dakota, Minnesota, North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, Olson said. It’s also perfect for students who might not have otherwise been able to pursue the degree—like a stay-at-home mom from Faulkton who completed the program and is now on her way to becoming a nurse practitioner, planning to work locally.

“The need is substantial in South Dakota, which is another reason we started this,” Olson said. “Nurses are retiring at a rate faster than they’re entering the profession.”

In the United States, registered nursing employment is projected to grow 15 percent through 2026—much faster than the average for all occupations, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. As the current workforce ages and health care needs grow, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing expects the shortage of nurses in the U.S. to intensify. For South Dakota, an added difficulty is low wages compared to other states, according to the American Nurses Association.

Despite challenges, programs like the NSU-SDSU partnership are making a difference.

“Rural nursing recruitment is challenging, but through partnerships with programs like this one at NSU, we’re making strides to build a pipeline for the future health care workers of our community,” said Kila LeGrand, director of nursing and clinical services at Sanford Aberdeen. “Graduates of this program often choose to put down roots in our community or other communities in the region. Overall, the addition of this program has been beneficial not only to Sanford Aberdeen, but also to many of the health care facilities in South Dakota.”

“The accelerated nursing program is a win-win for the community and students involved,” said Kelli Fischer, chief nursing officer at Avera St. Luke’s Hospital. “This program allows students to work in a fast-paced environment and give a local taste of the nursing opportunities in the community. With this relationship, students have found great places to live and grow to start their nursing careers.”

Olson said the program has a large focus on rural nursing. Clinical hours start here in Aberdeen at Avera and Sanford, but all students get experiences in a rural setting—in places including Sisseton, Webster, Redfield and Faulkton.

Nursing program requires dedication

Malsom said students must be dedicated with organizational skills and motivation. The teachers are there to help guide you and provide all the tools you need, but they’re not going to hold your hand.

“It’s a one-year program, so it’s fast-paced. And that’s what I think scares people about this program,” she said. “But it’s something that should be looked at as an advantage rather than a disadvantage.”

In each semester, you build off what you learned in previous semesters, so you never lose the knowledge that you learned at the very beginning.

Also, students have a lot of clinical hours starting first semester and benefit from an amazing simulation lab, so they are very well prepared, Malsom said.

Students recommend nursing program

Despite the challenges, Haile encourages others wanting to pursue a nursing degree to enroll.

“If nursing is your passion and you are willing to do what it takes, for sure it is a very rewarding program,” Haile said. “There will be challenging moments but it will get you ready for the future career you want to practice.”

Haile said after graduation, he’d like to start on a medical surgical floor and then move to something specific after acquiring the necessary experience and skills to feel confident about it.

“Nursing has been one of the most trusted professions for a very long time, and it has been my passion to join that part and provide quality health care to patients in many ways,” Haile said. Malsom also recommends the Accelerated Nursing Program.

“I learned a lot,” she said. “And I don’t think I would’ve been as dedicated if I would’ve done this program younger.”

And now, Malsom has a job she loves, working to be a voice for patients at difficult times in their lives—and working to end the stigma surrounding mental health.

Last year the Accelerated Nursing Program had a 93.9 percent pass rate and 100 percent job placement, and Olson said it’s very rewarding to see the students—some with spouses, children and mortgages—succeed.

Elissa Dickey
Those words of advice came from my father years ago when I was going through a difficult time in my personal life. It was his way of encouraging me not to take the easy way out just because it was "convenient." Rather, he was suggesting that I reexamine my beliefs, my values and prioritize what's important, even though taking that path may be challenging and difficult. In the long run, it was worth the effort. It helped me chart a course for the future and his words have stuck with me ever since.

The same concept can be applied to the SDSU College of Nursing. Dean Mary Anne Krogh and her team, including staff and faculty, have made a commitment to excellence. As the state's leader in nursing education, our college grants the highest number of nursing degrees in South Dakota. The college is frequently recognized as having one of the best nursing programs in the nation. That comes through commitment.

The start of a new year is always a great time to review the priorities to which we are committed. In order to maintain and enhance the reputation as having one of the top nursing programs in the country, visionary leadership is necessary.

The college's vision for the future has been sorted into four categories:

- Our People
- Our Places
- Our Traditions
- Our Innovations

In this issue, we will focus on Our People, which is mission critical because of what takes place inside the walls of our classrooms and labs. The interaction between faculty and students is where education happens.

Scholarships
Nursing is a demanding field of study. Scholarships reduce the need for students to work to fund their education. This allows the student more time to focus on coursework, required clinical experiences, research and advanced degrees.

Each year, one-third of newly licensed RNs in South Dakota are SDSU graduates. However, the demand is greater. Scholarships, whether annual or endowed, enhance our ability to recruit and retain successful students and strive to fulfill more of that need.

Did you know one out of two first-time, full-time students at SDSU do not receive scholarship support? We need your help to change that statistic and build opportunities for those students.

Faculty Support
Endowed faculty positions spur innovation and cast a bold vision for transformation. The result is a series of unique educational and research experiences for our students as well as faculty. Endowed faculty positions also elevate the prestige and recruitment efforts within the college.

You might be interested in supporting faculty who lead nursing students into the world of international studies. Currently, nursing students travel to Sweden or Ghana for a more global perspective on nursing and health care. This would be another area where you could make a difference for our nursing students and faculty.

As you finish reading, you have a choice. You may choose convenience, thinking that "someone else will take care of this." Or, you could choose to make a commitment that aligns with your passion and desire; a decision based on commitment versus convenience.

Whether your commitment might be establishing a new scholarship to support a nursing student or a gift that will benefit our faculty, YOU are needed ... and YOU will make a difference.
One-Life Charitable Gift Annuity

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Deductions assume quarterly payments. Payout rates as of January 1, 2020. Subject to change. 2-life and deferred payment options also available.

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www.sdstatefoundation.org/odfs
The College of Nursing is reviewing plans to change formats for distributing news and general information to alumni, donors and other stakeholders. Please check all applicable options and submit your answers.

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