

SPRING 2021

VOL. 2, NO. 1

Our Future with Vaccines

Chicago Medical School Dean Dr. Archana Chatterjee lends her voice to a national effort to increase public confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine, while RFU Health Clinics and volunteers strive to vaccinate populations most at risk.



DR. SYLVESTRA RAMIREZ

RFU Alumna, Doctor of Physical Therapy,
Entrepreneur, Community Activist

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Helix (Print)
ISSN 2693-924X

Helix (Online)
ISSN 2693-9258

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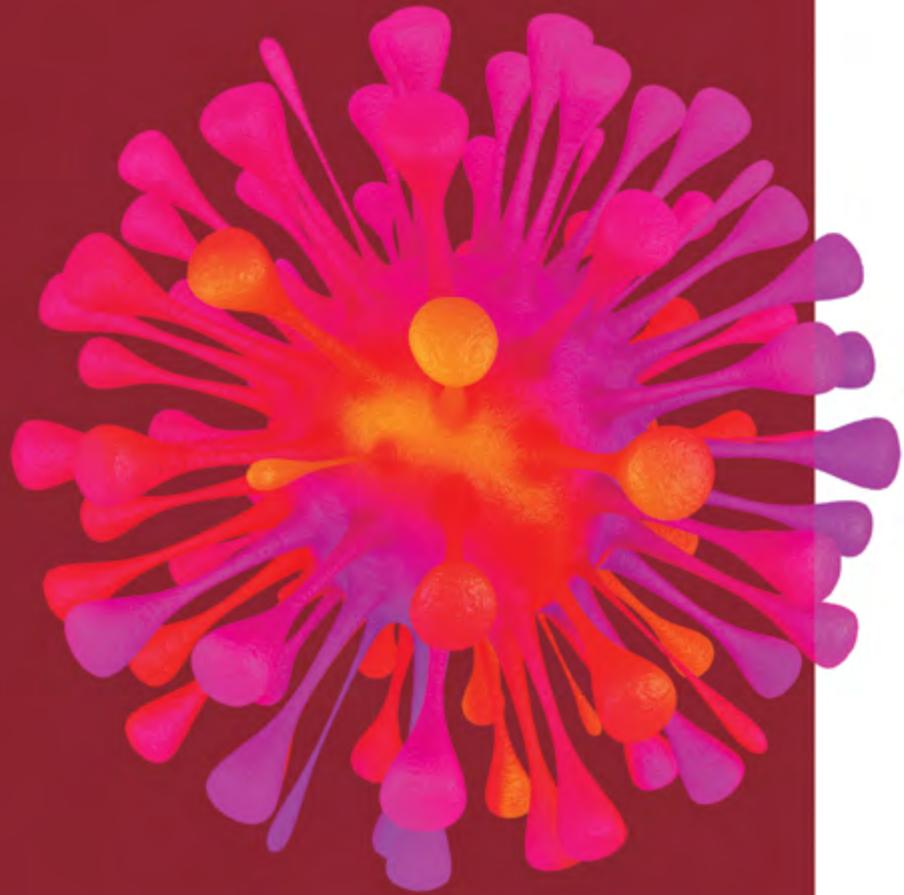
*Helix is published three times a year by
Rosalind Franklin University. There is no
subscription fee.*

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IN OUR AIMS

RFU is leading a post-COVID and post-2020 reality, envisioning a new future of health care and preparing the healthcare workforce for that future. We are rising up to meet complex challenges, use AI and other technologies, and hone interpersonal skills to improve health and longevity among populations.



Please note, any group photo that does not feature physical distancing or mask wearing was taken prior to the State of Illinois issuing such guidelines. RFU has policies in place that require these and many other safety measures.

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ROSALIND FRANKLIN
UNIVERSITY
of MEDICINE AND SCIENCE



If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it's to be vigilant. New cases, hospitalizations and deaths have dipped, leveled off and, in some places, climbed again. We continue to face many uncertainties — even as vaccination rates climb — including high case numbers, new variants of the virus and constantly evolving public health guidance.

Despite the uncertainty and the terrible toll, I am hopeful that we are turning a corner. I am optimistic for a bright future for improved access, health and well-being. Advancements in genomic sequencing, which enabled quick work in deciphering the virus genome, and the speed of vaccine development, production and efficacy — all give me hope.

Throughout the pandemic, our university community persisted in fulfilling our mission of education, research and service. We prioritized the health and safety of our campus community at the same time we helped to care for our larger community. Hundreds of faculty, students and staff volunteered in providing personal protective equipment, served as translators, worked phone banks for contact tracing and helped in public health education efforts. Finally, we joined the vaccination effort in partnership with the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center and our own Rosalind Franklin University Health Clinics.

This issue of Helix reflects our deep commitment to the future of health care. We stand in solidarity with the dean of our Chicago Medical School, Dr. Archana Chatterjee, as she continues to serve on the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, and to fulfill the many demands on her time as she strives to educate the public about the safety and efficacy of COVID vaccines. Dr. Chatterjee, along with so many of our faculty, students and alumni, is helping to build mutual resilience through service and advocacy.

Our planned College of Nursing, led by Interim Dean Dr. Sandra Larson, will help address a tremendous community need for a highly educated and diverse nursing workforce. It will also strengthen our interprofessional culture

and mission. Nursing, the largest segment of the healthcare workforce, is the most trusted profession in the United States. The compassion and competence so central to nurses' identity is also vital to the care they provide patients fighting the deadly coronavirus.

Our Innovation and Research Park, which we celebrated in a virtual grand opening on Jan. 28, also offers a vision for improved health and economic development for our surrounding communities. A collaborative environment for academic and industry scientists and entrepreneurs, it will help accelerate our nationally recognized research into treatment and prevention of disease.

“The resolve demonstrated by our scientific and healthcare community over the past 15 months tells me that we will be successful.”

We must develop a cohesive plan to address the many challenges that lie ahead, including equitable vaccine distribution, funding and development of new treatments for COVID and its lingering illnesses, and a cohesive response to the many indirect harms caused by the pandemic. The resolve demonstrated by our scientific and healthcare community over the past 15 months tells me that we will be successful.

The lightning pace of the development of the COVID vaccine is a reminder that some of our greatest innovations come in response to our greatest crises. Strengthened by our faith in scientific discovery and in each other, I believe we can make changes that improve our resilience and sustain our health and well-being.

Very sincerely,



Wendy Rheault, PT, PhD, FASAHP, FNAP, DipACLM
President and CEO

Left: Dr. Rheault presides over the Ribbon Cutting of the Innovation and Research Park. Read more on page 30.

VISIT OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL

for university updates and more messages from Dr. Rheault.

youtube.com/RosalindFranklinU

As the second week of December 2020 wound down, the days were growing shorter, and a long winter of rising COVID-19 infections was taking hold. Hope was in short supply. Then, at the end of an eight-hour, 41-minute meeting of the Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC), Dr. Archana Chatterjee surprised many observers by casting a vote against recommending an anticipated measure of hope: Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

But in her dedication to transparency, the dean of RFU's Chicago Medical School was eager to offer an explanation that she wasn't able to provide as VRBPAC officials tallied the 17-4 vote in favor of recommending the emergency use. She spent that evening of Dec. 10 and the following week responding to a stream of media inquiries, detailing her specific concern that the vaccine was being recommended for "individuals 16 years of age and older" without complete safety and efficacy data for recipients younger than 18.

"Let's say you're top of the list," CNBC's Shepard Smith asked her during a live-via-remote interview on his Dec. 11 program. "Would you be the first to get this shot, or no?"

"I absolutely would be. If it was my priority risk group's turn, I would be first in line," Dr. Chatterjee responded, adding that the data showed "this is a safe and effective vaccine" for adults.

This chapter of the ongoing, history-shaping COVID pandemic was instructive for anyone trying to make sense of the flood of information about vaccines. It also illustrated how the answers to questions in the bioscience realm are often complex.

As with all things that have yet to pass, the future of health care is still being written. In this issue of *Helix*, we explore how public health clinics might better engage and serve at-risk communities; how more nurses are key to filling gaps in health care; and how COVID survivors need support for their mental as well as physical well-being.

And Dr. Chatterjee joins us for a look back at the road that led to more than 50 million vaccinations administered nationwide in the two months after she demonstrated that not every question comes with a simple answer.

Dan Moran is the communications director in the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management.

OUR FUTURE WITH

VACCINES

Trusted Messenger

By Judy Masterson

Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

In the year since the novel coronavirus ignited a pandemic, Rosalind Franklin University clinicians and researchers have provided frontline services to the community, including testing, diagnostics and, beginning in winter, administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Out of that spirit of service, trusted voices have emerged on the science behind the vaccine and the ongoing discovery that will ultimately vanquish the virus.



Vaccines developed at record speed by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson subsidiary Janssen Biotech are helping to turn the corner on COVID, which by March had claimed more than 500,000 lives in the United States and more than 2.5 million worldwide. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) — a mechanism to speed the availability of medical interventions for individuals — has been harnessed to develop countermeasures for the population at large during the public health emergency, a move that highlights the expertise of Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, dean of the Chicago Medical School.

A specialist in pediatric infectious diseases, Dr. Chatterjee is a member of the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC), a panel of independent scientists and medical experts that reviews and debates safety and effectiveness data. She was thrust into the national spotlight after her Dec. 10 vote against the recommendation to authorize the Pfizer vaccine, which, as she explained in multiple national media interviews, was based on the limited data for clinical trial participants ages 16–17.

"I want to make it very clear that I am fully supportive of the Emergency Use Authorization of this vaccine for use in adults 18 and older," Dr. Chatterjee told CNN news anchor Erin Burnett some two hours after the votes were cast. "We are facing a deadly pandemic, and the vaccine in addition to public health measures are needed. We need the science and the data."

Dr. Chatterjee, who commended Pfizer for including children as young as 12 in its clinical trials and supported the collection of additional safety and efficacy data for review, received pushback on her vote.

"Yes, I received hate mail," she said. "That happens. It was not unexpected. Anyone who does this work in the vaccine world gets criticized."

A member of VRBPAC since 2018, Dr. Chatterjee has become a trusted messenger on the COVID-19 virus and vaccine, sitting for numerous television and radio interviews and weighing in via virtual discussions — local, regional, national and international.

"I have developed expertise in my field that can help benefit humanity," she said. "As a physician, as a scientist, this is what you do. I am so grateful that RFU has been supportive of this work, understands the value of this work — both the FDA committee and our public education effort."

"Why am I getting so many requests? People view me as someone who is reliable and who has accurate information. The message has to be accurate. It has to be science-based, but it has to be in language people understand."

Dr. Chatterjee was tapped in January and again in March by the Chicago public radio station WBEZ for its "COVID Conversations" virtual outreach to communities of color disproportionately affected by the virus. She joined Dr. Ngozi O. Ezike, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, Dr. Allison Arwady, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, and community-based physicians in answering questions, including concerns about safety.

"The currently authorized vaccines do not contain the virus," Dr. Chatterjee explained. "They are a blueprint for part of the virus — the spike protein. It cannot get into your DNA or become part of your genome. It gets into cells and helps make those proteins that our immune system recognizes, and makes antibodies to help fight the virus."

Whether she's discussing the platforms used to make vaccines or the threat posed by variants of the virus, Dr. Chatterjee frequently pauses and asks, "Does that make sense?" She works to counter what she calls the "chatter," often on social media, that feeds vaccine hesitancy.

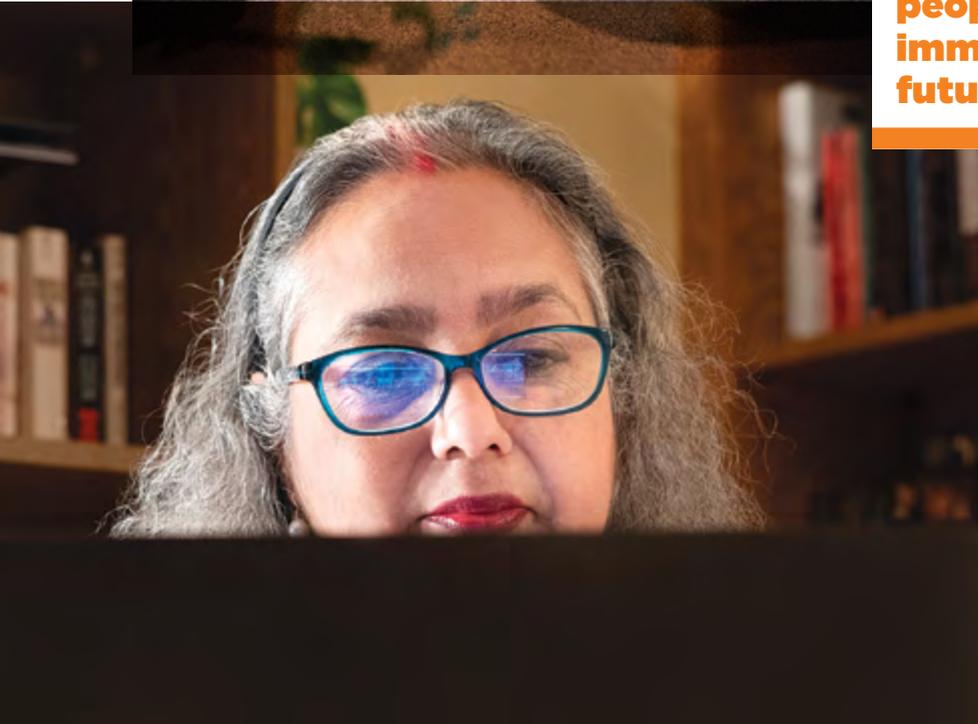
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following measures, in addition to vaccination, to slow the spread of the virus:

- Everyone age 2 and older should **wear a mask** over their nose and mouth — fitted under the chin and against the sides of the face.
- **Stay at least 6 feet, or about two arm lengths, from others** who don't live with you.
- **Avoid crowds** in places like restaurants, bars, fitness centers or movie theaters.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or caring for someone who is sick, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.





“It’s an open question whether people will develop natural immunity that will protect against future infections.”



Above: Chicago Medical School Dean Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, prepares for a community “COVID Conversation” on behalf of National Public Radio affiliate WBEZ. Dr. Chatterjee has helped lead the national conversation around COVID-19 vaccine safety and efficacy from an improvised studio tucked into the corner of her home library.

“There’s lots of misinformation and disinformation out there, and a lot of it is anecdotal,” Dr. Chatterjee said. “We’re hearing it from family, friends and neighbors. So how do we manage that? Each of us has a sphere of influence. Encourage people who are hesitant to talk to a doctor, talk to the people who actually know. Go to the websites where you find accurate information: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the FDA, the World Health Organization (WHO).”

Dr. Chatterjee has published and presented extensively on the efficacy and safety of vaccines and has worked for decades to address vaccine hesitancy. She stressed the rigor of the EUA process — used previously just once, for an anthrax vaccine in 2005 — during a Feb. 9 Instagram Live conversation with David Everly, PhD, associate professor, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection.

VRBPAC routinely reviews applications for approval of new vaccines and also determines which viruses to include in the annual influenza vaccines for the northern and southern hemispheres — an undertaking that typically draws “zero interest” from the public or the media, Dr. Chatterjee noted. But faced with a deadly pandemic, the FDA very intentionally expedited its evaluation, bypassing the more time-consuming Biologics License Application (BLA) process typically used for approval of vaccines, while maintaining procedures for a rigorous, independent review. Vaccine manufacturers also accelerated their timeline, manufacturing millions of doses before receiving FDA authorization.

“They made a bet that the vaccines would work,” said Dr. Chatterjee, who is frequently asked if corners were cut in developing the new vaccine. The short answer is no. The science behind the current vaccines was already in use. The mRNA platform used by Pfizer and Moderna was developed a decade ago. The adenovirus vector technology, used by Johnson & Johnson, has been in the pipeline for years. So it was easy to quickly pivot to the development of COVID vaccines.

People also want to know how long the immunity stimulated by current COVID vaccines will last.

“Our strategy can be prophylactic but may be therapeutic as well. Inducing cellular immunity would kill infected cells, while post-infection inhibitors would prevent infected cells from producing viruses for transmission or new infection to achieve a complete cure.”

“We don’t know,” says Dr. Chatterjee in agreement with Dr. Everly, who cited emerging evidence of reinfection from new strains and variants.

“The virus counteracts the ability to make antibodies and our ability to fight it,” Dr. Everly said. “The important question is as new strains of the virus emerge in different parts of the world, whether existing immunity will work against those new strains. It’s an open question whether people will develop natural immunity that will protect against future infections.”

RFU researchers are quietly tackling the question of COVID immunity and investigation of potential therapeutics. Johnny He, PhD, director of the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection, is investigating a potential vaccine strategy based on the parasite *Leishmania* with Dr. Ying Liu, Dr. Kwang Poo Chang, Dr. Joseph Reynolds and a collaborator at Tulane University.

“The vaccines currently on the market are all based on the antibody response, but we don’t know if antibody immunity will last,” Dr. He said. “We’re exploring the possibility of using Dr. Chang’s platform, which is based on cellular immunity that primes specific T cells in the human body against COVID-19. The beauty of cellular immunity is its permanence.”

Dr. He and his lab partners are also pursuing a research platform to understand the basic science of the virus and to identify or screen post-infection inhibitors.

“The vaccine is a first step, it’s a start,” Dr. He said. “So many people infected with COVID have lingering symptoms or other issues. We need to allocate resources for basic research to develop new therapeutics. Our strategy can be prophylactic but may be therapeutic as well. Inducing cellular immunity would kill infected cells, while post-infection inhibitors would prevent infected cells from producing viruses for transmission or new infection to achieve a complete cure.”



Above: Johnny He, PhD, director of the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection.

As new COVID-19 vaccines move through the pipeline, including the 64 now in clinical development according to WHO, does Dr. Chatterjee foresee a final break in the chain of transmission?

“I always tell people I am not a virologist,” she said. “I am an infectious disease specialist. And in infectious diseases, we tell you what we know today; things may change by this afternoon. We will probably continue to boost people with new cocktails of viruses to fight new strains. Depending on what is circulating in the population, we may need a vaccine every year. ‘Stay tuned’ is my advice.” ✕

Judy Masterson is a staff writer with the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management.



Dr. Archana Chatterjee provided interviews for multiple print, online and television media outlets in late 2020 and early 2021 to discuss COVID-19 vaccines, including:

The Wall Street Journal (Oct. 15): “Ahead of Covid-19 Vaccine, Half of Americans Indicate Reluctance, WSJ/NBC Poll Finds”

Politico: “The ‘Nerdy Virologists’ Steering the U.S. Vaccine Race” (Oct. 16)

Lake County News-Sun/Chicago Tribune Publications: “Rosalind Franklin University Dean Serving as Adviser for COVID-19 Vaccine Development” (Nov. 12)

WTTW: “Chicago Tonight” (Dec. 8)

The Hill: “FDA Panel Member Says She Voted Against Vaccine Authorization Because of Limited Data on ‘Younger Participants’” (Dec. 10)

USA Today: “Key Committee Endorses Pfizer’s COVID-19 Vaccine, Paving Way for Clearance by FDA and Vaccinations in US to Begin” (Dec. 10)

CNN: “Erin Burnett OutFront” (Dec. 10)

CNBC: “Squawk Box” (Dec. 10)

CNBC: “The News with Shepard Smith” (Dec. 11)

CNN International: “Quest Means Business” (Dec. 18)

WBEZ: “Latino Communities and the COVID-19 Vaccine” (Jan. 21)

ABC 7 Chicago: “526 Illinois COVID-19 Vaccines Wasted, Officials Fight to Keep Discarded Doses Minimal” (Feb. 15)

WBEZ: “African Americans and the COVID-19 Vaccine” (March 3)

The Latino Cancer Institute – San Jose, California: “Reporting from the Frontlines of a Pandemic: A Media Forum for Journalists” (March 16)





Elizabeth Shafernich Coulson Faculty Innovation Award

As chair of the RFU Board of Trustees and a former faculty member of physical therapy, Elizabeth Coulson, PT, MBA, is passionate about the importance of building pathways for those seeking to serve humanity through the health professions.

“We can’t expand access to the highest quality care without expanding access to the highest quality education,” Ms. Coulson said. “Our faculty members understand that the work our students are training for is really a calling — a commitment to lifelong learning. That’s what makes the health professions so challenging, so wonderful, and the faculty and students who undertake them so worthy of our support.”

Ms. Coulson partnered with the Division of Institutional Advancement to establish a matching gift fund within the RFU Legacy Challenge, which will match each new planned gift commitment with a contribution to the university’s Impact Fund campaign, up to \$5,000. Therefore, a donor who informs the university of their qualifying planned gift will help raise both current and future support for the university.

While Ms. Coulson’s gifts are targeted for faculty development and program leadership through the Elizabeth Shafernich Coulson Faculty Innovation Award, other donors can designate their gifts however they wish. Opportunities include scholarships that remove economic barriers to support students’ aspirations; advancing new discoveries and therapeutics; adapting pedagogy and technology; and making an impact on community wellness.

The RFU Legacy Challenge was launched in December 2020 with \$100,000 in matching funds that are available on a first-come, first-served basis to any donor who documents a planned gift. To date, more than \$1 million in new estate plans have been identified. The program is scheduled to run through Dec. 31, 2021, or until the matching funds have been depleted. ✧

PASSION IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND LEGACY CHALLENGE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Executive Director of Development George Rattin

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or visit: rfu.ms/legacy

SCHOLL COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBER ADAM E. FLEISCHER, DPM, JOINS RFU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Adam E. Fleischer, DPM, MPH, FACFAS, is the new faculty representative on the Board of Trustees. Dr. Fleischer, who has been with RFU since 2004, is a professor within the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine.



A recognized opinion leader in the field of foot and ankle surgery, and a frequent lecturer at national conferences, Dr. Fleischer is also heavily involved in RFU's co-sponsored podiatric medicine and surgery post-graduate residency program, which he serves as assistant director.

“I feel I’m acutely aware of the new challenges facing providers, trainees and the patients we serve in today’s continually evolving healthcare climate.”

“With heavy clinical responsibilities outside of teaching, I feel I’m acutely aware of the new challenges facing providers, trainees and the patients we serve in today’s continually evolving healthcare climate,” Dr. Fleischer said. “I’m also mindful of the ‘handoff’ required when our students leave us. I hope this unique perspective will allow me to be an active contributor on the board’s Academic Affairs Committee.”

Appointed in March, Dr. Fleischer said he looked forward to “the opportunity to represent our talented faculty’s interests and concerns, and to help advance the university’s culture of giving and philanthropic support from within.”

Dr. Fleischer is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine. He’s been in practice in the Chicago area and actively involved in the training of podiatric surgical residents since 2004. He sees patients at the Scholl Foot & Ankle Center, Advocate Condell Medical Center, and at the Weil Foot & Ankle Institute. His courses at RFU include Podiatric Radiology and Community Health, Ethics, and Professional Responsibility. x

THE FUTURE AND OUR

COMMUNITY

RFU Health Clinics Targets Barriers to Care

By Yadira Sanchez Olson
Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

Connecting with patients in their first language and helping Black residents overcome barriers that prevent them from accessing health care are two of the roads Rosalind Franklin University staff and students are paving toward a modernized healthcare system that is fully inclusive, diverse and fair to all.



STATION
#1

ROSALIND FRANKLIN UNI
Health C

UNITY

Nurse practitioner **Lupe Rodriguez**, Community Care Connection (CCC) director, uses her bilingual skills to build essential relationships with Spanish-speaking patients who otherwise might not seek care for fear they won't be understood.

"The challenge is that it's not a one-size-fits-all approach," Ms. Rodriguez said. "Providing care to different people means having to take into consideration their culture and its norms."

"Providing care to different people means having to take into consideration their culture and its norms."



Ms. Rodriguez's parents emigrated to the United States from Mexico before her birth, and they didn't become fluent in English until seven years later, she said. From that experience, she understands how not having full command of the language and culture triggers feelings of anxiety, apprehension, fear and sometimes humiliation. She also relates to how those feelings build walls that can keep people from asking for help.

Most of the patients the CCC treats are Spanish speakers — some new to the country, like her parents once were, and unaware of organizations that can lend them aid and provide information on what resources are available to help them thrive in their new home.

Colombian-born Eliana Henao, a Highwood resident, experienced Ms. Rodriguez's support in early February while visiting the Nuestro Center in Highwood alongside her parents, where the CCC was administering COVID-19 tests.

The experience was made less nerve-racking, she said, thanks to healthcare team members ensuring she understood the process and telling her to call if she had any concerns.

"It made me feel at ease. I could ask questions about my results, even if I thought of them later," Ms. Henao said. "You get so nervous sometimes about these things with the pandemic."

A primary objective of the CCC is education. Just as important is making sure patients like Ms. Henao are connected to physicians who will be their long-term primary care providers.

Ms. Rodriguez said the healthcare system "can be confusing for people who have grown up using it — imagine if you don't know the language and have no idea who to turn to."

Working in immigrant communities, Ms. Rodriguez added, has connected her with people who have medical insurance through their work and are paying into it, but have never known how to access it. Others use the nearest ER for any and all medical issues, whether serious or not. That's why Ms. Rodriguez believes in the power of health education.

"Lupe recognizes the need," said Maytee Diez, principal of LEARN 9 Charter School in Waukegan. "She goes above and beyond to make sure that the community is provided every possible opportunity to access health resources and information."

Ms. Diez added that Ms. Rodriguez has a devotion to the community and has worked extensively with the school to educate staff and parents. Ms. Rodriguez and the CCC have also provided no-cost flu vaccines and COVID testing.

That's because Ms. Rodriguez isn't one to back down from a challenge. Three years as a medic serving in the Army, she said, taught her discipline, organization skills, leadership and to never give up. She's zealous in her efforts to use every patient interaction as an opportunity to educate alongside her small team of three.

In February and March 2021, her work took the form of virtual presentations to continue COVID education and testing, as well as vaccine information. The CCC team also tackled the logistics of launching a full roster of mobile COVID vaccine clinics throughout northern Lake County, with a goal to administer 102 vaccines at each clinic.



Left: Stickers were given to recipients of COVID-19 vaccinations delivered by the RFU Health Clinics starting in mid-February 2021. Opposite page: Social-distancing rules applied as RFU Community Care Connection staff delivered COVID-19 vaccines to New Hope Church in Gurnee on Feb. 23, 2021. Top: Lupe Rodriguez, director of Community Health Engagement, gives a COVID vaccine to a Gurnee YWCA member during the CCC's visit to New Hope Church. Bottom: Another member of the CCC's mobile vaccination team was Linda Tanni, APN. The week of March 15-19, the CCC's Care Coach delivered 307 vaccinations to community partners in Lake County.



SEEKING AWARENESS

The work of Laurine Tiema-Benson, CMS '22, also focuses on healthcare education.¹ She began an ongoing independent project while volunteering with the CCC that targeted obstructions to health care within the Black community.

The project — “Assessing Barriers to African American Healthcare Utilization at a Student-Led Pro Bono Clinic” — began by asking 25 community leaders who live or work in the Waukegan, Zion and North Chicago areas to share insight on what barriers exist to African Americans obtaining health care services, including at the ICC. She also explored what can be done to dismantle those obstacles.¹

As a Black woman whose parents emigrated from Kenya, Ms. Tiema-Benson recognizes there are upstream factors contributing to disparities that disproportionately affect the patient population at the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC), a pro bono treatment center at the RFU Health Clinics.

¹ Among the findings of “Assessing Barriers to African American Healthcare Utilization at a Student-Led Pro Bono Clinic,” a research study conducted in 2020 by Laurine Tiema-Benson and mentored by Melissa Chen, MD, to “examine the barriers to the utilization of health services by uninsured African Americans” at RFU’s Interprofessional Community Clinic:

**AFRICAN AMERICAN
POPULATION IN
NORTH CHICAGO:
22.5%**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN
POPULATION IN
NORTHERN LAKE
COUNTY:
10%**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN
POPULATION IN
NORTHERN LAKE COUNTY
WITHOUT HEALTH
INSURANCE:
11%**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN
PATIENT PARTICIPATION
AT ICC IN 2018:
3.5%**

**LATINX POPULATION
IN NORTH CHICAGO:
33.2%**

**LATINX POPULATION
IN NORTHERN LAKE
COUNTY:
30%**

**LATINX PATIENT
PARTICIPATION AT
ICC IN 2018:
82.7%**

Primary care sources among African Americans in northern Lake County
(24 individuals surveyed in open-ended method, allowing more than one response; top responses listed):

EMERGENCY ROOMS:
20

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER:
13

LAKE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT:
9

Note: Sources fielding one vote included “urgent care,” “Walmart walk-in clinics” and “first responders.”

She recalls her parents working hard to support her and her siblings when she was growing up on the North Side of Chicago. She also remembers them facing challenges in navigating the healthcare system.

“I grew up without a regular physician from whom to receive continuity health care,” Ms. Tiema-Benson said. “We went to the health department if we got sick or needed our immunizations. That was my norm.”

Her study showed that in 2019, less than 3% of the ICC’s patient population was African American. She points out this is not reflective of the 11% of uninsured Lake County residents in this ethnic group. The study also revealed 48% of its participants had not heard of the ICC, even though 100% had heard of Rosalind Franklin University.

Under the guidance of Dr. Melissa Chen, the ICC’s clinical director, Ms. Tiema-Benson’s work is helping the healthcare center improve its outreach.

“The ICC has been a fantastic resource for the Latinx community ever since it opened in 2013,” Dr. Chen said. “Word-of-mouth has been our chief marketing strategy historically, because we have always kept quite busy without marketing; we have chosen to focus our limited resources on taking care of the patients that we do have.

“Now that the ICC is in a position to serve more patients, it is time to expand our outreach and make sure that we are truly serving the entire community we live in.”

“I hope it shows North Chicago citizens the importance of science, medicine and the scientific method when it comes to community development and activism.”

Steps designed to strengthen the community’s awareness of the clinic include advertising with strategically located informational flyers. The ICC is also utilizing its Facebook page and community partnerships to virtually spread the word.

William Coleman, executive director of the social justice group North Chicago Think Tank, said he’s enthusiastic about the partnership between his organization and the university.

“I hope it shows North Chicago citizens the importance of science, medicine and the scientific method when it comes to community development and activism,” Mr. Coleman said. He added that having access to someone like Ms. Tiema-Benson within the university is significant for the Black community.

There are also internal steps taken by students volunteering at the clinic to ensure intentional inclusion in every aspect of the ICC.

“This year, the student leaders created a diversity and inclusion task force to ensure intentional D&I incorporation in every aspect of the ICC,” Dr. Chen said. “To that end, they have added questions to the interviewing process for students, revised our mission statement and created an antiracist training module for future volunteers.”

Paramount in the work of Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. Tiema-Benson is a passion to help those who most need it within an ever-evolving healthcare system that aims to provide care for all without leaving anyone behind.

“I want patients to look at me as a resource who can help them navigate through health challenges,” Ms. Tiema-Benson said. “I want to empower them to take control of their health to be the best they can be.” ✕

Yadira Sanchez Olson is a Lake County-based freelance writer who has written extensively about the Latino community.

Opposite page: RFU Health Clinics staff (from left) Twinkle Patel, PA-C, Katherine Blake, DO, and Lupe Rodriguez, NP, unpack and store the first delivery of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine delivered on Feb. 9, 2021. Middle: College of Pharmacy Associate Professor Danielle M. Candelario, PharmD, BCPS, (next to vehicle) 3rd year PT student Abigail Hill (at keyboard) and Lake County Health Department Regional Medical Director Shami Goyal, MD, (in white vest) were among the volunteers assisting with COVID-19 vaccinations at the Lake County Fairgrounds in January 2021. Bottom: Ms. Patel administers a COVID vaccination at New Hope Church. RFU delivered more than 2,100 doses to the community by late March.

Perceived barriers hindering African Americans from utilizing ICC services

(25 individuals surveyed in open-ended method, allowing more than one response; top 10 responses):

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE:

20

TRANSPORTATION:

13

DISTRUST:

5

FEAR OF BEING JUDGED:

4

LACK OF HEALTH EDUCATION:

4

UNABLE TO PAY FOR MEDICATION:

3

LACK OF CHILD CARE:

3

DISTANCE:

2

DO NOT KNOW ICC CARES:

2

FEAR OF RECEIVING HEALTH RESULTS:

2



REPRESENT THE FIELD



By Yadira Sanchez Olson

A medical mystery plaguing her family that was solved by a thorough doctor/patient conversation provided the impetus for the journey that has taken Laurine Tiema-Benson, CMS '22, from the North Side of Chicago to the classrooms of Rosalind Franklin University.

After her Kenyan parents landed at the airport from a visit to their country of origin, Ms. Tiema-Benson's mother fainted and was taken to an emergency room. For weeks, doctors were unable to pinpoint what was affecting her.

It was a frightening time for the then 15-year-old, Ms. Tiema-Benson recalled. An in-depth dialogue between her mother and a doctor prompted a new battery of tests, which revealed malaria was the culprit. Shortly after, Ms. Tiema-Benson had her mom back home.

"That touched me really deep," Ms. Tiema-Benson said. The experience served to plant the seed that a profession in health care might align with her vigor and dedication.

Years later, while attending Emory University in Atlanta, Ms. Tiema-Benson had an encounter that similarly sparked a vision for her future — she shadowed an African American female physician.

"That really encouraged me, because I was able to see myself," said Ms. Tiema-Benson, who would be the first physician in her family. "You can't be what you can't see, and when I saw her, that just sealed the deal for me."

"Laurine brings a fantastic energy and dedication to the community."

Today, after successfully advancing through mileposts that included RFU's Pre-Matriculation Program (PMP), the first-generation American is one of many students who are not only studying medicine at RFU, but are also using the opportunity to work toward changing systems that have disenfranchised vulnerable communities in health care.

As a student volunteer with the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) in 2019, Ms. Tiema-Benson was guided by Clinical Director Melissa Chen, MD. Looking back on their work together, Dr. Chen said she was immediately impressed by Ms. Tiema-Benson's thoroughness and dedication.

Dr. Chen mentored Ms. Tiema-Benson as she conducted a project to identify how the ICC can improve its reach in the Black community. That work has provided insight now used to recruit and train students volunteering at the facility through RFU's Interprofessional Clinic Initiative. The results have also prompted a strategy to improve the clinic's community outreach.

"Laurine brings a fantastic energy and dedication to the community," Dr. Chen said. "She exemplifies the next generation of healthcare healers who are not only great doctors, but also leaders in addressing community needs."

After graduating, Ms. Tiema-Benson plans to visit Kenya alongside her husband — and to be that African American female physician who is an example for others who have a dream.

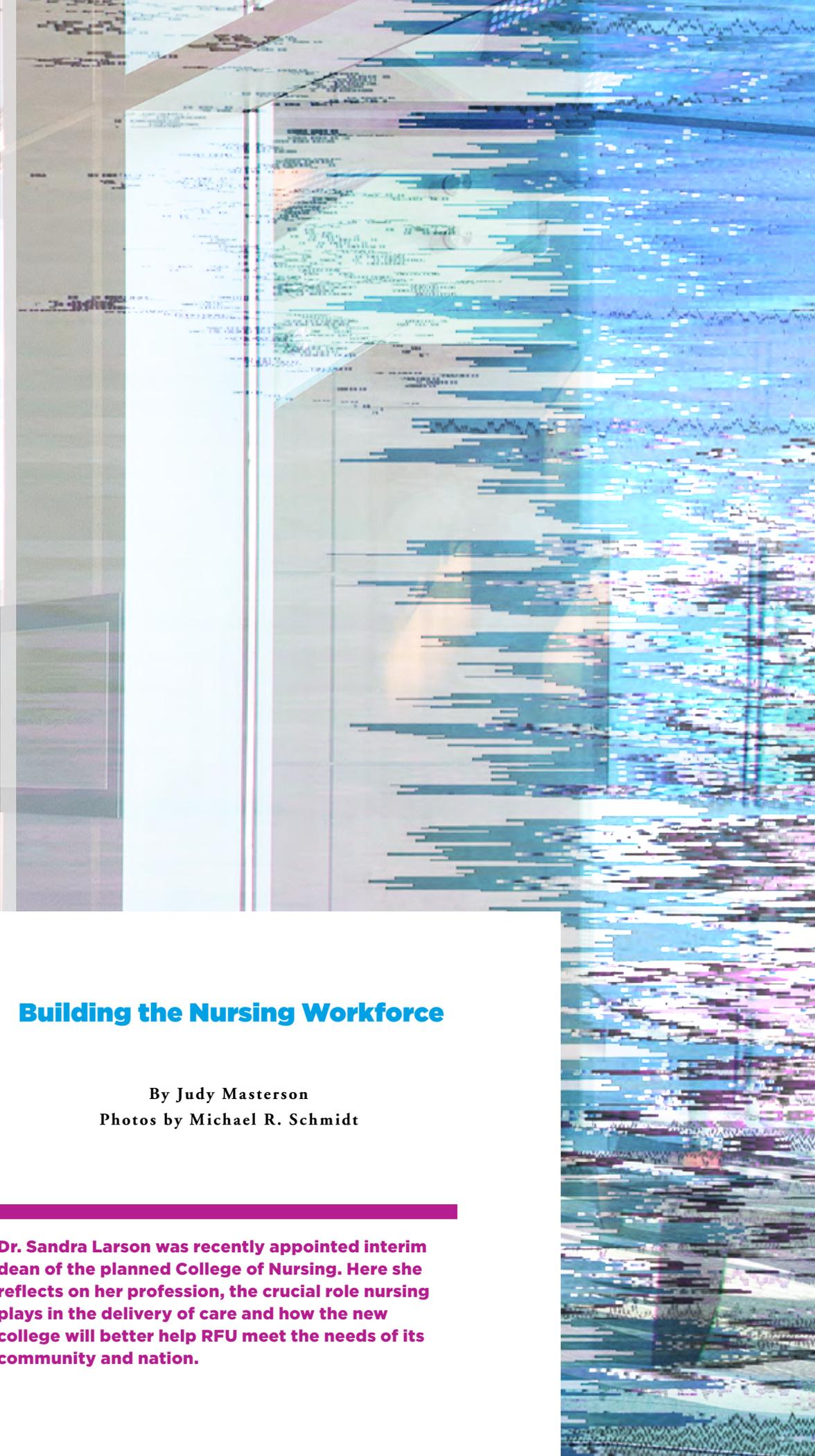
"My acceptance to RFU positioned me to be a future physician who can sit at the table and advocate for more access to health care for underserved populations," Ms. Tiema-Benson said, adding that she plans to be "a face others can see to represent the field." ❧

LAURINE TIEMA-BENSON

THE
FUTURE

NURSING





Building the Nursing Workforce

By Judy Masterson
Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

Dr. Sandra Larson was recently appointed interim dean of the planned College of Nursing. Here she reflects on her profession, the crucial role nursing plays in the delivery of care and how the new college will better help RFU meet the needs of its community and nation.

Q A

HELIX: Why did you choose a career in nursing?

DR. LARSON: Nursing was a natural choice for me because I love the human connection. Nursing enables you to use your hands, heart and knowledge when caring for those in need. I value and appreciate how that connection, in and of itself, promotes healing and wellness. I also value nursing's leadership in advancing a holistic approach to the diagnosis and treatment of disease and promotion of wellness. I learned that through nursing I could feed my soul, my spirit, while continuously evolving in my nursing roles and spheres of influence and advocacy.



“With the support and input from a broad group of key stakeholders, we are creating a nursing education-to-employment pathway. We are looking at our community, understanding what it needs and finding the intersections.”

You earned a doctorate in public policy analysis, which influenced CRNA scope of practice. How are you bringing that experience to bear as interim dean? ¹

¹ In 2020 RFU announced the expansion of its nursing programs. Housed within a new College of Nursing, in collaboration with regional academic and clinical partners. New course content will emphasize public and population health; race and health; and artificial intelligence and telehealth.

Policy analysts are trained to analyze and synthesize large bodies of literature, and to apply a rationale as well as a political planning model to the process of understanding issues and developing solutions. My unique expertise in health profession scope-of-practice regulation heightened my understanding that how nursing evolves over time will in part be determined by its ability to gain favorable local, state and federal scope-of-practice regulation. This influences nursing curriculum development across several areas and prioritizes the need to assess and graduate students who are competent to practice at the full scope of their licensure and training.

Top: Sandra Larson, PhD, CRNA, APN, FNAP. Bottom, left: Dr. Larson meets with Northwestern Medicine personnel and other RFU partners in February 2021. Bottom, right: Lake Forest College's Shubhik K. DebBurman, PhD, (left) and Dr. Larson in a science lab on the LFC campus.



Our planned College of Nursing will be the first of its kind in northern Lake County. How has the shortage of nurses driven the plan?

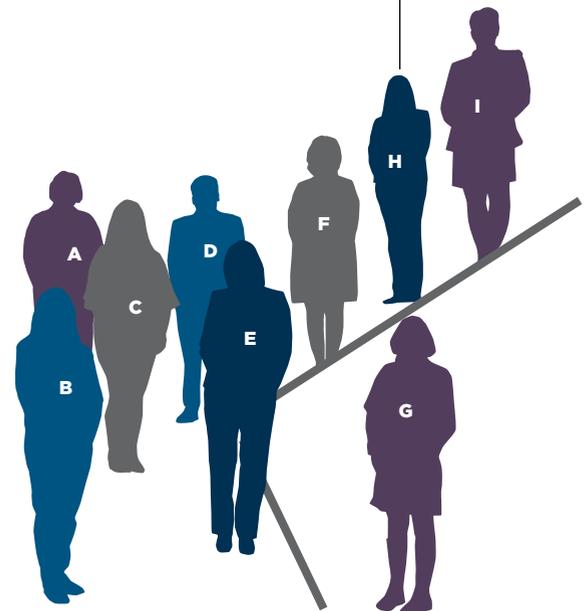
The need is great. Our state and our nation are experiencing a tremendous shortage of nurses. Right now, about one-third of nurses in Illinois are over age 55. Registered nurses are 80% of the nursing workforce — boots-on-the-ground folks out in communities, schools and hospital settings delivering one-on-one patient care and advocating for individuals, families and communities. Advanced practice registered nurses and nursing administrators account for most of the remaining 20%. Becker's Hospital Review, a leading hospital magazine, recently announced its top 25 women advancing in healthcare leadership. More than half are registered nurses. Under Dr. Rheault's leadership, we're seizing the opportunity to graduate registered nurses for entry into practice with a master's degree. We are answering the demand to contribute to building a more highly educated registered nursing workforce that enters into practice at the master's level, and that is well positioned to contribute to transformation of health care and improvement in patient outcomes and patient satisfaction. We are also building advanced practice nursing tracts that match the community's needs, beginning with a doctoral degree psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program.

We are prioritizing a program in psychiatric mental health nursing. Please explain.

Institute of Mental Health data shows that there are roughly 50,000 suicides per year in the United States. An estimated 330 people die each day from suicide and drug overdose. It's important to make the connection that so often drug addiction and mental health go together. Our local partners echo the national discourse of three-month waiting lists to receive care and provider burnout because demand so exceeds supply. The incidence of mental illness is uniquely profound in the veteran population but exists across all sectors and age groups. We're working closely with a number of our healthcare system partners to better understand their needs and to create innovation in community-based mental healthcare delivery that supports earlier detection and prevention.

From the previous spread: Several of the key community stakeholders who are helping RFU meet the nursing workforce challenge.

A) Denise Majeski, MSN, RN, ACM, NE-BC, chief nurse executive, vice president of operations, Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital **B) Lori Thuente**, PhD, RN, director, The Center for Interprofessional Education and Research **C) Amy Druml**, MSN, RN-BC, clinical director, NWSS Nursing Support Services, Northwestern Medicine **D) Shubhik DebBurman**, PhD, senior director for science partnerships, Lake Forest College **E) Sandra Larson**, PhD, CRNA, APN, FNAP, vice president of partnerships **F) Lori Sullivan**, RN, vice president and chief nurse executive, Northwestern Medicine Woodstock Hospital **G) Christine Somberg**, MSN, APRN-CNS, ACNS-BC, NE-BC, director of operations and professional development, Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital **H) Katie Voigt**, PA-C, advanced practice provider for APP practice and hematology/oncology, Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital **I) Catie L. Schmit**, MSN, RN, CEN, NE-BC, vice president and chief nurse executive, Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital



NURSING FAQ

IN ILLINOIS
80%
ARE REGISTERED
NURSES

1/3
ARE OVER
55 YRS OLD

NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT
PROJECTIONS
7.2%
INCREASE IN
REGISTERED
NURSES ²

² Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

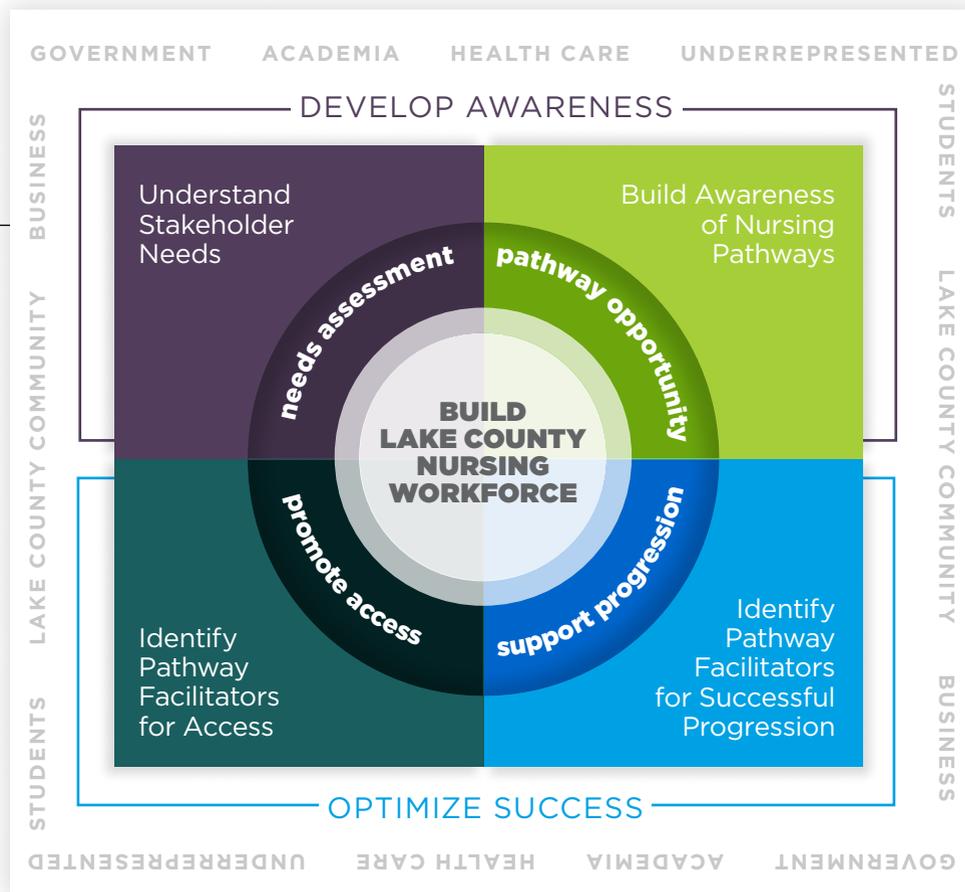
www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-major-occupational-group.htm

www.bls.gov/emp/tables/emp-by-detailed-occupation.htm

How can nurses help transform care in our own community?

A College of Nursing really speaks to a tremendous community need. We're building this college with and for the community. We're creating a strategy with a focus on the end game, which is to use education to improve aspects of the social determinants of health. With the support and input from a broad group of key stakeholders, we are creating a nursing education-to-employment pathway. We are looking at our community, understanding what it needs and finding the intersections. Our healthcare systems need nurses who hail from diverse communities to help improve the health outcomes of these patient populations. Our many Lake County biopharma companies and healthcare systems need nurses engaged in patient care, administration, marketing, research, sales and concept development. Creating a robust nursing education workforce pathway is a big win for all.

Advance Lake County Community Wellness and Prosperity



What has the pandemic revealed about your profession?

Nursing is so worthy of the trust people place in it. The public sees the profession as ethical and honorable and honest. Many in our ranks have given their lives for the care of patients who have contracted COVID-19. Many have also experienced a tremendous emotional toll from seeing so many lives lost — despite exceptional nursing care. Nurses' management of COVID patients has helped us see just how much we need them — not just in the ICU during the pandemic, but functioning in our communities in new ways. ✕

Judy Masterson is a staff writer with the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management.



RFU's Health Professions Program (HPP) collaboration with Lake Forest College — and the cause of building bridges for underserved students — received a boost in late 2020 when Deerfield-based Horizon Therapeutics committed \$500,000 toward full-ride HPP scholarships.

The Horizon Scholars initiative will provide two four-year scholarships for economically disadvantaged students and students of color. Preference will be given to students of color from Lake County or the greater Chicagoland area.

“Equity and inclusion in education is a significant global issue, and we feel it is important for companies and individuals who have the resources to help remove obstacles that exist for marginalized populations,” said Tim Walbert, Horizon’s chairman, president and chief executive officer. He added that “we look forward to developing long-term partnerships (and) building a global network of Horizon Scholars” with Lake Forest College and Rosalind Franklin University.

“EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION IS A SIGNIFICANT GLOBAL ISSUE”

The grant affirms the bold vision RFU shares with LFC, and aligns with the university’s goal of improving wellness through our own means and through partnerships. RFU is collaborating with regional academic, industry and clinical partners to strengthen the high school-to-college pathway in northern Lake County. With endeavors like the HPP that draw from and are intent on serving our most vulnerable communities, RFU and LFC empower students to help address structural barriers by offering culturally competent care.

HPP students enter an accelerated pathway that starts at LFC and continues through RFU, preparing them for careers in fields that include allopathic medicine, podiatric medicine, pharmacy, biomedical science, physical therapy, physician assistant, pathologists’ assistant and clinical psychology. Announced in October 2020, the HPP drew more than 200 participants entering the Spring 2021 semester at Lake Forest College.

According to Horizon, LFC faculty members and admission counselors will select the first two Horizon Scholars, who will matriculate this fall as members of the Class of 2025. ❧



Top left, right and bottom: The campus of Lake Forest College.

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Join us in advancing health care in education, research and communities.

MAKE YOUR IMPACT TODAY: rfu.ms/impactrfu



Groups of nurses from Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital participate in simulation training.



SUPPORTING RFU PARTNERS WITH ADVANCED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

By Sara Skoog

James Carlson, PhD '12, MS '01, vice president for interprofessional education and simulation, describes how RFU's simulation facilities help meet the training needs of our clinical and community partners.

Rosalind Franklin University's Center for Advanced Simulation in Healthcare at Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital in Huntley, Illinois, provides a safe learning environment for healthcare students and professionals to develop essential clinical and communication skills before entering real-world work settings. This 30,000-square-foot virtual health system provides simulation-based training that allows learners to hone their clinical skills in outpatient, inpatient, emergency, and surgical cases and settings, and it offers training opportunities for RFU's clinical and community partners with a commitment to advance quality and safety in patient care.

"Part of our mission is to support our partners," said Dr. Jim Carlson, RFU's vice president for interprofessional education and simulation. "Especially during the pandemic, we've continued to serve as a training facility for nurses from the Northwestern Medicine system. We're supporting Northwestern's onboarding of new nurses and helping current nurses advance their skills, helping to advance quality and safe care for the patients they serve."

While the simulation center is primarily a learning environment for healthcare providers, non-clinical partners such as the University of St. Mary of the Lake (USML) Mundelein Seminary also benefit from the training resources available through the Huntley facility.

"The seminary program has learning experiences that prepare seminarians to minister to patients in a hospital setting," Dr. Carlson said. "We started working with them about a year ago, integrating simulation training that provides patient perspectives such as someone undergoing cancer treatment or experiencing a behavioral health crisis."

Even in the midst of the COVID pandemic, the training continued via telelearning to ensure the safety of both students and staff. "We were able to modify to telesimulation and will continue to advance this important work," said Dr. Carlson. "We're also actively working with USML as they continue to include active experiences with standardized patients and communication skills via tele-delivery in their curriculum. I think it's a nice fit with RFU, as both organizations are helping to prepare their students to care for those in need." x



Above: James Carlson, PhD '12, MS '01, in the Center for Advanced Simulation in Healthcare.

"We're supporting Northwestern's onboarding of new nurses and helping current nurses advance their skills, helping to advance quality and safe care for the patients they serve."



THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH



RFU

Innovation and Research Park Ribbon Cutting

Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

Resilience and optimism were dominant themes on Jan. 28 when the RFU community pushed through the COVID-19 pandemic to cut the ribbon — in appropriately virtual fashion — on the \$50 million Innovation and Research Park.

Perhaps no one demonstrated perseverance more than U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Deerfield, who recorded remarks praising the IRP while in self-quarantine after testing positive for COVID.

“In spite of this pandemic, I think it’s important that we continue to look to our future, and that really is why we are gathered here today,” Rep. Schneider said during the event, which was streamed via RFU’s YouTube channel with pre-recorded comments from more than 20 speakers, including university leaders, government officials and executives from the bioscience and economic sectors.

The online celebration arrived one year after the IRP opened its doors and nine months after a traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony was put on hold by the pandemic. Many speakers joined Rep. Schneider — who described the IRP’s 100,000 square feet of laboratory and office space as “a nexus of creativity and intelligence” — in stressing the critical importance of moving forward through challenging circumstances.

Here are just a few of the other testimonials offered by those who offered encouraging forecasts for the IRP’s future during a most unique ceremony.



Wendy Rheault, PT, PhD, FASAHP, FNAP, DipACLM, RFU president and CEO



The IRP has been up and running through the darkest days of the COVID struggle, and now that we can see light on the horizon, our faith in medicine and science is being rewarded. The bright future of the post-COVID years is coming into view.”



Our Innovation and Research Park and Helix 51 incubator, the first of their kind in Lake County and north to Milwaukee, are evidence of RFU’s commitment to improving wellness through biomedical advances. We’re building a research enterprise that will benefit our university, our communities and our region for generations to come.”



Ronald Kaplan, PhD, RFU executive vice president for research



Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker



Growing our state’s life sciences is a key tenet of my administration’s five-year economic plan, and (the) Innovation and Research Park is the type of strategic investment that helps us reach the kind of future our state deserves. This project demonstrates that innovation is critical to our success as a state, and this past year in particular. We need more bold thinkers and more brave risk-takers to solve our toughest challenges.”



I see the Innovation and Research Park as symbolizing the interface between past achievements and the next decades of scientific progress for Rosalind Franklin University.”



K. Michael Welch, MB, ChB, FRCP, former RFU president and CEO



Kevin Byrne, chief executive officer, The University Financing Foundation



Like other shining stars, the Innovation and Research Park is a beacon for the best and brightest scientists and thinkers in the fields of brain disease, genetic disease and lower limb-related disease research. It is the shining star of the year 2020, and an asset for the Lake County life-science and medical-innovation hub.”



Elizabeth Coulson, chair, RFU Board of Trustees



This is a moment of great pride for all of us on the board, who have teamed with our administration and strategic partners to advance this project from the drawing board to reality. We’re especially proud that we can (cut the ribbon) amid all the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, sending a message that the research mission endures no matter what challenges arise along the way.”

The RFU community was honored to have the following speakers provide comments at the Innovation and Research Park’s virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony:

Kevin Considine, president and CEO of Lake County Partners

Tom Denison, founder, SmartHealth Catalyzer

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, Illinois

U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, Illinois

Marc J. Glucksman, PhD, director, Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics

Julian Gordon, PhD, co-founder and chief scientific officer, Inspirotec Inc.

Henry Gosebruch, executive vice president and chief strategy officer, AbbVie

Michelle L. Hastings, PhD, director, Center for Genetic Diseases

Johnny He, PhD, director, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection

State Sen. Julie Morrison, Deerfield

Shobha Parthasarathi, PhD, vice president of external innovation and new ventures, Xontogeny

Norbert Riedel, PhD, president and CEO, Aptinyx

Mayor Leon Rockingham Jr., City of North Chicago

Jeremy Amiel Rosenkranz, PhD, MS, director, Brain Science Institute

U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider, Deerfield

Jeff Sherman, MD, FACP, executive vice president and chief medical officer, Horizon Therapeutics

Grace E. Stutzmann, PhD, director, Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases and Therapeutics

VISIT THE RFU YOUTUBE CHANNEL

to see the IRP Ribbon Cutting and other RFU videos

<https://rfu.ms/i>



BARRIER-BREAKING SCIENTIST SPEAKS TO RFU

Namandjé N. Bumpus, PhD, spoke on “How Racism and Sexism Squash Talent and Slow Progress in STEM” on Feb. 10. Hosted by Women in Science and Healthcare (WiSH), the presentation, held via Zoom, was part of the Dr. Rosalind Franklin Centennial Series honoring women’s advancements in science and health care.



Dr. Bumpus is a professor and director of the Department of Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine — the first African American woman to lead a department at the institution, and the only African American woman currently chairing a pharmacology department at any U.S. medical school.

“It’s important to look at the contributions of women in science and medicine, but we have to be willing to acknowledge the very unique experience that exists for certain women and understand how our language and our actions marginalize women, even as we try to elevate women overall,” said Dr. Bumpus, who emphasized the intersection of race and gender.

“Making science and academia truly inclusive requires moving beyond discussions of diversity to actually confront oppression and racism.”

Dr. Bumpus added that her experience of racism in academia has often been dismissed, even by women colleagues.

“Specific systemic barriers go beyond sexism alone for Black and Latina and Indigenous women,” Dr. Bumpus said. “If we want to move to a place where we are really seeing inclusivity in science and academia, we have to acknowledge intersectionality and the impact that it has.”

Dr. Bumpus researches genetic differences that influence how people metabolize antiretroviral drugs used to treat HIV. Her recently published perspectives include “For Better Drugs, Diversify Clinical Trials” in the journal *Science*, and “Too Many Senior White Academics Still Resist Recognizing Racism,” featured in *Nature*.

She was attacked for the latter piece — someone sent her an image of a lynching, she said — for challenging “over-represented people in science” to “wake up to how the culture in academic science is exclusionary.”

“Making science and academia truly inclusive requires moving beyond discussions of diversity to actually confront oppression and racism,” Dr. Bumpus told her RFU audience. “How do we really turn ourselves into a unit as scientists in academia who are creating opportunities for all and who are willing to be brave enough to recognize everyone’s experience and the discrimination they have faced?” ✕

**TO VIEW DR. BUMPUS’ TALK
AND OTHER RF@100 PRESENTATIONS**

VISIT rfu.ms/wishyt

ERIN KASEDA



By Margaret Smith

As she explored the depths of brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, Erin Kaseda, CHP '24, said she was intrigued to discover not only that PTSD exists for survivors of COVID-19 but to learn how acute it can be — including the occurrence of delirium reported by advanced-stage patients.

“Many people have these hallucinatory experiences where they see things like themselves being wheeled down to the morgue, or they see their family members dead all around them. And those are the only memories that they have of being in the hospital and being in the ICU,” said Ms. Kaseda, a student in the clinical psychology PhD program on a neuropsychology specialty track.

“All of my research interests are in how the brain functions in the context of illness,” Ms. Kaseda said. This interest is what led to her most recent publication, “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Differential Diagnostic Consideration for COVID-19 Survivors,” which delves into cognition in relation to COVID-19.

However, her research didn’t begin and end with COVID. The project was sparked by her work with veterans and active-duty military, a population at increased risk for traumatic brain injury and PTSD. In the early months of the pandemic, the link between COVID survivors’ and veterans’ traumatic experiences and subsequent cognitive concerns became clear. Ms. Kaseda said that in addition to stressors imposed on COVID patients — such as isolation, lonely hospital stays and the real threat of death — “a lot of the traumatic kind of treatment experiences that people have in ICU settings, like intubation, that are very invasive and medically traumatic” made her realize that “PTSD is going to be something that comes up.”

The intrusive experiences detailed by patients following a stay in the ICU, she added, are “not something that providers can control and ends up becoming a prominent feature in life.” Identifying those who are at the greatest risk of developing PTSD and ensuring they are met with care then becomes an ongoing mission even after they have been discharged.

“It’s a new topic, and not a lot of people know about it,” said Dr. Andrew Levine, an adjunct professor with the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA specializing in HIV and its effects on the brain, and Ms. Kaseda’s co-author on the article. “It’s really interesting to think about these things as they arise and apply knowledge from other similar pandemics — such as HIV, for example — to this novel coronavirus.”

“COVID has turned a spotlight on how there’s this relationship, always, between medical illness and mental health.”

Looking at the future of COVID-19 and its lasting effects, Ms. Kaseda is hopeful that the increased attention placed on mental health during the pandemic and the new ways of accessing care — such as telehealth services — will help advance care for more people.

“COVID has turned a spotlight on how there’s this relationship, always, between medical illness and mental health,” she said. “That’s true, not just for COVID survivors themselves, but also for their family members and for healthcare workers.” ❖

Margaret Smith is a Chicago-based freelance editor and writer whose work largely focuses on current sociopolitical happenings.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE UNHEALED WOUNDS OF THE PAST

By Julie Atkins Waites, PsyD

THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE is a reoccurring Helix column that poses an issue to our community of experts.

We asked Dr. Julie Atkins Waites to address how sectors such as higher education and biomedical research can help create a future in which we prioritize health and wellness and the strengthening of all communities to better meet the next generational challenge.



To create a priority is to say, “This is important; it matters; it is of value.” Values are never fully resolved but always in progress, constantly in revision. Values point us in the direction we desire to move.

Creating a future in which we prioritize health and wellness and the strengthening of all communities must fully acknowledge the unhealed wounds of the past and continued wounding in the present. Communities of marginalized people experience human injury as a result of traumatic events in their lived reality day in and day out. As a world, a country, an institution or an individual, we cannot heal what is not first acknowledged. We cannot talk about healing trauma without including social justice.

Traumatic events take many forms and impact both individuals and communities. For example, institutionalized trauma refers to the way that people are harmed by the larger systems that we all rely on, including our systems of education, criminal justice and health care. When communities are not served by these systems — and often are harmed by them — the result can be trauma. Social justice is one means of preventing trauma, such as institutionalized trauma.

“Our next generational challenge may involve the development of empathy, our most human quality.”

Beginning a process to become trauma-informed allows RFU the lens by which to acknowledge the commonality of trauma amongst us. Social justice is both a process and a goal in service of addressing institutionalized trauma and strengthening all of our communities. The principles of trauma-informed systems — safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment — are values that guide change on an institutional level.

Our next generational challenge may involve the development of empathy, our most human quality. Empathy involves our capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference. We need empathy as the antidote to trauma. Einstein said, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” We can construct the future through embodying values that heal rather than traumatize all members of our human family. ✕

Julie Atkins Waites, PsyD, is director of Rosalind Franklin University Health Clinics’ Student Counseling Service, which offers direct clinical services, crisis intervention, educational outreach programming and consultation to the university. Under her leadership, student counseling providers have maintained services during the pandemic while increasing appointments by over 70%.



A space for meetings between staff and visitors at the RFU Health Clinics Student Counseling Service.

Opinions expressed in “Through the Microscope” columns are solely those of the authors and are not intended to represent those of Rosalind Franklin University.

BUILDING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY THAT STRENGTHENS AND SERVES ALL

By Max Loh, SGPS '21



The series of events in 2020 has had a significant negative impact, built from the culmination of social isolation, burdens on the healthcare system, political turmoil and the heightened awareness of racial injustice. Higher educational sectors and specifically RFU must adapt to address the new challenges to optimally shape generations of physicians and scientists.

While isolation effectively prevents COVID-19 contraction, quarantines and distancing practices have long-term effects on mental health. The prevalence of anxiety and depression in students has spiked during the pandemic — and is particularly severe in economically disadvantaged and underrepresented students. Though RFU provides free counseling, meeting the increased demand for mental health services requires a larger, more diverse set of resources. Before we emerge from the pandemic, RFU should expand current programs to help all students seeking aid.

RFU student, staff and faculty demographics do not reflect the proportions of U.S. racial groups. The disproportionate output of RFU healthcare professionals poses a risk to underserved communities, as patients benefit from being treated by physicians of the same race. To prioritize health and wellness of all, RFU must foster a new diverse community. Actions can include: 1) reorganizing admission criteria to prioritize students from diverse cultural backgrounds; 2) granting diversity and inclusion offices authoritative power to make institutional changes; and 3) requiring diversity statements from job applicants.

In the past year, more institutions have begun to address the weight of racial discrimination and inequality. As a result, newly established diversity task forces asked underrepresented workers to participate. Contributors led discussions, taught their colleagues and supported other underrepresented members. This additional labor was done while underrepresented members were processing the ongoing issues themselves and attending to their occupational responsibilities.

These diversity groups are beneficial but bear the question, “Are we further burdening our underrepresented workers?” Emotional labor is also requested in common workspaces. Being my laboratory’s only trainee of color, colleagues often seek my perspective for questions surrounding diversity. Diversity is a core value of RFU; we must practice what we preach and show that work in diversity is valuable. Moving forward, RFU should reward and compensate the workers contributing to these efforts, making their invisible labor visible.

These presented issues are not unique to RFU, and the suggested strategies are not novel. However, there is hope if RFU commits to long-term efforts that address the ongoing problems, the university can build the foundation of a future that strengthens and serves all. ✕

Max Loh, a cellular and molecular pharmacology PhD candidate in the Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders, is a past president of RFU’s Graduate Student Association (GSA). A member of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies’ Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, she contributed to the school’s Statement on Racial Inequality and Injustice.

Opinions expressed in “Through the Microscope” columns are solely those of the authors and are not intended to represent those of Rosalind Franklin University.

THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE is a reoccurring Helix column that poses an issue to our community of experts.

We asked Max Loh to address how sectors such as higher education and biomedical research can help create a future in which we prioritize health and wellness and the strengthening of all communities to better meet the next generational challenge.



Max Loh, shown in a photo taken prior to COVID-19 protocols, successfully defended her PhD thesis, “Role of the Developing Medial Orbitofrontal Cortex on Reward-Related Neural Circuitry,” on March 18.

BOXER LIBRARY SHIFTS TO DIGITAL-FIRST MODEL



By Sara Skoog

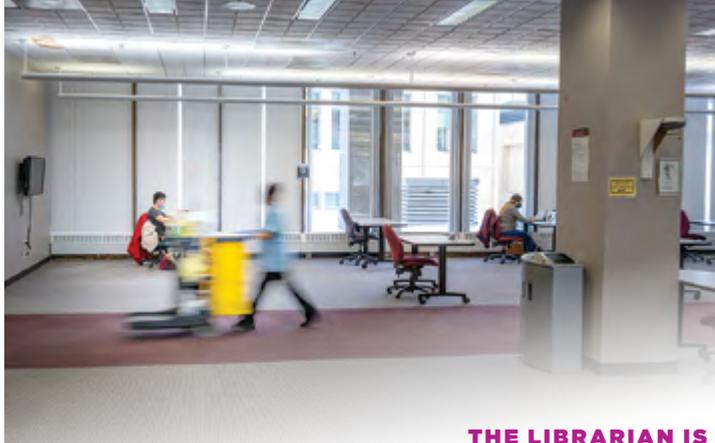
Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

Charlotte Beyer, MSIS, AHIP, was a month into her promotion as Library Director of RFU's Boxer Library when the coronavirus pandemic required major changes to library operations in March 2020. Tables and study carrels were removed to accommodate physical distancing. Print materials and study aids — such as bone boxes and dry erase markers for white boards — were removed from circulation. The risk of these materials transmitting COVID-19 was too great.

Other resources, such as journals and digital textbooks, were already available electronically, although Ms. Beyer said she knew they would need to expand these services as much as possible to accommodate higher usage levels during e-learning and remote work.

“We have really shifted to a ‘digital first’ model when it comes to accessing information during the pandemic,” she said, noting that this applies not only to e-journals but also textbooks and even book chapters when copyright and licensing agreements allow. “Some textbooks just aren’t available with a digital license, but we actively acquire as many e-books as we can to increase student access whenever possible.”

Ms. Beyer notes that expansion of these and other resources was part of the library’s longer-term plans, but the pandemic accelerated the timetable for implementation.



THE LIBRARIAN IS 'IN' (ONLINE)

One of the biggest challenges was making sure students and faculty could still contact the library staff for assistance. Like many RFU employees, members of the library staff have largely been working from home since the start of the pandemic. The solution? Implementing an oft-requested online chat program, and also connecting with library patrons via Zoom.

“The Student Library Advisory Committee often requested the launch of an online chat service for reference questions prior to the pandemic in March 2020,” said Ms. Beyer. “We were in the process of evaluating this type of service, and then the pandemic accelerated our plans when we launched it in March.”

When a topic requires more discussion than can be quickly addressed by chat, patrons can schedule a reference appointment via Zoom. Not only does this allow an option for face-to-face contact (sort of), but the video conference technology offers an added benefit that isn't part of a traditional in-person meeting.

“One benefit to Zoom appointments is, with the student or faculty member's permission, we can record the Zoom meeting and then send a link to the recording so they can refer to it at a later time,” Ms. Beyer explained. This allows the patron to have the information on hand as needed, accessible at their convenience. She expects this option to remain available going forward, as long as there is interest.

RECONSIDERING LIBRARY DESIGN

While the use of digital resources has spiked as demand rose due to remote learning and work, the library's physical spaces have remained open for those who still seek a quiet space to study. “Some students have said they still need that space, it's part of their study routine. For others, it's about just needing to get out of their house or apartment for a while, particularly when they have two or three roommates who are also home trying to study or work,” Ms. Beyer said.

“Before COVID, libraries contained lots of open spaces. Now, the thinking is some open space is OK, but there will also still be a need for some physical separation.”

Much of the library's furniture has been removed, with the remaining tables and study carrels spaced 8 feet apart. Students place signage on furniture they've used to indicate it needs to be disinfected before further use. Ms. Beyer noted that the pandemic has led to a rethinking of library design in institutions across the country. “Before COVID, libraries contained lots of open spaces. Now, the thinking is some open space is OK, but there will also still be a need for some physical separation.”

Although “digital first” is becoming the norm for accessing library resources, Ms. Beyer is quick to point out that it won't become the only way. Electronic resources work great for some people, while others can view them as barriers to finding what they need. Ms. Beyer says she and her team are committed to meeting students where they're at, whether in person or online. “Some students will still prefer that personal connection and want to drop in, and we'll be here for that,” she said. ✕

Sara Skoog is a staff writer with the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management. In addition to writing for Helix and other university publications, she also produces Pulse, RFU's monthly e-newsletter.

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ANATOMY RESOURCE USAGE

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MCGRAW HILL EBOOK SUBSCRIPTION USAGE

▲ **96%**
LIBRARY SEARCH USAGE

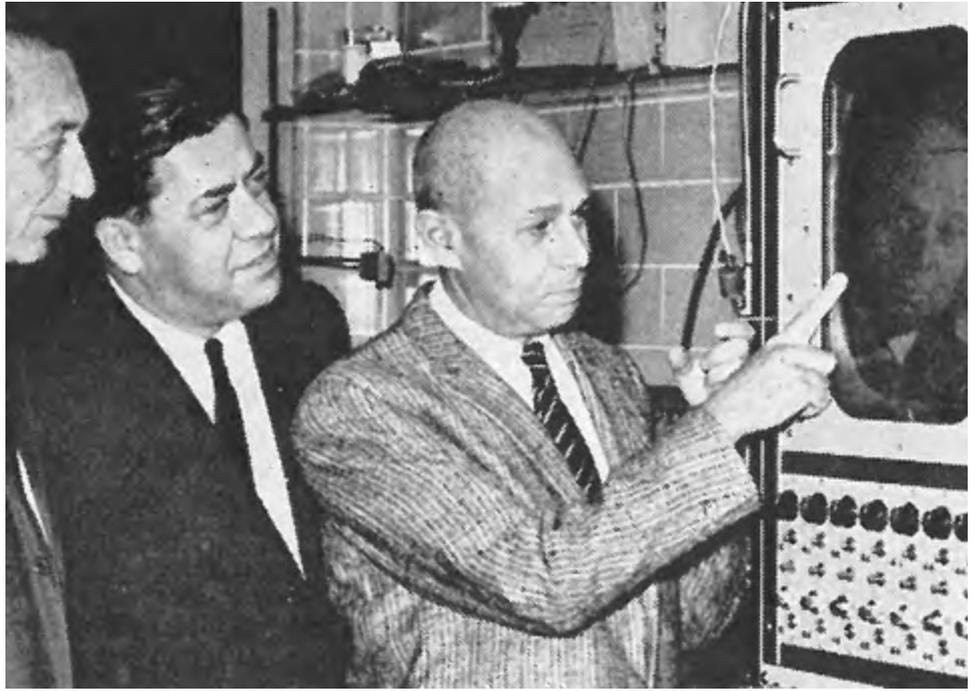
▲ **36%**
ELECTRONIC JOURNAL USAGE

▲ **17%**
DATABASE USAGE

Source: RFU Boxer Library. May 2019–June 2020

Opposite page, top: Boxer Library director Charlotte Beyer, MSIS, AHIP, in January 2021. There are new protocols to study in the library during the COVID-19 pandemic, including safe social distancing and wearing a mask. Middle: Alisha Benavides, CHP '22, wears a mask and sits apart from other students to observe Boxer Library's COVID safety protocol. Bottom: Frequent cleaning of equipment was among the precautions taken as the campus community navigated the pandemic.

The move couldn't have come at a more opportune time. Just weeks before the beginning of the school year, the roof of the old auditorium at 710 S. Wolcott St. collapsed.



CHICAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

By Kelly Reiss

Sixty years before RFU held the grand opening of the Innovation and Research Park, the Chicago Medical School Institute of Medical Research opened its doors in response to an increase in the school's faculty and research activities, which were advancing discovery around heart disease, cancer, hereditary childhood illnesses and mental health.



The 10-story building with a marble facade was constructed in Chicago's West Side Medical District at 2020 W. Ogden Ave. The institute was around the corner from Cook County Hospital and 710 S. Wolcott St., the building occupied by CMS since 1930. When the institute opened in 1961, each floor was designated to an area or research activity in the following disciplines: biophysics; ultrastructure; behavioral sciences; microbiology; biochemistry; enzymology and experimental hypersensitivity; metabolic research; cardiovascular research; and oncology.

It was anticipated to provide facilities for 400 scientists and to be a training center for physicians, graduate students and technicians. After the school dedicated its new research endeavor, it was also honored to develop a Society of Sigma Xi to mark its research distinctions, a chapter that continues today.

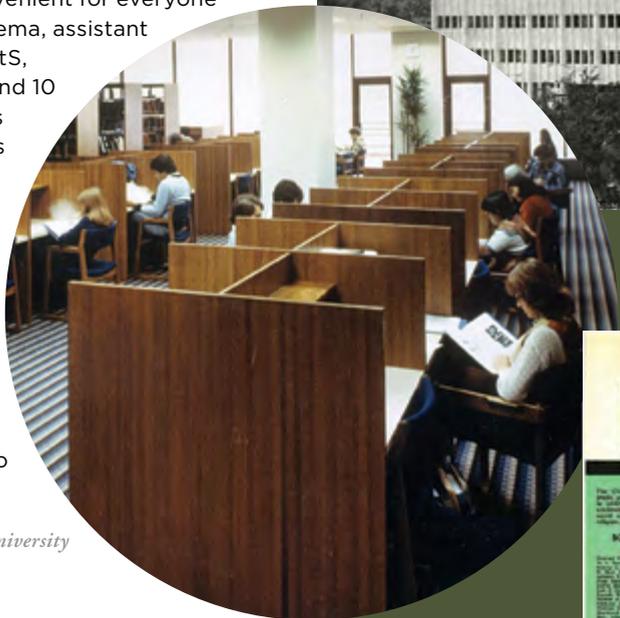
After three-and-a-half floors of cancer research space were vacated, the decision was made to bring Chicago Medical School/University of Health Sciences under one roof at 2020 W. Ogden Ave. for the beginning of the 1968-69 school year, bringing in 280 CMS and additional students in the new School of Graduate

and Postdoctoral Studies. During this time of transition, the building was affectionately named “The House of 20/20 Vision” by the students. The vacant floors were redesigned to create classrooms, laboratories and the library. The merger was completed with minimal switching around and not a square foot of wasted space. The move couldn’t have come at a more opportune time. Just weeks before the beginning of the school year, the roof of the old auditorium at 710 S. Wolcott St. collapsed.

“Consolidation has brought a closer relationship between faculty and students, basic science departments are self-contained, one floor to each department, and it is convenient for everyone to use the library,” stated Dr. John Fudema, assistant dean for facilities planning, in ComMENTS, January 1969. The labs on floors nine and 10 were redesigned to hold eight students and could be used for all the disciplines interchangeably. The small lab units gave the students privacy and a quiet place to work. At the beginning of each year, the labs were assigned to CMS students to use as a homeroom, study and laboratory center.

2020 W. Ogden Ave. remained the center of activities for the university until 40 years ago, when all operations moved to a new home in North Chicago for the 1980–81 school year. ✕

Kelly Reiss is director of the Rosalind Franklin University Archives and the Feet First Exhibition.



Opposite page, top: Prolific author and head of cardiovascular research Aldo Luisada, MD (at right), illustrates a piece of equipment in his laboratory during a tour of the Chicago Medical School Institute in 1963. Previous page, bottom: Students relax outside the North Chicago campus after the 1980–81 move from Chicago’s West Side Medical District. Top, right: 2020 W. Ogden Ave. under construction in September 1960, several months before the building opened in spring 1961. Bottom, right: A Chicago Medical School newsletter from September 1960 provided an update on construction. Inset: The new Learning Resource Center opened in the fall of 1980 following the move from Chicago. Bottom, left: Teaching laboratories in the new Basic Sciences Building, which opened for the 1980–81 academic year..

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LEYTHON WILLIAMS, PT, DPT '12

By Judy Masterson

Photos by Sean Proctor

Leython Williams' father always told him "never forget where you came from," advice that has taken on deeper meaning as Dr. Williams gains personal and professional experience.



"As a child, I thought he meant 'don't forget the people close to you,'" Dr. Williams said. "But as an adult, I understand his words to also carry a community focus. My desire has expanded from being the best PT I can be to helping our profession at large be the best it can be. I want to challenge the healthcare professions to be more representative of the communities that we serve."

Dr. Williams is a physical therapist and facility manager for Athletico Physical Therapy in Royal Oak, Michigan, a suburb not far from the East Side of Detroit, where he was born and raised. While he grew up in the inner city — where the collapse of the auto industry brought high unemployment and hastened the decline of already segregated, underfunded schools — he attended better-resourced, private schools in the suburbs.

"Attending predominantly white schools while playing sports in the predominantly Black community where I lived allowed me to appreciate perspectives that were different than mine," Dr. Williams said. "I grew up with a sense of cultural identity while also learning to value the differences presented in various cultures and socioeconomic classes. It gave me a balance in my perspective that I think is often missing in conversations around diversity, inclusion and equity."

“It’s not an inability to perform well in the sciences that makes students feel incapable — it’s a lack of resources and representation.”

Today, Dr. Williams is co-chair of the Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Council at Athletico, which operates 500 clinics in 12 states. He is also founding president of the Detroit chapter of the National Association of Black Physical Therapists and serves as a member of the External Advisory Board for the Physical Therapy Department at RFU. In 2020, he participated in an American Physical Therapy Association Diversity and Inclusion panel and webinar.

“African Americans make up 13% of the population but just 3% of physical therapists in the United States,” Dr. Williams said. “I feel it’s my responsibility to use my unique experience to foster healthy discussion around how we can build a more diverse PT profession and healthcare industry at large. It starts with exposure. Other than my mother, who was a nurse, I didn’t see diversity in the health professions growing up. Even in my shadowing, I didn’t see anyone who looked like me or came from the same background or who understood the unique challenges that exist in the community I came from.”

Dr. Williams, who works to build a culture of teamwork and purpose among his fellow PTs, frames the quest for diversity in the health professions around resource equity.

“If I attended my neighborhood schools, I’m not certain that I would have gotten on the PT track,” he said. “It’s not an inability to perform well in the sciences that makes students feel incapable — it’s a lack of resources and representation. When we discuss equity, we’re not talking about changing requirements. We’re saying, ‘Give equal resources. Provide the necessary tools to be successful.’”

“Equality means giving everyone the exact same thing,” Dr. Williams added. “Equity speaks to giving based on what is specific to one’s need. The unique disparities that exist in many underserved communities are consistent with their unmet needs.” x

Judy Masterson is a staff writer with the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management.



Opposite, top: Leython Williams, PT, DPT '12, College of Health Professions 2021 Alumnus of the Year, assists a patient. Top: Dr. Williams, who played Division 1 football at Central Michigan University, stands with colleagues Ally D'Abbinale, PT, DPT, and Jessica Michal at Athletico Physical Therapy in suburban Detroit. Bottom: Shown working with a patient in early 2021, Dr. Williams said his first visit to RFU made him feel “extremely warm and welcoming. Coming from out of state, I wanted to be somewhere where I felt I could thrive.”

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STUART MEYER, CMS '60, AND THE HELIX NEBULA

By Sabreen Alfadel

There are a multitude of connections across the universe. Stuart Meyer, CMS '60, first of three generations of RFU alumni, understands this even more with his observations of planetary nebula — specifically the Helix Nebula.



“The word helix describes that round circle of gas that forms around the star. It’s also sometimes called the ‘Eye of God.’”

Dr. Meyer’s early career in medicine started at St. Louis University, where he trained in orthopedic surgery. Since retirement — after practicing orthopedic surgery on Chicago’s North Shore — he has turned to astrophotography, taking an interest in exploring the sky and melding his two passions: the helix associated with the practice of medicine, and the helix associated with the universe.

“The scientific interest of learning medicine was a very important part of dealing with the learning of the sky,” he reflected. “The fact is that for thousands of years, before there was the formation of the double helix, there was an association between astronomy and the sciences, and we can put that together with all the work that Rosalind Franklin did.”

Dr. Meyer’s interest in astronomy evolved when he moved to Arizona in 2004 and began taking courses at local colleges. Moving forward, he was able to connect this newfound interest to his acquired knowledge in orthopedics, noting that “in orthopedic surgery, we visualize things, we fix things. It’s a technical specialty, and as I got into astronomy, it certainly was a technical project, too.”

Some of the technicalities in astronomy include telescopic and digital work, which, according to Dr. Meyer, can assist in pinpointing the nebula’s 10,600-year-old age and helical appearance. With help from high-powered telescopes, this extremely small object in the sky is easily identifiable, and the small white dwarf star in the center becomes visible.

Planetary nebulae, Dr. Meyer explained, are stars that burn out and shed their outer layer of gas, forming a ring that astronomers refer to as a nebula.

“The word helix describes that round circle of gas that forms around the star. It’s also sometimes called the ‘Eye of God,’” he said of the Helix Nebula, which is 450 light years away and the closest planetary nebula to Earth. He added that if you look closely, “there are two layers of gas, which tweaked my feeling more thinking of the double helix.”

Dr. Meyer learned that, although different from the double helix we are familiar with as the structure of DNA, the term holds an equal significance in the science of astronomy.

“We’ve been involved with the double helix for so long,” Dr. Meyer said, “that when I made that connection, I wished everyone associated with Rosalind Franklin knew that up in the sky, there is also a helix.” ✕



Top: Dr. Stuart Meyer, CMS '60, with one of the telescopes that helps him explore the cosmos. Bottom: The RFU roots in Dr. Meyer’s family include granddaughter Alyssa Sloan, CHP '22, whose father is Eric Sloan, MD, '85. Opposite page: An image of the Helix Nebula captured by Dr. Meyer shows the interstellar cloud’s distinctive outer circle.

Sabreen Alfadel is a staff writer with the RFU Division of Marketing and Brand Management, specializing in content development for social media efforts and initiatives.

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