Now more than ever, Penn Nursing is rising to the challenge of being change-makers. The School consistently ranks as the #1 nursing school in the U.S. and the world; and it is clear that we’re leading because we are at the forefront of innovation.

Our faculty and students are committed to advancing knowledge, developing policies and practices to support and promote health, improving quality of care, and designing technologies to make health an easy option. This is what it takes to remain at the forefront, especially with so many rapid changes that affect health and health care.

As co-chairs of Penn Nursing’s Innovating for Life and Living Campaign, we have a front row seat to what goes on behind the scenes—what must happen for our faculty to have the resources to devote to research, and the support required to ensure that the best and brightest students can learn from our faculty, regardless of financial situation. The simple truth is that Penn Nursing is the best because our alumni, supporters, and friends believe in the Power of Penn and have a shared vision for and commitment to Penn Nursing that will not allow us to falter.

From endowing new student scholarships and new faculty chair positions, to finding opportunities to support diversity, to funding innovation in the lab and in the classroom, Penn Nursing supporters are making our leadership possible with their generosity. The stories in this Impact report represent only a portion of the amazing support Penn Nursing has received over the last 12 months.

As Penn Nursing investors ourselves, it is truly humbling to know— to actually see—that a gift to the School has a real impact. With every new graduate who finds their dream job in the nursing world, with every new discovery that changes the way we think about health and health care, with every patient who feels great about the care they receive from a Penn-educated nurse, know that you can and do have an impact. You are the engine that drives Penn Nursing’s ability to innovate. Your investment makes it possible for Penn Nursing to lead.

I hope you will join us over the next year of the Campaign by making an investment in Penn Nursing. As you will see in this Impact report, the return on investment is immense and has an incredible impact on the future of health care and the future of Penn Nursing.

Campaign Co-Chairs

Krista Pinola, Nu’86
Susan Drossman Sokoloff, C’84
Patricia B. Silverstein, C’81
Designing the Future of Health

While nurses have always played a critical part in innovation, the field of nursing innovation is still quite new. Nursing students might have an opportunity to study health technology as they pursue their degrees, but rarely do they get a chance to incorporate design-thinking into their education. Thanks to a grant from the Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation, that’s about to change—and Penn Nursing will lead the way.

Therese S. Richmond, CRNP, FAAN, the Andrea B. Laporte Professor of Nursing and Associate Dean for Research and Innovation at Penn Nursing, and Marion Leary, MSN, MPH, RN, Penn Nursing’s Innovation Specialist in the Office of Nursing Research, are spearheading the development of a jointly owned and branded curriculum resource. The curriculum, which will focus on design-thinking, will be available to all schools and health care systems—wherever nurses study or practice.

The choice to center the curriculum on design-thinking, said Leary, was not an accident.

“Design-thinking is the process of rapidly defining, iterating, prototyping, and testing solutions to problems, and the foundation of the concept is empathy—as nurses, that’s right in our wheelhouse. The first step in design-thinking is to think about and work with the population you’re designing for, so that we’re not telling them what they need, but they are telling us what they need.”

The goal of building the innovation curriculum is to help nursing students think differently about their role as innovators. Richmond notes, “We want to see nurses become innovators in their own right, and we want them to believe that they can be innovators. Penn Nursing is a leader. Being able to develop this curriculum for ourselves and others will keep Penn Nursing at the forefront of this emerging field.”

The Hillman Foundation-Penn Nursing innovation curriculum, with an estimated launch in 2019, will provide a full range of learning materials. Materials will include videos of case studies that exemplify nursing innovations and define design-thinking, podcasts and readings related to design-thinking, and activities that go along with each of the five phases of design-thinking. After the launch, resources will be incorporated into a new University of Pennsylvania interprofessional course designed by Leary.

In advance of the Hillman Foundation-Penn Nursing Innovation curriculum, Penn Nursing’s first design-thinking class launched in fall 2018. “Graduates and undergraduates from any school can take the new Penn Nursing Innovation in Health: Foundations of Design-Thinking class. We have public health and engineering students in the class, among others, something we’re very excited about—it’s important for all students to learn to play in the sandbox with others, whether it’s in the innovation sphere or outside it. This is a real opportunity to build real world skills, and an excellent opportunity in particular for nursing students.” A second innovation class at Penn Nursing will evolve as well; the class will focus on commercialization and entrepreneurship.

The Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of patients and their families through nurse-led innovations—and through helping nurses put education into practice and spark discovery. In 2017, the Hillman Emergent Innovation Program awarded its first grants for early-stage prototype and pre-evidence work to Sara Jacoby, PhD, MPH, RN, Assistant Professor at Penn Nursing, and Dennis Flores, PhD, ACRN, Assistant Professor at Penn Nursing. The program provides $50,000, one-year awards to accelerate the development of bold, new interventions targeting the needs of vulnerable populations. Hillman’s programs, including the new Hillman Innovation Curriculum, create incredible opportunities for Penn Nursing students and faculty to truly be change makers.
Johnson & Johnson’s new $1 million investment launched the Nursing/Wharton Impact Scholars Loan Program, a program that will increase the number of health care leaders with expertise in both business and clinical care. The program will provide forgivable loans to students pursuing the rigorous five-year dual degree through the Nursing and Health Care Management (NHCM) program, which awards undergraduate degrees from Penn Nursing and the Wharton School. NHCM students complete a demanding schedule of clinical placements and academic classes that prepare them to become transformative practitioners and leaders.

As part of its ongoing commitment to advancing health and wellbeing, Johnson & Johnson saw an opportunity to devote resources to these future leaders and impact the future of health care. The Impact Scholars Loan, for fifth-year students, is forgivable in exchange for graduates working with underserved communities or populations for a one- to two-year period. Twenty-five NHCM students will receive this initial distribution of financial aid over the next seven years.

Current NHCM student Jiaxuan “Grace” Nie said, “The availability of Johnson & Johnson’s forgivable loans will make an enormous difference to our program’s growth. The NHCM program is losing out on great applicants because of the added expense of a fifth year at the University of Pennsylvania, but new resources like this will make the program more attractive and produce an even greater number of highly trained graduates.”

Creating an incentive for students of excellence and making this rigorous program more affordable is why Johnson & Johnson chose to create new a financial aid resource. “Health care is personal,” said Alex Gorsky, WG ’96, Chairman and CEO, Johnson & Johnson. “It impacts all of us. And we believe we have a responsibility to advocate for this dynamic profession. We need more people with a passion to serve others, a spirit of ingenuity, and a relentless drive for innovation. They’re out there, and this scholarship will help Penn find them, and continue to nurture and support them. Our students are tomorrow’s leaders. And by investing in them, we will continue to improve human health.”

There are currently about 3,960 federally-designated Health Professional Shortage Areas across the U.S. with approximately 46 million residents. Medically underserved communities and populations, both adults and children, typically suffer higher health disparities than those with access to health professionals.

For students in the NHCM program with financial need, the average annual need is $40,616.
Carol Lefkowitz Boas, Nu’77, and Andrew M. Boas know the value of high quality nursing talent embedded in vulnerable communities. Their gift to Penn Nursing in 2008 established the Penn Civic Fellows program, which only recently gave out the last of its 15 fellowships to outstanding students in need who pledged to work in medically underserved communities after graduation. This year their funding served as a launchpad for an exciting new program at Penn Nursing—the Community Partnerships Program.

The new program supports a dedicated nurse preceptor—that is, a skilled practitioner or faculty member who supervises students in a clinical setting—positioned within a Philadelphia nonprofit that provides health care. The nonprofit organization, Penn Nursing graduate students, and the Philadelphia community will all benefit: the preceptor will provide primary care services to patients as well as instruct at least two students each semester. This dynamic partnership translates into real-world experience for our students, allowing them to gain valuable on-the-job training.

Community-based health care is the future of health care. Certainly, nursing students should have as much experience as they can get at places like addiction centers, city-run health centers, health-related community based organizations and homeless shelters—and not just because this is where more and more people in vulnerable communities are accessing health care. In the current political atmosphere, where fewer and fewer people will have access to decent health insurance, we’ll see more middle class individuals turning to community options for care as well. Penn Nursing is the #1 nursing school in the world for a reason, and our students and graduates can and should be a part of providing the high quality care we’re known for at sites that are in deep need of great nurses.

The Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Nursing Antonia M. Villarruel, PhD, RN, FAAN, recently sat down with Carol Boas, a member of Penn Nursing’s Board of Overseers, to talk about her family’s support of Penn Nursing:

What drives your interest in ensuring the education and practice of nurses in underserved communities?

I’ve been working in underserved communities for many years, so it’s clear that the hospital model doesn’t work as well for all patients. Lack of staffing and resources, very little to no transportation and poor understanding of how to utilize health systems—all are serious barriers to care. Nurses need to be educated to offer high quality community health for all sorts of reasons, but, frankly, we understand how to solve complex problems associated with underserved populations. We are seen as one of the most trusted occupations because of that.

From your perspective—in all you have done in nursing and education—what are the greatest opportunities you see for nursing? Where do you think we might have the biggest impact? How do you envision the nurses of the future?

Community-based health care is the future of health care. Certainly, nursing students should have as much experience as they can get at places like addiction centers, city-run health centers, health-related community based organizations and homeless shelters—and not just because this is where more and more people in vulnerable communities are accessing health care. In the current political atmosphere, where fewer and fewer people will have access to decent health insurance, we’ll see more middle class individuals turning to community options for care as well. Penn Nursing is the #1 nursing school in the world for a reason, and our students and graduates can and should be a part of providing the high quality care we’re known for at sites that are in deep need of great nurses.
In Brief

Award Honors Nutrition Pioneer and Nursing Alum

From the NICU to acute care for the elderly, nutrition is key in nursing care. Penn Nursing undergraduates have the option of double majoring in nutrition science or minoring in nutrition—and now a new award recognizes academic excellence and exemplary education, service, or research activities for these nutrition minors and double majors. The JoAnn Nallinger Grant Award honors Penn Nursing alumna and nutrition pioneer JoAnn Nallinger Grant, HUP’62, Nu’72. In 1968 JoAnn was part of the first interprofessional hyperalimentation support team inaugurated at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania; she was pivotal in the development of protocol for improving the infection rate of total parenteral nutrition. Additionally, JoAnn wrote *Nutrition Support in Nursing* in 1988, a textbook still viewed as the “blue book” by nutrition support nurses even today. JoAnn’s husband, Igor Grant, MD, RES’71, established the new award this past year in tribute to JoAnn’s incredible contributions to the field of nutrition. In addition, JoAnn donated an autographed copy of her textbook to Penn Nursing’s Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing.

CHOPR Gift Invests in Global Policy Reach

Being ahead of the curve on health care policy is critical in an ever-changing world—and Penn Nursing’s Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research (CHOPR) puts our faculty and students at the forefront of innovating that change. CHOPR is working in 30 countries to create an evidence base to inform national policy decisions on investments in nursing to improve outcomes of those who need health care. From collaborative work with the United Arab Emirates’ government to build nursing excellence, to work here in the United States that is responsible for the entire country shifting to a BSN workforce as recommended by the National Academy of Medicine, CHOPR makes an incredible impact. A new investment in CHOPR from health care entrepreneur Lauren Arnold, GNU’79, GR’91, will help the Center’s impact grow.

Lecture Series Boosts Leadership Education

An increased demand for care in the coming years means nurses’ roles, responsibilities, and education must change significantly to meet that need—including more meaningful leadership training. The Independence Foundation is meeting this challenge head-on by establishing the Conversations with Nurse Leaders initiative at Penn Nursing. Conversations with Nurse Leaders provides our nursing students as well as nursing students throughout the greater Philadelphia area with expanded leadership education opportunities. This exciting new lecture series showcases diverse nursing leaders who are transforming health and health delivery. Students have an opportunity to engage these leaders in small group lectures and conversations, all designed to encourage discussion and transformative learning that will impact career paths. The Independence Foundation is a champion of nurse-led health care in the Philadelphia region, committed to better health, improved quality of life, reduction in health disparities, and lower costs to the health care system.

New Financial Aid Resource for Fifth-Year Low-Income Students

Transfer into Penn Nursing from another school as an undergraduate or suffer an illness that throws off your academic progress, and it is almost impossible to graduate in four years due to the rigorous curriculum that requires a specific class sequence. With limited financial aid resources available for fifth year undergraduates, the introduction of the Abby and Robert Karsch Family Scholarship Program is an exciting new option to help low-income students in their fifth year complete degrees. Established by Robert Karsch, C’85, M’89, and Abby Bechler-Karsch, Nu’88, GNu’93, the scholarship program will award a new fifth-year student with funding each year for the next five years. Abby said, “We come from a Red and Blue family—we both went to Penn, our daughter Emily graduated from the Nursing School in 2018, and our son Jacob is a member of the class of 2021 in the College—and truly believe that a Penn education is priceless. Ultimately, we’re hoping that the students who need the fifth year to complete their BSN will have access to jobs as bedside nurses or as health care consultants and that one day they’ll be the nurse leading a team. It all starts with a BSN degree, and that’s why we’ve chosen to establish this scholarship.”
Evin P. Wright, G’18, holds the distinction of being a recipient of the Melanie Franco Nussdorf Fellowship in Gerontological/Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing. “This fellowship made it possible for me to complete my Penn Nursing education,” Kevin said. “My wife was unemployed for six months while I was completing my MSN. I was working at a behavioral health hospital while going to school, which allowed us to stay afloat financially during that time, but receiving the Nussdorf Fellowship was really the only way I could continue my education. It helped immensely; I would like to thank the Nussdorf family for helping my dreams become a reality.”

A master’s degree seemed like an unattainable dream to Kevin, and not only because of his financial difficulty while attending Penn Nursing. “When I was 16 years old,” Kevin said, “a career counselor told me that I should be a nurse—I always had the idea that I should be working in health care in the back of my mind, but college was not something that seemed like a possibility.”

Born in Stoke-on-Trent, England to a single mother, he didn’t do well in school and didn’t know why. “I didn’t qualify for university,” he said. Unemployment and careers that didn’t suit him followed. He met his wife, an American, in the late 1990s and moved to New Jersey to be with her, but his lack of secondary education meant that it was more of the same for him. Despite opening several successful businesses, nothing felt right.

“I found out I was dyslexic in my thirties,” Kevin said, “and that changed a lot for me. After learning how my brain processed information, I wondered what more I could do with my life.”

When Kevin and his wife decided to have a baby when Kevin was 40, he made a critical decision. “I couldn’t imagine bringing up a child without having more stability, and the idea that I should work in health care had stuck with me. I moved back to New Jersey and enrolled in the Medical Sonography program at Rowan College at Burlington County; however, one of my professors—an MD—encouraged me to aim higher. I fell in love with the idea of becoming a nurse. I love the holistic model of care and the direct patient interaction. It’s also a field that lets you expand your horizons and grow.”

In response, Kevin pursued instead a BSN from Thomas Jefferson University. However, he couldn’t let go of his credits at Rowan College. By 2016 he had graduated not only with an Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences at Rowan, but with a perfect 4.0, he was also the Valedictorian of his class. A month after that he graduated with a BSN from Thomas Jefferson University—he had been taking classes concurrently. He’d also started earning his MSN from Penn Nursing from the Adult Gerontology Primary Care NP (AGNP) program. “The field is a really good fit for my personality and interests,” Kevin said. “I like to know my patients, their histories’, and be able to follow up over the long term.”

“Penn Nursing’s AGNP program is fantastic,” Kevin said. “Six years ago I would have laughed at the thought that I’d be a Penn master’s graduate. But I’ve done it, and I know I can go further—I’m already considering a DNP.”

Kevin would like to one day own a practice when nurse practitioners become independent and he has more experience. “I’d also love to work as a clinical instructor for a nursing program. As nurses we educate constantly, and I think my unique view point could help the next generation of nurses.”

Established by Melanie Franco Nussdorf, CW’71, and Lawrence C. Nussdorf, W’68, the Melanie Franco Nussdorf Fellowship in Gerontological/Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing has supported graduate students at Penn Nursing, particularly those pursuing a specialization in geriatric and/or psychiatric nursing. To date, twenty-one Penn Nursing students have received the Fellowship.
Penn Nursing’s Nurse-Midwifery Class of 2017 is determined to be a catalyst for change—not just in their field, but at Penn Nursing. That catalyst has taken the form of a new scholarship for future midwives of color. The Class of 2017 committed to raising $125,000 to fund a scholarship in an effort to diversify the workforce and improve patient outcomes.

The idea for the scholarship began with Nicole Chaney, GNu’17. Chaney said, “Seeding this scholarship here at the University of Pennsylvania will inspire the Penn community to intentionally become more welcoming to and supportive of students of color and continue raising our voices about confronting the legacy of racism in our present time. Within the midwifery community this scholarship represents a call to action, a reminder of the urgency of making individual, institutional, and national changes that advance and prioritize educating more midwives of color.”

On average across the country, 78 percent of graduating Nurse-Midwifery Program classes are white; however, certified nurse-midwives provide care to primarily people of color. The maternal mortality rate is three to four times higher for black women. Encouraging more people of color to enter the midwifery field may positively impact that rate by creating a trusting atmosphere between midwives and clients and lessening the role that implicit bias may play.

Judy Major, MPH-MCH, a contributor to the scholarship fund, echoes Chaney’s thoughts. “As a former doula for 13 years, coordinator of a regional study of infant death in Western North Carolina, and most recently, founder of our region’s first non-profit birth center, I have always been troubled by the impact of racial discrimination on women’s and infant health. My contribution to this special scholarship demonstrates my strong support of the midwifery model of maternity and newborn care and my hope that more women of color will enter the profession. They are certainly needed.” Chaney’s inspiration for the scholarship was simply looking around her classroom, which only contained two students of color out of a 21-person class. Chaney and her fellow graduates in the Class of 2017 have pledged to donate a percentage of their salaries every month to meet their $125,000 goal. However, with only a 21-person class, they recognized that they needed additional help to reach their ultimate goal. The University of Pennsylvania has pledged to match $25,000 in donations, and crowdfunding has helped increase the number of donations made toward the scholarship as well.

To date, the scholarship has raised just over $19,000 and garnered incredible local media attention—the Class of 2017 was featured on local news station WHYY, among others, and they were chosen as DailyNurse’s Nurse of the Week. The dream is to make enough money toward the scholarship to get it endowed, turning it into a gift that can be repeated year after year. The Class of 2017’s effort highlights not just the need for more midwives of color but the need to think creatively around solutions.

If you would like to make a gift to the Nurse-Midwifery Class of 2017 Scholarship, please visit the online giving portal at www.nursing.upenn.edu/midwiferyscholarshipfund.
Alum and Harrison Society Member Celebrates Nursing Grit

Whether the future of health care brings us new technology we’d never dream of today or advanced policy that offers creative solutions to the world’s most perplexing and persistent problems, Penn Nursing students and faculty will play a role. That future is assured, thanks to forward-thinking funders who have invested in Penn Nursing through the Charles Custis Harrison Society.

Named for a former University of Pennsylvania Trustee and Provost, the Harrison Society recognizes all funders who have named Penn as a beneficiary of a will, living trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy, or have set up a life income gift that benefits Penn in the future. Joan Segal Trachtenberg, Nu’65, GNu’81, recently became a member of the Harrison Society, having committed to a planned gift to support Penn Nursing.

It is no surprise that Joan chose to invest in the future of Penn Nursing—not when she herself was a trailblazer.

“It meant so much to me to head off from high school to the University of Pennsylvania for a four-year nursing degree at a time when that was not the norm. Most parents would not have supported college for an RN degree. Unlike today, the early sixties was not a time of great respect for nursing. But I could not imagine anything else.”

Her much-coveted BSN degree wasn’t the only thing that Joan acquired at the University of Pennsylvania: she also met her husband of 52 years, Steve Trachtenberg, W’63, as a freshman in front of The Wharton School. The University of Pennsylvania, however, had not seen the last of Joan. She returned to campus in 1980 to earn her MSN degree in adult psychiatric nursing.

“It was a wonderful experience that led to my thirty-year career as a psychiatric nurse, she said. “Penn Nursing taught me true grit, and it is a joy to support the School through the Harrison Society. Leaving a gift to Penn and to Penn Nursing comes with great gratitude.”

Interested in exploring a planned gift to support the future of Penn Nursing? Reach out to the University’s Office of Gift Planning at (215) 898-6171.
Underserved Students Get a Taste of Penn Nursing Technology

The Penn Futures Project brought students from the Kensington Health Sciences Academy (KHSA), a public school located in one of the country’s most underserved neighborhoods, to Penn Nursing’s Helen Fuld Pavilion for Innovative Learning and Simulation so that students could get first-hand experience taking vitals in a safe, controlled environment.

“I wanted to stay longer,” said one of the students. “Having access to the Sim-Man made the lessons we learned in the classroom so much more real.”

Penn Nursing was the first nursing school to have the interactive Sim-Man.

The Penn Futures Project is an initiative by three professional schools at the University of Pennsylvania—the Graduate School of Education, the School of Nursing, and the School of Social Policy & Practice—to collaboratively address pressing social issues that affect Philadelphia’s most vulnerable young people and their families. This exciting project was launched in 2016 thanks to investments from participating Penn Schools, matched by the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania.
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For questions about the Impact Report or any of the information within, please contact Penn Nursing’s Office of Institutional Advancement at (215) 898-4841.
Since the day Alexie Maria Smith, GRN’19, first set foot in an operating room, she knew she wanted to be a nurse anesthetist. “To enter the field of anesthesiology, I knew that I would need a graduate degree,” she says. “I also recognized that graduate studies at a nursing school like Penn’s were out of my financial reach.” Now, thanks to the Tillman Ortiz Memorial Nursing Endowed Scholarship, Smith is working towards a DNP in Penn Nursing’s Nurse Anesthesia program.

“I knew that I wanted to go to Penn Nursing so that I could hone my skills in the Simulation Center, be mentored by expert faculty, and work in Philadelphia’s great hospitals,” says Smith. “Without my scholarship, I wouldn’t have been able to take this important step in my career.”

Scholarships, especially for students from underrepresented backgrounds, are one of Penn Nursing’s top priorities in the Innovating for Life and Living Campaign. Financial support for students is crucial to achieving Penn Nursing’s goal of ensuring that the best and brightest scholars have access to its programs, and that the School can continue to grow its pool of students in a way that reflects the diversity of the real world.

Help us tell more stories like Alexie’s by making a gift today in support of scholarships. Please use the enclosed envelope, or visit us online at www.nursing.upenn.edu/scholarships.