



HONORS COLLEGE NEWS

DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE. NO. 3

*By Helen Yousaf,
Honors College Intern*



Dr. Barbara Andrew

From Classroom to Real-Life

Fifty students traveled to New York City in November to visit the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and the New York Historical Society museums. At AMNH, Biology students went with Dr. Joe Spagna to explore the behind-the-exhibit collections with museum scientists. Dr. Tj Gundling and Dr. Molly O'Donnell worked with first-year Honors students to explore exhibits with the themes of understanding decolonization and how some objects are considered "art" and others are considered "artifacts". Students looked to see what distinguishes objects and does the designations of art or artifact have to do with who used the objects? Dr. Rosa Soto's ENG 1100 students, who are not enrolled in the Honors College, also joined the trip to explore examples of climate change and humans' impact on the environment. Honors trips such as these bring course themes to life and encourage students to connect the course material to their everyday experiences.



Students will be recognized at Civic Engagement Ceremony

Join us on Wednesday, December 13, from 5 - 6:30pm, in UC Ballroom C for the Civic Engagement Recognition and Pinning Ceremony. Dean Andrew will present all sophomore students with an Honors lapel pin. This is the first time that Honors sophomores can receive their lapel pins. Juniors and seniors who have not yet received their Honors lapel pins may attend and receive one. Also, students who volunteered to host a Mini Coat Drive will be recognized for their hard work and dedication! Attendance at this event will count as All-College Meeting credit.

finish strong!

Good luck with your finals! Email your favorite study tip to honors@wpunj.edu for a chance to win an Honors t-shirt!

The ALUMNI UPDATE

Meet Xanilyn Red, '16

Currently – **Candidate of Doctorate of Nursing Practice, Acute Care** – Adult Gerontology, Nurse Practitioner, Rutgers University – Newark

2016 – **B.S Nursing, Nursing Honors Research Track**, William Paterson University, Honors College



Xanilyn Red

Xanilyn Red has been keeping busy since graduating with her Bachelors degree in Nursing in December 2016. Immediately after graduation, Red went on to work at St. Joseph's Healthcare System, eventually moving on to St. Peter's University Hospital as an ICU nurse, where she worked alongside her father, Valentine Red, a respiratory therapist, during the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was definitely a blur and stressful," she says about working during the pandemic.

"There was a silver lining though. Working with my father helped brighten the long days, and it was uplifting to see how the community came together to address patient needs." Both her and her father's dedication to their work even caught the attention of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, who tweeted a thank you to both Red and her father for their work in 2020.

Today she continues to serve her patients as an ICU nurse at New York Presbyterian Hospital. Amid her busy full-time work schedule, Red has still found time to pursue her Doctorate of Nursing Practice at Rutgers University - full time too! Currently in her third year of a four-year program, Red acknowledges her long hours of work, noting that she spends 6 days a week at a hospital for work or for her clinical practice. Red says that research has been an important aspect of her life, ever since joining the Nursing Research Track in the Honors College. "The Honors College always emphasized that curiosity goes a long way, and that has taught me to explore a variety of specialties, including cardiology."

For Red, though, her dedication to nursing is simple. "If you find your *why*, it is all worth it." So, I had to ask her what her *why* was. "To help patients get the care they need," she says without hesitation. "I think of my grandpa and the amazing care he received when he needed it." Red strives to promote the most common change with the greatest outcome for her patients, and she does so all with a smile on her face and a humanistic approach.



Red with her father, Valentine Red

Photo courtesy: nj.com 4/29/20

In our interview, Red reflected on the role of her WP and Honors education. She is grateful for being placed in interesting clinical rotations and remembers her Honors education as inspiring and impactful. "Dr. Nocella continues to be my favorite professor" she said happily after finding out that Dr. Nocella would also be featured in this newsletter.

She hopes to finish her Doctorate next year but is already thinking ahead. She looks forward to getting her MPH in the future! But for now, she is focused on helping her patients and working towards her quality improvement project.

Red is a true inspiration for our Honors students and a reflection of where a strong education and passion can lead you!

Meet Dr. Jill Nocella, PhD, APRN-BC

Professor of Nursing, and Director of the Nursing Honors Track

I caught up with Dr. Jill Nocella, Professor of Nursing and Director of the Nursing Honors Track. Dr. Nocella has been at William Paterson since 2011 and has developed and directs the track since 2014. Prior to joining the university, she worked in community health, an environment that she continues to be passionate about. In our interview, she reflected on the role of nursing in society, what she wants her students to achieve, and how her own professional experiences shape her approach to teaching and research.

How did you know that you wanted to pursue nursing as a career?

My parents were teachers so I always knew that I wanted to do something in which I could help others and have an impact on their life. I also knew that the nursing field had a lot to offer me, both academically and professionally. There is just an abundance of opportunity in this field, whether that is furthering your education through graduate school or the different environments you can work in. The hospital is just one setting, but there is also so much potential in home care, community health, and even research. And I can confidently say that I do not regret my decision!

What are your own research interests and how has your professional experience enhanced it?

I really loved working in community health, as it afforded me the opportunity to work with diverse communities with various levels of needs that required attention. I hope to slowly go back to working in this environment. Being a professor is very full-circle for me. I teach both nursing and the community health courses here at William Paterson. By doing so not only do I go back to my roots and teach students about the profession but I also

teach students how to teach others.

Patient advocacy is important for me so I enjoy questioning current practices and determining if there are better ways to treat our patients. One of these ways is by acknowledging the social determinants of health.

How do you see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nursing field?

The pandemic did definitely impact perception around nursing. A lot of students felt inspired to become nurses and contribute to the field. But on the other hand, recent graduates did feel burnout. Empowerment of nurses has come a long way but I do think there is more to be done. I am really passionate about nurse autonomy and them being given the freedom to advocate for their patients. They really are changemakers and I continue to advocate for them to have seats at the table.

The nursing track is different from the others in that it is designed specifically for nursing students. How does the track enhance their education if they are already coming into it with extensive clinical experience and academic knowledge?

You're right, the students do come in with a lot of previous experience. But the track really allows for those experiences to be contextualized. The students really get to immerse themselves in a topic and carry out impressive research, from development of a research question to writing their final product.

What is really great about our students every year is that their research questions are unique to them and their clinical experiences. In fact, most of the thesis ideas have been sparked by a situation the student observed during their clinicals. And a lot of the students go on to work in specialties closely related to their thesis.



Dr. Jill Nocella

I want us all to recognize the opportunity that our Honors College presents to our students. When I went to graduate school, the research we carried out was of the same rigor and caliber so it is wonderful that our students are encouraged to do the same in their undergraduate education.

I have heard a lot of students say that one of the best parts of the nursing track is that it is really close-knit. How do you foster this environment of comradery?

I emphasize a lot of group work in the track classes and encourage peer to peer feedback. The goal is to get useful help from your classmates and sometimes it can be constructive. I would say that the major is close-knit by nature. I mean these students are consistently spending time with each other in their cluster of classes and at clinicals. Even in the field in general, nurses are always working as part of a team. I think the comradery the students feel happens very organically but Honors adds another level!

I also teach all five of the track courses so I have a lot of opportunities to work with the students over a longer period of time.

What is your advice to your nursing and Honors students?

Keep up the momentum. The thesis is both feasible and very rewarding. And I would say the same for the nursing profession!

Thank you to Dr. Nocella for her time.

Honors Student Takes on London with Study-Abroad Opportunity

Campus looks a little different for senior **Emily Martinez '24** who has been studying abroad at the **University of Westminster** in central **London** this semester. The **political science** major with **minors in legal studies and philosophy** is getting ready to come back home in 2 weeks and will present her thesis in **the Social Sciences Honors Track** next semester. Martinez has a passion for political science, especially political theory and has immersed herself in opportunities throughout her undergraduate career. In fact, she was one of only 20 students in the nation to participate the **American Political Science Association's Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI)** this past summer. She spent a couple weeks in the summer at **Duke University** doing research and presented her findings *The Effect of Perception of Immigrants on Right-Wing Nationalism in Europe* at the **2023 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting and Exhibition** in Los Angeles.



Emily Martinez, '24 in London

Studying abroad has been a dream for Martinez and she agrees that “it has been so worth it!” Studying abroad has allowed her to integrate herself in another culture and city. She has even visited 7 countries during her time there. “The whole experience has been life-changing,” she says. Martinez is confident that her decision has enhanced her college experience and contributed to gaining a well-rounded understanding of different political systems around the world.




Martinez during a quick visit to Barcelona, Spain

Her advice to Honors students, whether they are considering studying abroad or not is: “I highly recommend that everyone try it whether it is for a week or even a year. Even after being here for 3 months, I continue discovering new places to explore.” After graduating in the spring 2024 semester, Martinez hopes to enroll in a PhD program in political science.

We love to see our Honors students extending their experiences outside of campus, both nationally and internationally!



Martinez presenting at the 2023 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting and Exhibition in Los Angeles.



William Paterson University
Honors College
 Raubinger 207
 300 Pompton Road
 Wayne, New Jersey 07470
 Phone: 973-720-3657
 Email: honors@wpunj.edu

Barbara Andrew, Ph.D.....	Dean
Jan Pinkston, M.A.....	Associate Director
Amy Learmonth, Ph.D.....	Honors College Fellow
Nicole Joachim.....	Graduate Assistant
Jessica Momanyi.....	Office Intern
Helen Yousaf.....	Office Intern