

FIU Nursing and Miami VA awarded funding to launch Florida's only VA-funded Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner residency program

The collaboration strengthens services in Florida to improve patient outcomes and lower costs for the VA

MIAMI (May 7, 2019) – The need to provide U.S. military veterans with greater access to mental and behavioral health services is quantifiable. Various reports show approximately 730,000 military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from mental health conditions, primarily in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression or traumatic brain injury (TBI). Yet, less than 50 percent of returning veterans receive mental health treatment.

The U.S. Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) has awarded funding for four resident stipends to Florida International University's [Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences \(FIU NWCNHS\)](#) and the Miami VA Healthcare System (Miami VA) to launch Florida's only Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner residency program under the VA's Nurse Residency Expansion Initiative.

Up to four actively licensed advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNP) will be recruited from South Florida annually to receive clinical training in the delivery of psychiatric-mental and behavioral health care to patients at the Miami VA. FIU graduate nursing faculty will oversee recruitment and didactic education, while Miami VA practitioners will serve as preceptors for the residents during their year-long clinical tenure.

“The mission of this much-needed residency program is to enhance these specialized competencies for nurse practitioners wishing to serve the veteran patient population while creating a pool of well-educated and well-qualified professionals to fill future clinical practitioner needs in the VA system,” said Ora L. Strickland, dean of the college.

Difficulty recruiting qualified ARNPs to fill recurring vacancies within the Miami VA Psychiatric Services unit propelled this latest education-workforce alliance. The two institutions have enjoyed a highly effective collegial partnership going back more than a decade when the Miami VA began serving as a clinical rotation site for FIU nursing students.

In 2014, the relationship was augmented when the OAA awarded FIU Nursing and the Miami VA \$8.2 million to establish the Veterans Affairs Nursing Academic Partnership (VANAP). Since then, nearly 120 FIU undergraduate nursing students have followed a veteran-centric clinical training curriculum focused on the care and management of health problems predominant to military veterans and active service members such as PTSD, TBI, chemical exposure and traumatic limb loss.

Also stemming from that grant was the Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency (PBNR) program to increase nurse recruitment and retention for the VA hospital system. All 20 nurses who completed the 12-month residency were retained on staff by the Miami VA, joining the 16 FIU VANAP students who were hired back upon graduation.

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According to Miami VA's Marcia Lysaght, associate director of patient care services, the clinical and operational effectiveness of these earlier joint efforts has set similarly high expectations for the Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Residency initiative with FIU.

“Our partnership with the NWCNHS has proved to be an unprecedented success for the Miami VA, bolstering our nursing workforce and lowering our recruitment and retention costs by more than \$2 million per year,” said Lysaght. “Furthermore, we have witnessed clinical patient outcomes improve because of the quality of care delivered by the FIU-trained nurses in these programs. It is a major reason why our PBNR has the rare distinction of being one of the few in the nation to receive accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.”

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About the FIU Nicole Wertheim College Nursing & Health Sciences:

Established in 1982, the School of Nursing at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, Florida was elevated to the [College of Nursing and Health Sciences](#) when it joined with the School of Health Sciences in October 2006. It was renamed as the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences in September 2013. The College offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees, as well as specialty certificates in programs across the departments of [Nursing education](#), [Athletic Training](#), [Communication Sciences & Disorders](#), [Health Services Administration](#), [Occupational Therapy](#) and [Physical Therapy](#). The College's Doctor of Nursing Practice program and Master of Science in Nursing programs are ranked No. 50 and No. 56, respectively, in the U.S. News and World Report 2020 Best Graduate Schools listing. For more information, visit cnhs.fiu.edu.

About FIU:

Florida International University, a public university located in Miami, has a passion for student success and community solutions. The university is classified by Carnegie as “R1.” FIU is among the top 100 public universities in U.S. News and World Report's 2019 Best Colleges and 18 academic programs are individually ranked. FIU was recently ranked as the second-best performing university in Florida and graduates are among the highest-paid in the state. FIU has multiple state-of-the-art research facilities including the Wall of Wind Research and Testing Facility and FIU's Medina Aquarius Program. FIU has awarded more than 330,000 degrees since 1972 and enrolls more than 57,000 students in two campuses and centers including FIU Downtown on Brickell, FIU@I-75, the Miami Beach Urban Studios, and sites in Qingdao and Tianjin, China. FIU also supports artistic and cultural engagement through its three museums: Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, the Wolfsonian-FIU, and the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU. FIU is a member of Conference USA with more than 400 student-athletes participating in 18 sports. For more information about FIU, visit www.fiu.edu.