Nicole Wertheim College
of Nursing & Health Sciences

Nursing

PINNING CEREMONY

Fall Class of 2025

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The History of Florida International University's Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Caring. Culturally competent. Trailblazing. Dedicated. Passionate. These are the attributes of the faculty, students, and alumni who are the lifeblood of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Florida International University in Miami.

The Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences was created in 2006 with the joining of the FIU School of Nursing and the School of Health Sciences, each bringing with it more than 30 years of academic distinction. This young, vibrant and dynamic institution is focused on advancing the quality and spectrum of care through the highest levels of education, training, research and leadership. The Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences has more than 10,000 alumni in the fields of nursing, athletic training, health services administration, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language pathology. They have gone on to serve communities locally and globally.

On September 25, 2013, the futures of Florida International University's nursing and health sciences programs were transformed when South Florida philanthropists Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim presented a $10 million gift to name and endow the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences. This record-setting gift to the College means much more than a name change. It embodies the Wertheim family's commitment to clinical and interdisciplinary research, preventive health care and the belief that the best health care is delivered when health professionals work together as a team. It serves as a catalyst to accelerate our aggressive strategic plan to further enrich our academic and research programs and attract top faculty and students.

The Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences is one of the founding units of the Academic Health Center at FIU, built on an interprofessional approach to health care education that mirrors the new paradigm of today's health care system. It is making important strides to enhance practice and policy through interdisciplinary collaboration, state-of-the-art technology and resources, integration of real-world training in the curricula, and programs of research designed to make a difference in patient care and advocacy.

The multicultural student body and faculty of the College reflect the highly distinct South Florida community. This collection, illustrative of changing demographics across the country, provides students with a unique perspective and distinct set of capabilities to address the health care delivery and health access concerns of minority and underserved populations.

The family of professors, academic leaders and students that comprise the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences work together to prepare culturally competent, compassionate and caring practitioners who are ready for the complexities and challenges of today's health professions. They are innovative clinicians and scientists who help their professions evolve to optimally meet society's health care needs. And they are leaders who fight tirelessly to transform and elevate the healthcare system so that everyone in our society can benefit.

This is the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Florida International University. Fueled by intellect; driven by innovation and caring.

The History of the Nursing Pinning Ceremony

The pinning ceremony is a prominent nursing school tradition, as it signifies one's official induction into the solidarity and fellowship of nurses. The ceremony is rich with symbolic representation of both the values and ideals of Florence Nightingale as well as the core principles of the nursing profession. The history of this rite of passage can be traced all the way back to the Crusades of the 12th century. During this time, the Knights of the Order of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist tended to injured and infirmed Crusaders. When new monks were inducted into the order, they vowed to serve these sick soldiers in a ceremony where each monk was given a Maltese cross, the first badges given to those who nurse.

The modern ceremony dates back to the 1860s, when Florence Nightingale was awarded the Red Cross of St. George in recognition for her tireless service to the injured during the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale chose to extend this honor to her most outstanding graduate nurses by presenting each of them with a medal for excellence. The Wolverton Royal Hospital in England adopted the tradition of presenting all graduates with a badge. However, the first pin was presented to the graduating class of 1880 at the Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing in New York City. By 1916, the practice of pinning new graduates was standard throughout the U.S. FIU and the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences have celebrated this tradition throughout the history of the Nursing Program and will continue to celebrate nursing scholastic achievements while commemorating the common goals of all nurses around the world.

Order of Ceremony
Saturday, December 13, 2025
Student Academic and Success Center, Modesto A. Maidique Campus

PRESIDING & INTRODUCTION OF PLATFORM PARTY…....……..……...……. Dr. Jorge A. Valdés, *Dean*
Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

NATIONAL ANTHEM & ALMA MATER ……...…….… Valentina Sanchez
The Herbert and Nicole Wertheim School of Music & Performing Arts

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP MESSAGE...……...……...….…Dr. Heather Russell
Vice Provost, Faculty Leadership and Success

REMARKS BY CLASS PRESIDENT….……...….…Sebastian Benitez
Class President

RECOGNITION OF NURSING HONOR SOCIETY……...….....Dr. Lillybet Guilarte
Undergraduate Nursing, Clinical Assistant Professor

PRESENTATIONS OF AWARDS……Nightingale Excellence Award
presented by Dr. Nola Holness, Department Chair

Outstanding Nursing Graduate Award
presented by Dr. Ivette Hidalgo, Assistant Chair

Deans Legacy Award
presented by Dr. Jorge A. Valdés, Dean

PRESENTATIONS OF
THE NURSING PINS……... Dr. Jorge A. Valdés
Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Dr. Heather Russell
Vice Provost, Faculty Leadership and Success

Dr. Nola Holness
Undergraduate Nursing, Department Chair

Dr. Ivette Hidalgo
Undergraduate Nursing, Assistant Chair

NIGHTINGALE OATH……Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences Fall Class of 2025

CLOSING REMARKS……..Dr. Jorge A. Valdés, *Dean*
Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

President Jeanette M. Nuñez

Florida International University

Mrs. Jeanette M. Nuñez is the President of Florida International University. The FIU Board of Trustees voted unanimously to name Mrs. Nuñez as the university's seventh president. Her presidency was confirmed by the Florida Board of Governors on June 18, 2025.

Prior to her appointment, Mrs. Nuñez served as Florida's Lieutenant Governor. She was first elected in 2018 and subsequently re-elected in 2022. Mrs. Nuñez oversaw the Florida Department of Health and served as Chair of Space Florida, Florida's Cybersecurity Advisory Council, and the Health Care Innovation Council. She was reappointed as Chair of the Space Florida Board of Directors on February 17, 2025.

Before her tenure as Lieutenant Governor, Mrs. Nuñez served as a State Representative of the Florida House of Representatives from 2010 to 2018. She held several positions such as Speaker Pro Tempore and Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee, as well as Chair of the Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness following Hurricane Irma. In addition, she served as Chair of the Health Quality Subcommittee, Government Operations and Technology Appropriations Subcommittee, and Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee.

Over the years, Mrs. Nuñez has served on a number of professional boards and as a member of various organizations. She has been involved with the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Miami, and various other local, state and national organizations.

In addition to her extensive experience in public service, Mrs. Nuñez has contributed to the academic community as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer at Florida International University.

Mrs. Nuñez is a proud FIU alumna. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Political Science and her Master of Public Administration from Florida International University.

Dean Jorge A. Valdés

Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Dr. Jorge A. Valdés serves as Dean and Professor of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Florida International University (FIU). As a distinguished leader and author, with a prolific career as a clinical nurse anesthetist spanning over twenty years, he has been instrumental in fostering academic excellence, driving research innovation, and strengthening community and industry partnerships.

Prior to his appointment, Dr. Valdés served as Chair of the Department of Nurse Anesthesiology, where he made significant contributions to the field through the expansion of high-quality nurse education, scholarship, and by solidifying a dedicated workforce of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). Under his leadership, the college has launched new academic programs, expanded experiential learning opportunities, and cultivated a strong sense of community, all contributing to the university's enhanced reputation as a leader in healthcare education.

As a researcher, he has authored various book chapters and numerous publications. Most recently, from 2022-2023, he was Principal Investigator of the Nurse Anesthetist Traineeship (NAT) Grant funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) aimed at increasing scholarship and evidence-based training of CRNAs to practice safe anesthesia and pain management services in underserved communities.

His work has translated into transformational leadership in health education and legislative action. He is an esteemed Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology. Additionally, he is a distinguished member of the Miami-Dade College Alumni Hall of Fame and recipient of the FIU President's Council Real Triumphs Faculty Award, in recognition of his numerous contributions to the South Florida community.

Dr. Valdés holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice from the University of Miami and a Masters in Nurse Anesthesia from the Mayo School of Health Sciences Nurse Anesthesia Program. He has also served as president of the Florida Association of Nurse Anesthesiology and held leadership roles on various professional boards at the state and national level.

Dr. Valdés remains dedicated to community service, mentoring, and advancing healthcare policy, continually working to shape the next generation of healthcare leaders and ensure the continued growth and success of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Nicole J. Wertheim, Honorary Chairwoman

Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Nicole Wertheim's journey from her roots in France to her impactful contributions in the United States is quite remarkable. After earning her bachelor's degree in Fashion Design from Elisa Lemonnier College in Paris, she followed her passion for travel and embarked on a four-year journey that led her to Miami, Florida, where she met her husband Dr. Herbert Wertheim in 1968. Their meeting sparked not only a personal connection but also a fruitful professional partnership.

Together, they founded Brain Power Inc. in 1971, which went on to become the world's largest manufacturer of optical tints, chemicals, and instruments. Their business success paved the way for their substantial philanthropic endeavors. In 1977, they established the Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Family Foundation, marking the beginning of a legacy of giving back to the community – including transformational initiatives in the fields of healthcare, engineering, and the arts, as well as community-based projects that improve the quality of life for all.

Nicole's passion for nursing is evident in her commitment to supporting the profession. With her daughter, Dr. Vanessa Wertheim, being a nurse, she has a personal connection to, and appreciation of, the field. Nicole recognizes the vital role nurses play in the healthcare system and strives to empower them to reach their full potential.

For her efforts and commitment to the nursing profession, the Board of Directors of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma), overwhelmingly voted to induct Nicole Wertheim as an Honorary Member of Sigma. The honorary status was conferred by the Board on those who demonstrate superior achievement in a chosen field and a commitment to the ideals and concerns of nursing. Nicole Wertheim was *presented with* the Tribute Award on November 11, 2023.

Nicole Wertheim's impact extends far beyond her professional accomplishments; indeed, her greatest legacy lies in the values she instilled in her family. As a mother to Erica and Vanessa, and a grandmother to Elan, Alexa, Ethan, and Julia, Nicole's influence will continue to shape the lives of future generations.

Fall Class of 2025

Austin Applegate

Felipe Andres Arcila

*Gala Asis **

Brittney Baboram

Chelsie Jasmine Banegas

Edith Batrony

Sebastian Antonio Benitez

Jose Luis Bernal

Preet K. Brar

Andy Bravo Hidalgo

Brittany Tameika Brucculeri

Biljana Bujisic

*Tatyana Cadet **

Daniela Canizares

*Sophia Carmenates **

Daniela Caro

*Yasmine Cavatorta **

Maelle Cassandre Charles

*Nynca A. Cyla **

Cecile Tamara Decastro

Daniel Delgado

*Marian Diaz Leiva **

Ryan Dirse

*Gizeh Echevarria Benitez **

Alexandra Eckert

*Bienca Etienne **

Shakira Ashely Ferron

Widlande Filias

*Diedre-Gai Forbes **

Ashley Marie Garcell

Britney Martha Garcia

Isabella Anays Garcia

Vanessa Betty Garcia

Arianna S. Garcia Morella

Christa Gerlin

Mariafernanda Gonzalez

Johnathan Gutierrez

*Ashley Harper **

Carolina Herrera

*Nedjie Jean **

Morgan Paige Kauffman

Madison Michelle Leon

*Lisset Lopes **

Erney Ray Lorquet

Valery Marchenko

Melissa Marrero

Naomi Martinez

Joëlle Philogène

*Alisha Mildort **

Angela Lynn Nelson

Regine Nerette

Samantha Omoafe Oghinan

Valeria Alexanda Perez

Esaivy Pozo

Yelennys Regalado

Beatriz Rey

Emily Marie Rosa

*Bryan Rosario **

Kayla Marie Saint Come

Tiana Santos

*Ami Shehu **

Tatiana Alyse Torres

Gerard Christian Valme

Ariana Vidal

Leonardo Leonidas Viveros Montilla

*Marina Wasem Netzlaff **

Katherin Yero Santana

*** RN BSN**

Message from the Fall Class of 2025

We are grateful for your constant encouragement and unconditional love.
Your support did not go unnoticed and will forever be valuable to our hearts.

State of Florida

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, *Governor*
The Honorable Jay Collins, *Lieutenant Governor*
The Honorable James Uthmeier, *Attorney General*
The Honorable Blaise Ingoglia, *Chief Financial Officer*
The Honorable Wilton Simpson, *Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services*

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Florida International University
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Gerald C. Grant Jr. '78, '89 *Vice Chairperson*
Marcel L. Navarro '93 , *Treasurer*
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Jeanette M. Nuñez '94, '98, *President*
Kenneth C. Hall, *CEO*

Humberto "Burt" Cabañas '76
Cristina di Mauro '01
LaTessa Dotson Hall
Albert "Al" Lorenzo '74
Carlos A. Somoza '93
Elliot N. Stone
Albert R. Tano

Florida International University Administration

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El pagnier K. Hudson, *Senior Vice President, Human Resources*

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Michelle L. Palacio '03, *Senior Vice President, Marketing & Strategic Communications and Chief Marketing & Communication Officer*

Charlie Andrews '94, '14, *Vice President, Student Affairs*

Christina Castillo '15, *Vice President, Government & Community Relations and Deputy Chief of Staff to the President*

Bridgette Cram '17, *Vice President, Academic Affairs: Student Success Operations and Integrated Planning*

Robert Grillo '91, *Vice President, Information Technology, and Chief Information Officer*

Michael R. Heithaus, *Vice Provost, Environmental Resilience, and Vice Provost, Biscayne Bay Campus*

Scott Carr, *Director, Intercollegiate Athletics*

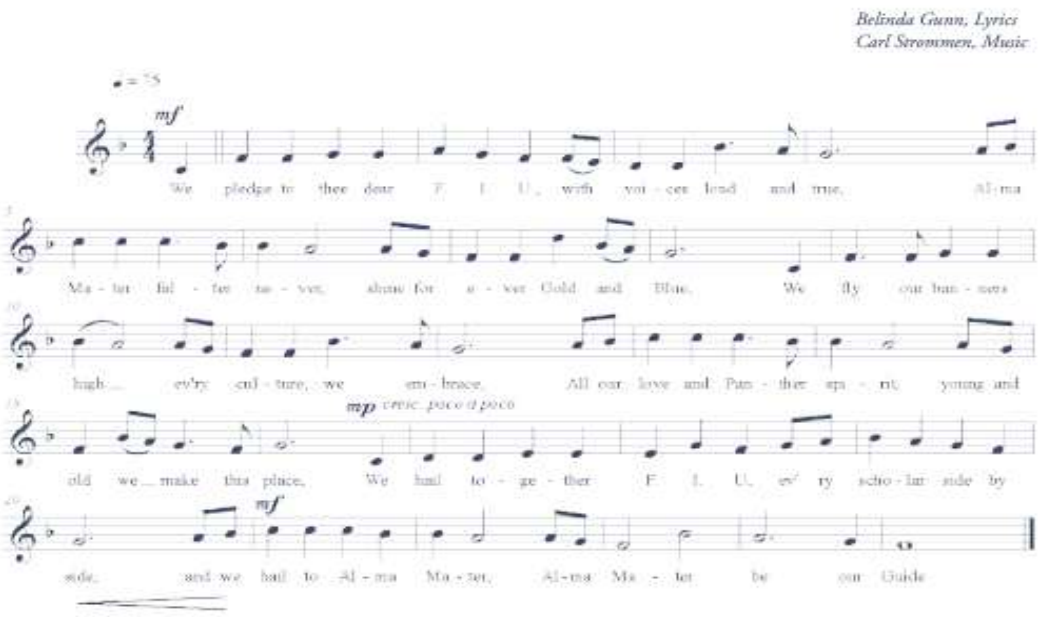
Carlos B. Castillo '88, *General Counsel*

FIU Alma Mater

Composed by Belinda Kaitlynne Gunn

We pledge to thee dear F.I.U.,
with voices loud and true.
Alma Mater falter never,
shine forever Gold and Blue.
We fly our banners high,
ev'ry culture we embrace.
All our love and Panther spirit,
young and old we make this place.
We hail together F.I.U.,
ev'ry scholar side-by-side.
And we hail to Alma Mater,
Alma Mater be our guide!

FIU Alma Mater



FIU Nicole Wertheim

College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Florence Nightingale Pledge

(*Patterned after the original Florence Nightingale Pledge*)

With full knowledge of the responsibilities that I am undertaking,

I solemnly pledge myself to the service of

humanity and will endeavor to practice my profession with

consciousness and dignity.

I will maintain by all the means in my power to honor the noble

traditions of my profession.

The total health of my patients will be my first concern.

I will hold in confidence all personal matters coming to my knowledge.

I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race or

social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient.

I will endeavor to keep my professional knowledge and skills

at the highest level and give my support and cooperation to all

members of the healthcare team.

With full awareness of my qualifications and limitations, I

will do my utmost to maximize the potential of nursing

profession and to uphold and advance its standards.

I will maintain the utmost respect for humanity.

I make these promises solemnly, freely, and upon my honor.

GIVE TODAY!

Nursing Pinning Ceremony

Text to Give: Text NursingPinning to 41444
URL: https://go.fiu.edu/CNPinning