



IDFPR

Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation

Division of Professional Regulation

idfpr.illinois.gov

JB PRITZKER
Governor

MARIO TRETO, JR.
Secretary

CAMILE LINDSAY
Director

Krista Jones, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC, FNAP, FAAN, ELAN Fellow

Dr. Krista Jones is Director of UIC College of Nursing's Urbana Regional Campus and a Clinical Professor in the Department of Population Health Nursing Science. Dr. Jones is a board certified Advanced Public Health Nurse and serves as the UIC Inaugural Endowed Jean Stout Faculty Scholar. At UIC she has completed a Doctorate in Nursing Practice degree (2011), a Master's degree in Advanced Community Health Nursing (2007), a Post-Master's degree in Nursing Administration and Leadership (2009) and a Teaching Certificate in Nursing Education (2008). For the last 19 years, Dr. Jones has instructed undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students enrolled in Population Focused Nursing, EBP, Professionalism, Nursing Theory, and Leadership and Management courses.

Dr. Jones is the author of numerous publications. She currently leads a team of academic librarians and nurses from population health, acute and clinical agency settings who have received five cycles of grant funding from the National Libraries of Medicine to provide face to face and online instructional sessions to educate public health nurses (PHNs) on the acquisition, translation and application of evidence to inform their practice. In phase 3 this work was expanded to provide online evidence-based education to acute and ambulatory care nurses and in phase 5 to all health care professionals.

She is a member of the Illinois Public Health Nursing Leadership Academic Practice Workgroup. This team conducted a needs assessment of public health nurses and faculty across Illinois to determine priorities for partnership activities, and the challenges impacting PHN practice. These results were used to develop innovative strategies to address the educational needs of new and existing PHN workforce. Additionally, these efforts have spawned three consecutive annual state-wide academic practice conferences and a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant that has funded 30 state-wide academic practice community service projects.

Dr. Jones has held several leadership positions in local, regional and national nursing and public health organizations. These include current Chair of the Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations (CPHNO), Immediate Past President of the Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE), Co-Chair of the Midwest Nursing Research Society Nursing Education Research Group, President of the Champaign County Board of Health, and Chair of the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center Board of Directors.

Dr. Jones scholarship has been recognized locally by Carle Foundation Hospital, statewide by the Illinois Public Health Association, and regionally by two different Research Sections of the Midwest Nursing Research Society -- Public Health and Adolescent Health. Additionally, she has received the Daisy Award for teaching excellence, the Sigma Theta Tau Alpha Lambda Chapter Clinical Excellence Award, the Urbana Faculty Excellence Award and two Silver Circle Awards for teaching distinction at UIC. She is also a

2012 recipient of the Illinois Board of Higher Education Nursing Faculty Fellowship and a 2020 American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Elevating Leaders in Academic Nursing (ELAN Program Fellow. In 2023, she was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and in 2025 was inducted as a Distinguished Fellow of the National Academies of Practice.

Lynda Bartlett, MS/MBA, RN

Lynda Bartlett is currently a Case Manager Lead at the University of Chicago Medicine. She also serves on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Nursing Research Committee at the University of Chicago. She earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN) from Saint Xavier University, Chicago, in 1986 and her Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) with a focus in community health and nursing administration from Saint Xavier University in 1998. Also from Saint Xavier University, she earned her Master of Business degree (MS/MBA).

Lynda started her career as a staff nurse on a step-down cardiac telemetry unit and then moved to research. For seventeen years, she managed the Clinical Research Center (CRC) at the University of Chicago Medicine where she managed clinical staff who provided nursing care at the bedside to adult and pediatric patients participating in physician initiated studies. This research encompassed both inpatient and outpatient areas of endocrinology, pulmonary, surgery, psychiatry, sleep medicine, rheumatology and transplant.

Lynda is also adjunct nursing faculty at Saint Xavier University where she acts as a clinical instructor for the Nursing Care of Adult Practicum. She provides hands-on experiences to nursing students whose patients have complex disease processes. Lynda has served on the adjunct faculty council and the alumni board at Saint Xavier University. She has been a preceptor/mentor to many nurses who are pursuing their Master's in Nursing Education. She also has experience in the outpatient setting where she has acted as a triage nurse in a variety of specialty areas that include endocrinology, general internal medicine, nephrology, rheumatology, dermatology and dermatology surgery. Finally, Lynda is actively involved with Sigma Theta Tau International and now serves on the Fellow Committee Sigma Foundation for Nursing.

Gina Canny, PhD, RN

Dr. Gina Canny has been an Associate Professor of Nursing at St. John's College of Nursing in Springfield, IL since August 2025. Prior to this, she was Chair of Undergraduate Programs at St. John's College of Nursing. She has been in nursing education since 2013. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from St. John's College of Nursing; a Master of Science in Nursing Education from Millikin University; and a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing with a focus in Nursing Education from Nova Southeastern University (NSU).

She has been a nurse for 31 years. For the first part of her career, she worked as an acute care registered nurse focused on adult respiratory, acute renal dialysis, intermediate care unit, intensive care unit, and emergency department. She spent time as a hospital educator teaching employees and the public about cardiopulmonary resuscitation. More recently, she was a clinic nurse for a Vascular Neurologist.

In 2020, Dr. Canny was a recipient of the Illinois Board of Education Nurse Educator Fellowship Award. In addition, she presented her dissertation as a Rising Star of Research and Scholarship at Sigma International Nursing Research Conference in 2021. The focus of this

research was to gather first generation nursing students' experience with failing a nursing course. As a nurse educator, she has created new undergraduate courses, been involved with revising the undergraduate nursing curriculum, as well as creating educational support plans for nursing student success. In 2018, Dr. Canny completed the academic educator certification as a Certified Nurse Educator.

Heather Escobar, MSN, CNE

Heather Escobar is the Senior Director of Nursing at Elgin Community College. Ms. Escobar has been in this role since 2022. She earned her Baccalaureate degree in nursing from Bowling Green State University in 1997. Her nursing career began in Ohio as a public health nurse for a rural community with limited access to healthcare. She quickly became the Program Director for Child and Family Health Services overseeing a large grant funded program to provide prenatal care, well child care, and child abuse prevention services for this largely underserved community.

Ms. Escobar moved to the Chicagoland area in 2005. In Illinois, she became a certified neonatal intensive care nurse and neonatal resuscitation program educator. This began her love for educating nurses. Heather transitioned to nursing education as the simulation coordinator at Kishwaukee College in Malta, IL, while still serving as a neonatal nurse on the weekends. At this time, she earned her Master of Science in Nursing Education from American Sentinel University, now part of Post University, Waterbury, Connecticut. Her role at Kishwaukee College expanded to tenured nursing faculty teaching pediatric nursing while continuing to oversee clinical simulation for nursing and allied health professions. While at Kishwaukee, Heather was awarded the IBHE Nurse Fellowship Award and earned her Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) credential.

In 2020, Ms. Escobar returned full time to bedside neonatal nursing to assist with the care of high risk neonates and their families during the pandemic. Heather returned to academia in 2022, accepting the Director position at Elgin Community College where she works to promote nursing education in this majority minority nursing program. She also serves the Illinois nursing education community as President of the Deans & Directors of Illinois Community College Nursing Programs, a group of nursing education leaders dedicated to quality nursing education in the community college setting. Access to quality nursing education is an ongoing passion for Heather who is honored to serve on the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center Advisory Board.

Elaine Hardy, PhD, RN

Dr. Elaine Hardy currently serves as the Dean for Academic Affairs for the St. John's College of Nursing. She completed a non-traditional educational track in nursing and began her career as an associate degree prepared registered nurse in cardiac IMCU and transitioned into academia while earning her master's in nursing from Purdue University Northwest. She earned her PhD in nursing from University of Illinois at Chicago with a passion to address health inequities based on racial identity among midlife African American women.

Dr. Hardy is the founder of the Black Nurses Association of Central Illinois, a chapter of the National Black Nurses Association and serves as President. Her chapter has been engaged with the school nurses in Bloomington, IL to expose middle-school age children to different health professions and to bring awareness to health disparities within their communities. Dr. Hardy's clinical background, scholarship, and community engagement addresses structural and

social determinants of health to promote health equity and improve outcomes in historically under-resourced communities. Her leadership extends across several local and national boards, where she advocates for the nursing profession and equitable access to care. She has been an invited speaker on local and national panels to address diversity issues in nursing, and student success. Her work has been guided by a deep commitment to advancing nursing education, mentoring the next generation of nurse leaders, and improving access to quality healthcare.

Blanca Miller, PhD, RN

Dr. Blanca Miller is the Dean of Nursing at Methodist College in Peoria, IL. She has been in the Dean of Nursing role since 2021 and has been in nursing education since 2006. Prior to becoming the Dean of Nursing, she was the Chair of Undergraduate Programs at Methodist College for 2 years. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Iowa Wesleyan University; a Master of Science in Nursing with a focus in Healthcare and Nursing Administration from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing with a focus in Nursing Education from Nova Southeastern University.

She has been Project Director on two Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants and has been awarded HRSA funding. She serves on the board of the International Association of Latino Nurse Faculty/Nurse Leaders and is the Chair of the Membership Committee. She is also a past board member of Peoria Grown, an organization that addresses food insecurity. Dr. Miller is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses and a member of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group. She was a participant in the National League for Nursing Emerging Leaders Program and the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing Research Scholar Program. She is a Higher Learning Commission volunteer reviewer.

Dr. Miller has been the author and co-author of publications and has presented at the local, state, and national level. Her research areas are recruitment and retention of underrepresented, educationally/environmentally, or economically disadvantaged nursing students, nursing education and advance care planning/end of life care.

Glenda Morris-Burnett, PhD, MUPP, RN

Glenda Morris-Burnett is currently an assistant professor at Rush University with teaching responsibilities in health promotion, population-based health care, public health and health policy. Dr. Morris-Burnett was an Illinois Public Health Research Fellow through the Centers for Disease Control at the University of Illinois School of Public Health and has done international research through the Fogarty Minority International Research Training Grant. Dr. Morris-Burnett has a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from Rush University, a Master's in Urban Planning and Policy with a specialization in health and a PhD in Nursing Science from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr. Morris-Burnett has an extensive background in community engagement, population-based health care, community partnership development, and public health. She has worked as a public health nurse for the city of Chicago and at Great Cities-Neighborhood Initiatives at the University of Illinois at Chicago planning health and health related services to women, children and families. She has worked, as a project director, evaluator, and led teams in the addressing health issues and communicating health needs. She has co-written and worked on two Healthy

Tomorrows Partnership for Children funded programs by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). These were REACH-futures and Teens Educating Learning and Leading (TELL). REACH-futures was a project that developed a collaborative partnership among community partners, professional nurses and community health workers delivering services to underserved women, children, and families. During this project Dr. Morris-Burnett developed the curriculum to teach community health workers how to engage with health care professionals, families and communities when delivering health care services to families with children under the age of 2. Teens Educating Learning and Leading (TELL) was a project that developed a collaborative partnership with professional nurses, adult community health workers and teen advocates to deliver services to adolescent mothers. Teen girls were recruited from high schools to serve as teen advocates for teen moms. This was an additional team member to work with teen moms to support them to remain in school while learning to be a parent.

Dr. Morris-Burnett has worked and provided standardized education to community health workers and received funding from the Illinois Department of Public Health Family Case Management/ Healthy Start and Teen Advocacy to teach community health workers and paraprofessionals from Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and other community based organizations in delivering health services to families with children that were at risk and high risk for adverse health outcomes. Dr. Morris-Burnett also has worked with faith based health care in identifying health issues and working with congregations through such initiatives as Acts of Faith to develop strategies that address health issues in African American communities on the south side of Chicago.

Dr. Morris-Burnett currently works with the Infant and Maternal Mortality Among African Americans Task Force (IMMT) systems subcommittee exploring ways to address gaps in how families, communities and legislators are provided education on the health and well-being of Black/African-American women their children and families. The committee examines how policies and social systems are used to engage families in the health of women and children to improve health outcomes. Dr. Morris-Burnett's research interests are in women's health, community engagement, health inequities, community based participatory research and health care policy. Additionally, Dr. Morris-Burnett also works with the Illinois Public Health Nurses Academic Practice Partnership Work Group to promote academic/practice partnerships that engages public health nurses and populations in partnership to promote health equity.

Karen Richey, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC

Dr. Karen Richey is the Associate Chief Nursing Officer (ACNO), Inpatient Services, at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. Dr. Richey is board certified as a nurse executive, advanced, and has been in progressive leadership roles for over 30 years. She completed her BSN at Ball State University, MBA at National Louis University, and DNP, Executive Leadership at American Sentinel University. Dr. Richey also completed an Innovation Healthcare Fellowship through Arizona State University.

Dr. Richey began her career at the former Children's Memorial Hospital as a staff nurse, worked as a charge nurse and served as the nursing director of a neuroscience/ortho/endocrine unit for several years. Dr. Richey then became the Senior Director of Acute Care Service and was instrumental in planning the move and merging of inpatient units and leadership teams at

the new Streeterville location opening of Lurie Children's in 2012. Dr. Richey led operational planning for a large inpatient expansion and became the ACNO in 2017. She holds membership in AONL, ANA, INA, and Sigma Theta Tau. Dr. Richey has since implemented a variety of new programs and was the co-incident commander for the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Dr. Richey was selected for the Leadership Engagement, Assessment & Development (LEAD) program for High Potential Talent through The Executives' Club of Chicago and received the Press Ganey 2019 Success Story Award for "A Nurse Manager Leadership Development Program" submission. Dr. Richey has several publications, has served on the Nursing Advisory Board for Aurora University and precepts students for a variety of MSN, MHA, and DNP programs.

Daisy Sherry, PhD, APRN, ACNP-BC

Daisy Sherry is the Interim Dean of the College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL. She has served in this role since 2024, and in nursing education since 2007. Prior to being Dean, she served as Associate Dean 2021-2024, and preceding Program Director of the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.

Prior to working in higher education, Dr. Sherry worked clinically as a Nurse Practitioner at the University of Chicago Hospitals for over a decade in Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology and general Cardiology prior to that at Central DuPage Hospital. She began her nursing career as a nurse in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit at University of Chicago.

Dr. Sherry obtained her PhD in Nursing from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2010. To support her work, she was awarded an F31 NRSA pre-doctoral fellowship from the National Institutes for Nursing Research (2007-2010). She earned her Master's of Science in Nursing with specialization as an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner in 2001 at the University of Illinois at Chicago and subsequent post-MSN certificate in Nursing Education. Dr. Sherry completed a post-doctoral fellowship at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital in Health Services Research & Development (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011-2013). Her research interests have consistently involved improving health for vulnerable populations such as the promotion of physical activity in the complex and chronically-ill, addressing new models of care delivery for the acutely-ill, fostering access to healthcare for the uninsured, and promoting patient-provider trust in underrepresented minority groups.

Since 2007, Dr. Sherry has been a leader in the development of new nursing programs at Lewis University, being the founding Coordinator for the Nurse Practitioner track and subsequently the founding DNP Program Director. In 2014, she was granted a Nurse Educator award from IBHE. In 2020, she was first author on an award of \$25,000 from the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics Direct Relief to support additional pandemic-related expenses at Bolingbrook Christian Health Center. In 2021, Lewis University was awarded a \$2.1 million HRSA Nursing Workforce Diversity grant with Dr. Sherry as Project Director. She completed the EAB Rising Higher Education Leaders Fellowship in 2023. More recent projects include the provision of quality care for diabetic patients and holistic support of underrepresented nursing students.

Diane Smith, MSN, RN

Diane Smith currently practices as a staff nurse at the University of Chicago Medicine for over 33 years. She is a staff nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for 29 years. She began her

nursing career as a staff nurse in an adult general medicine unit at the University of Chicago Medicine in 1991. She is also a clinical adjunct faculty member of Prairie State College, Rasmussen University, and Chamberlain University. She provides clinical instruction for nursing students in Associate Degree Nursing and Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs in the pediatric and adult general medicine clinical rotations.

She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Saint Xavier University in 1991. In 2018, she received her Master of Science in Nursing focusing on healthcare policy from Chamberlain University. She received a certificate in Education from Chamberlain University in 2019. She is enrolled at Chamberlain University as a Doctor of Nursing Practice student with an expected graduation date of January 2026.

Theresa E. Towle, DNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, APRN-FPA

Theresa E. Towle, DNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, APRN-FPA, is a dual-certified Psychiatric-Mental Health and Family Nurse Practitioner with a strong commitment to advancing nursing practice and workforce development in Illinois. With experience spanning large university medical centers and rural community clinics, Dr. Towle brings a comprehensive perspective to patient care and nursing leadership.

Dr. Towle holds advanced degrees from Rush University (Doctorate), Saint Xavier University (Masters), and a Post-Masters Certificate from the University of St. Francis. She is licensed to practice in multiple states, including Illinois, Arizona, and Colorado, Maine and Vermont. She is an active member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, American Psychological Nurses Association, and the Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing.

Dr. Towle is a business owner and currently works in private practice. She specializes in mental health medication management and the treatment of medication-associated weight gain, providing holistic, patient-centered care. Her clinical expertise is complemented by a dedication to evidence-based practice, patient advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Dr. Towle's background aligns with the mission of the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center (INWC), which focuses on recruitment, retention, and strategic utilization of the nursing workforce. She is committed to supporting initiatives that enhance recognition, reward, and renewal for nurses, and values the importance of data-driven decision-making and educational advancement in nursing. Through her work, Dr. Towle strives to empower fellow nurses in developing a resilient and dynamic healthcare workforce in Illinois.