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# South University: A Look at Flourishing Nursing Education from Both Sides

By Barbara R. Fallon

Pre-pandemic approximately two thousand students and their faculty took advantage of the South University, Florida campus academic portfolio – a full range of on-site, online, and remote learning undergraduate and postgraduate degree classes. So, when COVID-19 obstacles threatened campus life and learning, South was prepared to adapt their methods of teaching and not only survived but flourished.

Most importantly however, administrators and faculty recognized – before, during and after the pandemic – that it takes more than books and simulation labs and virtual programs to instill the ‘art and science’ of nursing in students. Faculty with clinical excellence, didactic skills, and research insight are a vital ingredient to mentor students and guide them on their educational paths.

## **Faculty Engagement**



Susan Hamley,  
Ph.D., R.N

Susan Hamley, Ph.D., R.N., is a model of her South faculty colleagues’ attributes. She is an Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing BSN Program who started on her professional career in a small community college as a homeless mother of two small children. Throughout the years she earned a BSN (cum laude) from Florida Gulf Coast University and Master of Science in Health Law (magna cum laude) from Nova Southeastern University. After the tragic loss of one of her daughters, she returned to her clinical roots and expanded her educational experience with a Doctor of Science in Nursing from Barry University.

Hamley came to South University after her oldest daughter graduated from the School of Nursing, because her experience in the local health care environment led her to appreciate the respect the university held among area health care professionals. She has been a faculty member for three years

and the culture of inclusive and integrated learning is what keeps her there.

“Because of its mission and size, South offers the rigor of a larger university and the intimacy and personal attention of a community-sized program with highly integrated engagement among students, different cohorts, and the faculty,” Hamley explained.

“I can match a face with any student name I’ve engaged with and can help my students recognize how their personal interests and strengths match with a variety of career options that will satisfy their intellectual, professional and human-interest needs,” she said. “I always share my experiences as a working mom, a pediatric nurse, a school nurse caring for hi-risk students, managing eldercare, and providing in-the-field care for homebound patients, to expose them to the variety of clinical specialties within our profession, no matter what their life experiences have been. In addition, there are administrative and academic options to explore. In fact, nursing chose me ... not vice versa,” she said.

## **Theory and Practice Learning**



Sharon  
Ramjohn,  
PhD, MSN,  
RN, CNE

And that engagement and rigor with faculty/student is what intrigues South’s 8-year tenured Professor, Sharon Ramjohn,

PhD, MSN, RN, CNE, who loves the satisfaction of mentoring students but can't imagine giving up her bedside nursing passion. As a continuing practicing nurse, she brings not only the academic credentials to her students but the currency of technology and realism that on-going bedside nursing brings to the profession. Her philosophy is that by sharing her clinical and academic competency she can connect theory with practice for her students.

"Most of our students are technically savvy, particularly having survived the rigors of virtual learning during the pandemic," she explained, "so my fundamental value-add advice is never stop learning during your hands-on nursing experience after graduation."

"My students love to hear my personal stories of work but also need to learn not only how to care for patients, but also how to balance work/school and family life. Many are recent high school graduates, but our diverse student body includes career transitioning and return-to-school parent/students," she said.

Holding an array of undergraduate and graduate nursing degrees, Dr. Ramjohn's doctoral dissertation focused on the value of mentoring novice students, practitioners and faculty and the resilience of nursing educators. Experienced in medical-surgical, research, simulation and public health, rehabilitative and academic nursing she not only instills her work ethic in her students, but obviously in her own children having raised a son and daughter who entered the legal and teaching professions.

## **A Career Transition**



Shayna  
Adaniel

Shayna Adaniel, a career transitioning student, has studied with both professors in her South experience. Raised in a health career-oriented family, she planned to be a nurse but switched and earned her initial Bachelor degree in social work. She enjoyed client engagement with youth and seniors recovering and enduring eating or memory disorders and dealing with health needs during the aging process. That experience plus her advocacy for Alzheimer's, home-bound seniors and COVID vaccinations for healthcare workers, prompted her to return to nursing school so that she could increase engagement in direct patient care. South offered her an accelerated opportunity in the initial prerequisite studies to speed her educational nursing journey.

Excited after her first day of clinicals, she values the mutual benefits of brightening the day of patients who had limited to no visiting privileges during the pandemic to observing and participating with staff in the fulfillment of her own career dreams and goals. While her clinicals will provide opportunities to shadow in public health, women's health, psychiatry and med-surg nursing, currently during her second quarter at South she is still leaning toward geriatric specialty care.

"I appreciate the personal interaction between faculty members and students both within my own cohort and with other students. In fact, my best friend is enrolled here and is six months ahead of me, so we share experiences, likes and

dislikes, practical and personal advice to build morale and knowledge to succeed in our goals.”

An extremely low attrition rate among faculty (mostly due to retirement) is proof that South’s culture works. Both Ramjohn and Hamley, agree “Impacting lives at the bedside and in the classroom doesn’t feel like work.”

Ramjohn has experienced fulfillment watching her former students succeed in passing boards, working as charge nurses in local hospitals and populating the pipeline of the nursing profession on clinical, academic and administrative paths. Hamley relates to her students’ uncertainties and enjoys helping them erase those doubts by sharing her own professional history and satisfaction with personal choices. And, Adaniel has found her niche as an advocate for the aging Florida population, and; is anxious to convert her professional experiences in the allied health community to direct patient care, thanks to her South education.

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