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Lolita Bryant, '20, Honored to Serve as a Nursing Educator and Leader

Lolita Bryant, of Wilmington, N.C., is especially proud to earn her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Gardner-Webb University in 2020—the “Year of the Nurse.” The celebration recognizes the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

“She was known as the ‘Lady with the Lamp,’ who helped to formalize nursing education,” Bryant reflected. “She was the founder of the first scientifically based nursing school—the Nightingale School of Nursing at St. Thomas’ Hospital in London in 1860. For all these years, she has been a role model for the professional nurse. I hope that I can leave a legacy in my nursing career where my light and gift given to me by almighty God will shine on forever.”

Bryant continued, “Although the Coronavirus has changed our world, nurses have been placed in the forefront of this pandemic and made a difference. Our lamps are shining so bright during this crisis. I am sure Florence Nightingale would be proud to see the professional nurse in action today. I hope we have placed a smile on her face in heaven. Happy Birthday, Florence Nightingale!”

In addition to the yearlong recognition, the American Nurses Association, which traditionally observes National Nurses Week May 6-12, has expanded its celebration to the entire month of May. While the Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing (HSON)



Lolita Bryant (in white lab coat) teaches nursing students at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.



recognizes the excellence of its students, faculty and staff on a daily basis, National Nurses Month is a time to highlight their dedication and commitment to the profession.

Bryant shares more about why she became a nurse and her experience as a nursing educator, leader and student during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: Why did you choose nursing as a career?

Bryant: I love serving others and putting a smile on the face of someone who needs their spirits lifted when they are not feeling well. I enjoy teaching nurses, interacting with nursing students and giving back to my community. I feel my nursing career has been a gift from God. I truly love what I do.”

Q: What is your current position and job responsibilities?

Bryant: I am a lecturer and clinical instructor in the baccalaureate nursing program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW). My area of expertise is in obstetrics/labor and delivery. I teach nursing students how to provide care for the laboring mother and her newborn. I also teach registered nurses in the online RN-BSN program at UNCW. I recently accepted a position at New Hanover Regional Medical Center (Wilmington, N.C.) as an Outcomes Manager II in the Patient Safety Department. My role is to support various aspects of nursing care, and this involves providing expertise and support to nurses who are caring for patients at the bedside, helping drive practice changes throughout the organization, and ensuring the use of best practices and evidence-based care to achieve the best possible outcomes for the patient.

Q: How have you been prepared for the next level of your profession?

Bryant: The nursing professors and the classes at GWU are preparing me to lead health care innovations and influence policy that is founded on the science and theory of nursing, analytic principles, evidence-based practice, and strong leadership at the highest organizational level. God placed me in this DNP program at Gardner-Webb. I am honored to have been taught by the phenomenal nursing professors at GWU.

Q: What aspect of the DNP program has been the most helpful to you?

Bryant: The support and prayers for my success have been most helpful and a blessing to me. When I would come to campus for my intensives, the nursing professors prayed for God’s peace and protection over me as I completed this program. We also had a designated area in our courses if we needed prayer and support. I really love the scriptures the nursing professors posted in the courses. Dr. Yvonne Smith, my project chair, has given me guidance and advice as I completed the implementation of my capstone project. Her

patience and gentle spirit are amazing. I have learned so much from her I feel that I can begin to teach, assist and support nurses who are completing their studies at the graduate level.

Q: How has your job changed since the pandemic began?

Bryant: The way I do my job has changed significantly. We were not allowed to take the students to the clinical area in the hospital because of the COVID-19 crisis, which was the best decision to provide safety for everyone. The undergraduate nursing faculty had to create an online learning environment for the students. This was very challenging, because we had to create modules and activities to enhance their learning in an online environment when they would normally get the hands-on experience in the clinical setting. We had the opportunity to use 'Shadow Health' which turned out to be a great alternative. This program provided the students with the ability to engage with Digital Standardized Patients to perform patient exams, practice documentation and develop clinical reasoning skills. My position as an Outcomes Manager at the hospital changed from face-to-face meetings to virtual/Zoom meetings. The virtual experiences have been very successful for all the administrators and leaders in the entire organization. We are looking into exploring the use of more virtual opportunities in the future.



Q: What has the pandemic taught you about patient care, patient interaction or a new way of medical practice?

Bryant: Many nurses are working on the frontline providing care to patients daily in the hospital. They are the heroes during this pandemic. Before the COVID-19 crisis, I thought that in-person, face-to-face encounters afforded nurses and medical staff the greatest level of connection and intimacy with their patients. Yet, I have been pleasantly surprised to discover the perks of telehealth during the unprecedented Coronavirus crisis. Telehealth has many advantages, including keeping patients and nurses safe from possible exposure to COVID-19, improving access to care and cutting health care costs. It also offers its own type of personal and lighthearted or even heart-warming connections.

Q: How do the patients respond to this new way of interacting with medical providers?

Bryant: Many patients like the idea they can have an appointment in the comfort of their homes. I have even heard that some patients are introducing their loved ones and pets to their health care providers virtually. Although some patients will have situations when they

specifically need to see the health care provider in the office, telehealth can support health care delivery that is far less cumbersome for many patients and health care providers alike. This mode of consulting should be sustained and expanded on through and after this pandemic.

[Learn more about the Hunt School of Nursing.](#)