

2021 Scholarship Program Recipients

Valerie Weiss Award

Awarded to RNs working toward advanced degrees in nursing or a related field. The award is made as a legacy to Valerie Weiss, ARNP, MN, MA, whose professional commitment was an inspiration to her colleagues and patients alike.

JESSICA CHANG (KCNA member) is pursuing a master's degree in Clinical Informatics and Patient-Centered Technologies at the University of Washington. She is passionate about patient education, whole-person-centered care and utilizing technology to improve access and equity systematically. Jessica enjoys the challenge of bringing innovation and design solutions to the field of nursing and is specifically interested in developing technologies to improve communication.

Innovation and advancements in computing and technology have brought us into a new age of data. I aim to be a nurse leader who embraces this opportunity, understands how to analyze and translate the data, and is present at the design table...



Jessica Chang

CORDELIA R. COCHRAN is in Family Mental Health track of the DNP Program at Seattle University. She comes to nursing after advocating for marginalized clients as a therapist. After witnessing a lack of access to providers, she decided to do something about it, and went back to school. Her goal is to create a Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Community Agency and a PMHNP residency. As a student, Cordelia is the Diversity Ambassador for the School of Nursing, a member on the Equity and Justice Committee, the student representative for her specialty track and a leader on the Mentorship Committee.

I consistently saw that there were gaps in access to care for marginalized populations... I wanted to be part of the solution, I wanted to help fill in those gaps of care and to eventually mentor others who want to become providers.



Cordelia Cochran

LEIGH KALAMAN is in the DNP-FNP Program at the University of Washington. While other kids were drawing with crayons, Leigh was practicing her charting skills on blank charts as her nurse mother cared for patients. Leigh earned her LPN in high school and has stayed steady in her pursuit of nursing ever since. Leigh is passionate about ensuring that new nurses feel supported. To that end, Leigh volunteers as a nurse preceptor on her acute care unit and mentors future nurses through the UW's Future Nurses Club.

I have always identified as a nurse. Nursing is such a beautiful career where we can touch the lives of others. I want to continue to promote nursing... [and] ensure that the nursing body stays strong and continues to foster fantastic new nurses.



Leigh Kalaman

JESSICA KELLEY is in the DNP Program at the University of Washington in the Population Health and Systems Leadership track. She holds a special interest in impacting the health and education of adolescents through system-level changes. Jessica is a community volunteer in the areas of family planning, vaccinations, sexual violence prevention and more. In all that she does, Jessica strives to minimize health disparities and provide more equitable pathways to wellness.

My true passion lies in research and policies that improve patient's lives before they arrive at the hospital, or even better, avoid a hospital visit altogether. I strive for empathy and actively engage a cultural humility framework...



Jessica Kelley

LILIANA PALACIOS is a Latinx, first-generation college student and a COVID-19 nurse at Harborview. Deeply inspired by her mother, Liliana is working towards her DNP at the University of Washington. Her goal is to be a strong advocate and partner of marginalized communities. During the pandemic, she saw health inequities become

even more evident. Liliana is the chapter president of the Western Washington-National Association of Hispanic Nurses where she is a leader in community engagement, advocacy and mentoring. She is dedicated to encouraging Latinx individuals to pursue nursing as a career.

My experiences as Latinx have fostered my resilience and drive to advocate for policy-level changes that urgently need to be addressed. My nursing career is something that excites me, and I look forward to my commitment in advocacy for health equity.

SHAVONNE REYNOLDS (KCNA Member) is pursuing her Doctor of Nurse Practice degree as an FNP at the University of Washington. Growing up, a children's clinic played a big part in Shavonne's life. Not only was it a place to see practitioners that looked like her, but where her mother took teenage parenting classes and more. The deep sense of



Liliana Palacios

acceptance, understanding and relatability she felt there made a lasting impression. Today, Shavonne's overarching goal is to establish a nurse-led community health center that caters to the needs of BIPOC communities.

As a woman of color in health care, it is glaring the lack of diversity in health care policymaker, administrative, education, provider and student roles... I want to be a voice of empowerment, understanding, and knowledge for policies and programs that address the disproportionate representation of people of color in health care.

ANGELITA UTLEG is in the Doctorate Program at the University of Washington. A first-generation college student from an immigrant family with thirteen children, Angelita advocates for those with no voice — a passion she gained as a medical interpreter. She also believes that nurses need to be politically active and has participated in various social movements rallies.

Her life experiences underpin her holistic approach to nursing that ensures the totality of each patient is considered along with any physical disease. She looks forward to combining her skills as a nurse scientist and nurse clinician.

I've always had this feeling that I can help people of color better by becoming a health care professional. My calling is to advocate for people who find it hard to speak up...



Angelita Utleg



Shavonne Reynolds

Basic & Graduate Awards

Scholarship awarded to students enrolled in associate or baccalaureate degree programs preparing for careers as registered nurses as well as those pursuing graduate degrees in nursing.



Masuma Baset

MASUMA BASET is a Doctor of Nursing Practice student at Seattle University and is most passionate about serving the underprivileged. As a child visiting Bangladesh, Masuma witnessed the social exclusion and limited access to health care experienced by the underprivileged and gender minorities.

A spark of social justice rose in her, and thus began her interest in health care and her desire to

address inequalities. She also became a passionate advocate for education, especially for young girls and marginalized populations. After graduation, Masuma plans to continue her advocacy work to empower women and the underprivileged.

I am determined to make my dream of becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner a reality. To be part of an individual's health care journey is a blessing... it would not just be a career, it is an essential part of my life that would bring me eternal happiness.

THAO BUI is a public health nursing student at the University of Washington. As both a first-generation immigrant and college student, Thao understands how oppression and systemic factors influence health. In high school, she was drawn to nursing as a way to serve people whose health was impacted by outside factors. Later, she was deeply inspired by the nurses who cared for her in the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) Program. They further sparked her dreams to become a labor and delivery nurse with hopes to one day work in the NFP Program.

I chose nursing because I love everything that the profession has to offer....Nursing care does not end just at the bedside. As a nurse, it is essential to view patients from a holistic perspective...



Thao Bui

ELIZABETH DAWSON is a nursing student at the University of Washington, Bothell and is especially motivated to serve underprivileged communities. She interned at a children's clinic in Jamaica and ultimately wants to establish a clinic in a developing country. Elizabeth was first struck with the immense need for dignity in health care when traveling to South Korea where she met a man from a small community of lepers, not interacting with others for 60 years. When she extended her hand to him, he refused and looked down. That moment cemented Elizabeth's desire to pursue a career in nursing.

It was then that I decided I would pursue a career in nursing, and that my mission would be to treat every patient with dignity and respect. I uphold this value in my interactions with my patients...



Elizabeth Dawson

BRIDGETTE GARDEA, a nursing student at Seattle University, has been volunteering in health care since the age of eight, gaining inspiration from her mom, an operating room nurse. Her volunteer work in hospitals, and even an ambulance ride-along, helped guide her to her passion of nursing. Bridgette is most drawn to nursing in pediatric oncology, and her desire is to obtain an MSN in that specialty. Bridgette is known as a facilitator of positive change, always looking for ways to help find success.

My inspiration to be a nurse comes from within my heart and gives me a greater sense of purpose as



Bridgette Gardea

I move forward in life. Nurses can protect patients and their human rights by reducing health disparities and promoting health within the community...

ANDRÉ MATTUS is a nursing student at the University of Washington in their accelerated program. It was witnessing how a nurse cared for their mom that brought nursing into focus for this scientist. After finding the day-to-day work of a scientist intensely solitary, André is happy to pursue a career in nursing as it combines science, interpersonal connection and impact.

As an emergency department technician and street medic to protesters, André is on the frontlines of nurse activism with a deep commitment to anti-racism, sexual and gender minority inclusive care. They are taking action to address and highlight how systemic oppressions are public health issues.

It matters to me that health care professionals recognize how their patients are not just bodies with maladies, but complex people seeking care and respect. As a registered nurse, I plan on continuing to advocate for my gender non-conforming patients and colleagues...



André Mattus

HANNAH MORRISON is studying for her DNP at Seattle University. As a second career nurse, she brings her life experiences with her including living in remote and rural areas, serving youth in urban settings and working with the Makah Tribe. Her passion is providing equitable care and advocating for the most vulnerable, including the LGBTQ community and those suffering from homelessness and drug addiction. In fact, she helped develop a program for Ryther to support homeless youth experiencing addiction.



Hannah Morrison

Nurses occupy a unique position to be active forces of change and therefore should boldly find ways to impact policies. In the long term, I aspire to be a nursing instructor and contribute to the education of the next generation of nurses.

ASHLEY MURRIETA ORTEGA is in the nursing program at Seattle Pacific University where she also is earning a minor in Psychology. Ashley has a heart for learning, growth and advocacy. As a first-generation student from an immigrant family, Ashley is passionate about making a difference in marginalized communities affected by discrimination and bias. She is bilingual in English and Spanish and understands

the complexities of health care in the LatinX community where fear often results in forgoing care.

I believe that EVERYONE, regardless of their social status, citizenship status, income status and English proficiency, is entitled to equal health care. In my career as a nurse, I will do everything that I can to advocate for the patients...

AMBER RODRIGUEZ-MUÑOZ is pursuing her passion of nursing at Seattle University. She comes from a family of caregivers who instilled in her a strong work ethic that has held her steady as she achieves her goals despite setbacks. She is most drawn to the field of emergency medicine, where she is constantly learning and adapting. As someone with direct experience with a family member who has suffered with mental illness, drug addiction and homelessness, Amber is intensely compassionate in her care and advocacy.

I have found that who I am as a person and my goals are in harmony with what it means to be a Registered Nurse... I have an appreciation for both the good and the bad, knowing supporting others is always something within my capacity.

JESSICA SCHUSTER is in the DNP Program at Seattle University where she is focused on Psychiatric Mental Health. She began in research but then found that she was drawn to the direct impact she could have through nursing. She is incredibly passionate about destigmatizing mental illness and is working on her doctorate project to develop an evidence-based decision tree to assist providers when patients present with depression. Given her own experience with trauma and journey to full health, her field of study is both professional and personal.

Becoming a PMHNP is not simply a career but an important facet of my life's purpose. I truly wish to help others the way I have been helped.

NICOLE WOOLDRIDGE is in the MSN Program at Pacific Lutheran University. With a background in non-profits and degrees in theology and peace studies, she surprised herself when she decided to become a nurse. Soon she



Ashley Murrieta
Ortega



Amber Rodriguez-
Muñoz



Jessica Schuster

came to recognize the many parallels and accepted her life experience as an asset. Nicole has lived in five countries on four continents and first became interested in medicine after spending a year volunteering in a clinic in rural Honduras. She hopes to work with indigent and underprivileged communities, advocating for those harmed by implicit bias and structures of injustice.

My belief is that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated with dignity. My desire to become a nurse is rooted not in a hope for accolades or increased earning potential, but in a commitment to serving vulnerable people.



Nicole Wooldridge

SHWE ZIN is a first-generation college student in the accelerated BSN program at the University of Washington. As a young child in a refugee camp, she observed the kindness of nurses and decided to take on the caregiver role herself in order to address health discrimination. She is eager to develop the same nurse superpowers she saw at a young age — the ability to give others the feelings of being protected, comforted and taken care of when at their most vulnerable. Shwe has held a leadership role in increasing Southeast Asian visibility on the UW campus through the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity and has worked as a medical interpreter.

I am a firm believer that the greatest health outcomes are not achieved in doctor offices, but through safe housing, financial security, and adequate nutrition.



Shwe Zin

This year, King County Nurses Association awards 18 scholarships of \$3,000 each to deserving nursing students from King County. Recipients include students seeking initial licensure as RNs or in graduate entry programs, as well as registered nurses returning to earn BSNs or advanced degrees. Students receiving scholarships demonstrate an understanding of equity and social justice through creative ideas to improve health disparities in our community. They embody the values of collaboration, compassion, innovation and community wellness. Since 1993, KCNA has awarded \$605,750 to 287 deserving students.