

news

2017 Circle of Excellence Award Winners *Faculty Winners Edition*

Please join me in congratulating the EA Class of 2017 Circle Of Excellence winners!

My 'A-ha!' moment today was reading these diverse and inspiring bios from people who truly enjoy what they do and are very good at it.

We all are changing people's lives every day!

- Duncan Anderson

Karen Brown Dental Hygiene Salt Lake City
Danielle Guillory Dental Hygiene Birmingham
Ayreon Jackson EFDA Landover
Linda Swallows Surgical Technology Cookeville
Trenton Smith BSN & A D N Denver
Rochelle Samson Dental Assisting Wayne
Lisa Maldonado Medical Assisting Wayne
Percy Gorham Medical Assisting Orange Park
Candice Merrick Massage Therapy Richmond
Carla Blakely Surgical Technology/SPT Richmond
Scott Deeter Welding Pittsburgh
Michael Jones HVACR Houston North
Dr. Mohammed Ahmed . Medical Assisting Houston North
Erik Eudy General Education Columbia
Lynette Jacobs Surgical Technology Houston South
Tonya Edwards Medical Billing & Coding .. Houston South
Gene Haus HVACR Lawrenceville
John Allen HVACR Smyrna

David Lund HVACR Salt Lake City
Dr. Angel Baez Allied Health & Gen. Ed Cutler Bay
Peter Falzarano General Education Columbus
Jennifer Hall Dental Assisting Orange Park
Dr. Erick Santana General Education Cutler Bay
Gary Wilson Advanced Tractor Trailer Driver Baltimore
Yvonne Harrison Medical Assisting Birmingham
Jackie Johnson Medical Assisting Cincinnati
Greg Mach Cybersecurity Centerville
Wilmanie Robert-Dossous RN Orange Park
Tracy Pannunzio Nursing Indianapolis
Michelle Cohen-Fesman RN Cincinnati
Kathleen Williams Practical Nursing Scranton
Melanie Thompson RN Salt Lake City
Mary Banayat Practical Nursing Phoenix
Sandra Curtis Practical Nursing & RN Cincinnati
Cathy Ceccio Nursing Cuyahoga Falls



Karen Brown

Karen Brown is a dental hygiene faculty member at Fortis College in Salt Lake City, Utah. She joined EA four years ago after a 30-year career as a dental hygienist and periodontal specialist with California and Utah licenses. Her past positions – including a corporate stint as hygiene educator at Johnson & Johnson – prepared her for teaching Fortis students the more intricate details of patient care. Karen, who graduated the University of Southern California School of Dentistry in 1985, remembers wanting to teach when she was in third grade. She draws daily motivation from Fortis students who successfully apply what they learn. “Learning by application is very empowering for them – and for me,” Karen says. Her A-HA! experiences at Fortis include seeing and sensing the pride that students feel when they graduate. Karen says she motivates her students by warning them to avoid complacency, reminding them that “the world of dental hygiene is not saturated but competitive.” Her teaching style puts emphasis on what Karen calls “collaborative learning. I like students to work together. I think they can learn so much more from each other.” Her favorite quote has collaborative flavor, too: “Your success is my success. Bloom where you’re planted.” Karen is married and has two dogs, a Berne doodle puppy and a Brussels Griffon. She lists her hobbies as golf and “reading textbooks.”



Danielle Guillory

Danielle R. Guillory serves as clinic coordinator at Fortis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. Before joining EA four years ago, Danielle was a dental technician in the U.S. Air Force from 1999 to 2009. She has bachelor’s degrees in both psychology and dental hygiene and a master’s in curriculum and instructional leadership. Her A-HA! experiences have been teaching moments with student, she says, “and seeing that light bulb up over their heads. How elated I am.” Danielle says the ingredients in the “secret sauce” for her personal success include “working hard and loving what you do.” Danielle’s classroom leadership often involves walking around the room and posing questions to engage students. Her favorite quote is from Martin Luther King Jr.: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Danielle is single and enjoys reading and fishing.



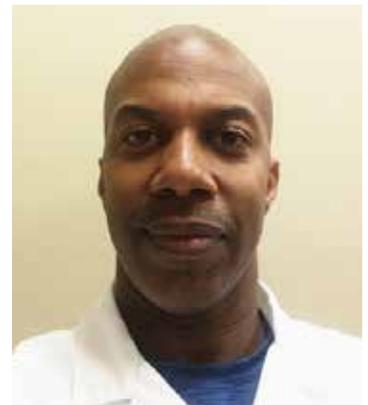
Ayreon Jackson

Ayreon S. Jackson serves as program chair at Fortis College in Landover, Maryland, and has a professional background as a dental assistant. Ayreon says she joined EA three years ago because her prior experience gave her insight into “how to produce a great dental assistant.” Her daily motivation comes from making a difference in the lives of her students, and she credits a higher power for her success: “God is my secret sauce. My purpose is to serve my community and change lives.” A love of exploring and learning led Ayreon into the teaching profession. Among her best activities in class is playing the role of an angry patient and putting students in charge of resolving the imaginary issue. Ayreon promotes professionalism by emphasizing the importance of “doing what’s right when no one is looking.” Her favorite quote is, “Love the life you live.” Ayreon is married with one son, Addison, and a dog named Blanca.



Percy Gorham

Percy D. Gorham is a medical assistant instructor at Fortis College in Orange Park, Florida, and he knows well the challenges students often face. Percy says he nudges students toward success in several ways: “During the course of the term, we take surveys and have counseling. The system already is designed to flag students with problem areas as well as reward effort.” Before Percy joined EA over four years ago, he worked as a pharmacy tech instructor, medical assistant instructor and a pediatric office manager for employers including Everest University, Jones College, Kaplan College, Remington College, Sanford Brown Institute and Virginia College. Percy’s educational background includes introductory training in the military as a combat medical specialist. He has a medical specialist associate degree. He says his background has given him insight into the human condition: “It has shown me the introspective workings of what motivates people to do what they do.” Percy is a proponent of proprietary education and says Fortis measures up well versus other higher-education options. His teaching style emphasis strategic individual approaches to studies: “For everything, there is a strategy. There is a strategy to learning, test taking, recalling information.” The need for individual strategies arises from different learning styles that Percy strives to understand.



Trent Smith

Trent Smith serves as HESI champion and assistant professor of pathophysiology and pharmacology at the Denver School of Nursing. Trent has worked at EA for six years. He attended the University of Colorado at Boulder and earned his M.S. degree in integrative biology in 2012 after he got a bachelor's degree with an emphasis in human and animal genetics in 2004. Trent's previous experience includes working as the lead instructor of the human cadaver lab at the University of Colorado at Denver, where he taught human anatomy. Trent also has worked as a phlebotomist when he ran the medical lab at the office of a general medical practice. He says his background helped him to discover effective techniques to make "nerdy science content" relevant and applicable to students. The "secret sauce" of his success is seeing himself as part of a team, not just an individual instructor, and getting involved in as many committees as possible to improve the Denver School of Nursing.



Rochelle Samson

Rochelle Samson brings an international perspective to her position as dental clinic/externship coordinator at the Fortis Institute in Wayne, New Jersey. Now a resident of nearby Bayonne, New Jersey, Rochelle is from the Philippines, where she practiced 10 years as a general dentist before moving to the United States and working as a dental assistant, then as an instructor. In 1999, she graduated with a doctor degree in dental surgery in the Philippines. Rochelle says she takes a practical approach to inspiring students: "I give them examples of graduates who made it and became successful in the field." She also stays in contact with her former students as they progress to graduation. Her daily work habits encompass planning, organization and compassion, a potent mix for teaching, which she tried at the urging of a friend – and discovered a labor of love. "I love teaching," says Rochelle, whose favorite quote is a lovely play on words: "Teaching is a work of heart." Rochelle is married with one daughter and two cats and loves to sing.



Lisa Maldonado

Lisa Marie Maldonado is a medical assistant program director and externship coordinator at Fortis Institute in Wayne, New Jersey. She has 14 years of experience as a medical assistant, cardiovascular technician and ultrasound technician. Lisa Marie also worked for five years as an instructor and program coordinator at other schools before joining EA eight years ago. She is a firm believer that experience is a critical teaching tool, especially her background in dealing with patients and public health institutions. Lisa Marie has received many letters, emails and messages from former students who graduated and changed their lives through education. Lisa Marie engages students by reminding them that "knowledge is the one thing that no one can ever take away from them." She describes Fortis as a "family" and treats students as if they were part of her own family. Her favorite quote is, "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return."



Linda Swallows

Linda Swallows is a surgical technology clinical coordinator at Fortis Institute in Cookeville, Tennessee. Linda gained experience eye surgery and labor and delivery prior to joining EA 14 years ago. Her prior experience taught her that the change is nonstop in the medical field, so continuing education is critical. Linda says a major component of her success is sticking as closely as possible to a lesson plan because students expect structure. Her daily work habits include reviewing her lesson plan first thing in the morning to ensure she's ready for the day. "I am usually early for everything," says Linda. She is also punctual in providing feedback to her students by giving them tests, evaluations and encouragement in regular intervals. Her teaching goal also include professional literacy, so Linda asks students to use proper medical terminology both in the surgery lab and in class. And when students struggle, Linda says, "we listen, encourage; we push them, pull them, whatever it takes to keep them focused on the future."



Candice Merrick

Candice Merrick, the massage therapy program director at Fortis College in Richmond, Virginia, has a feel-good story about helping students outside the classroom. After joining EA three years ago, she realized that many hungry students were coming to the Richmond campus. So, Candice started a food closet at the school called HOPE (Helping Other People Eat) and she successfully urged faculty and staff to make donations for the benefit of students in need. Her favorite quote from Woodrow Wilson reflects Candice's concern for the underprivileged: "We are not merely here to make a living. We are here to enrich the world." In 2009, Candice graduated from the same Fortis College campus where she now teaches. "This helps me quickly connect with the students when they realize that I sat where they are sitting," says Candice, whose successful approach to work is trying "to give 100 percent every day ... Whatever outside distractions I have, I check at the door." Candice has two daughters, Paige (17) and Natalie (14) and two dogs, Molly and Trixie. Her hobbies include kayaking and jet skiing.



Carla Blakely

Carla Blakely is surgical technology and sterile processing clinical coordinator at Fortis College in Richmond, Virginia, whose teaching style makes memories. Carla says her best classroom activities include a "pig's feet suturing lab and several dissection labs featuring cow's eyes." Her favorite quote, not surprisingly, is this one from Benjamin Franklin: "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Carla began her teaching career at Fortis in 2010 after working as a surgical technician for more than 20 years. Carla is a graduate of Medical College of Virginia, or MCV. She is a proponent of Fortis and particularly two programs in her field of expertise. "The Surgical Technology and Sterile Processing programs have proven their efficacy by maintaining stellar placement within the community," she says. "Our graduates can be found in every OR and sterile processing unit in and around Richmond." Carla is married with a son and a daughter, who is a Fortis graduate and an operating-room manager. "My third baby is a black lab named Sheba," says Carla, who also enjoys reading, shopping, traveling and "laughing every day."



Tonya Patterson-Edwards

Tonya Patterson-Edwards is a certified billing and coding instructor at the Houston South campus of Fortis College. Tonya, whose hometown is St. Louis, Missouri, is a woman of faith and fortitude who credits her mother as a major motivator. "She taught me to be the woman I am," says Tonya, who started her career in care when she entered the nursing field in 1988. Her experience spans billing and coding plus injections, insurance verifications, patient scheduling, among other tasks. Tonya says she never set out to become a teacher but found purpose in instruction -- and encouragement. She tries to inspire students by helping them find their own purpose in life. Her teaching style encourages discussion and debate among students. Tonya feels blessed when a struggling student comes to her for help and she can provide a solution in the form of tutoring or other assistance. She says her "secret sauce" is an unflinching emphasis on enduring and overcoming obstacles, to "constantly keep pressing forward." Tonya has one daughter, Tiauna Patterson, who is following in her footsteps in the medical field.



Michael Jones

Michael Jones, an HVAC/R instructor at the north campus of Fortis Institute in Houston, Texas, is building on a background that includes working as a construction-site foreman. Michael got training as an electrician while serving in the U.S. Navy and attended Universal Technical Institute as a student in the HVAC program. Teaching to him is more than just an enjoyable occupation. "I also identify this as my purpose in society," he says. Michael says his A-HA! moments happen "when students have come back or called and told me thank you for helping them change their lives." Compassion for students and transparency are the key ingredients in his "secret sauce" for success, Michael says. When students struggle, "I am uncle, brother or mentor -- whatever it takes to show them the support that they need." He subtly monitors class progress by requiring the students in every classroom session to ask three questions about the course material (if not, he asks them five). He says his best classroom activity is playing the role of the "devil's advocate." Michael is married with three kids and one grandchild.



Dr. Mohammed Abbas Ahmed

Mohammed Abbas Ahmed is a medical assistant instructor at the Houston North campus of the Fortis Institute. He has worked for EA for three years. Mohammed, educated as a medical doctor, previously worked for Kaplan University as medical advisor and live lecture coordinator. For Mohammed, the real reward from teaching is being part of the life-changing experiences of successful students. Mohammed became a teacher for those happy moments when smiling students learn something and thank him. He tries to inspire students by urging them to visualize progress and success. Mohammed tries hard to accommodate the preferred learning styles of his students, and he doesn't hesitate to change the format of a classroom session: The moment his students seem bored with a lecture, he immediately will switch to a more interactive activity, such as a lab, to teach the same lesson. Mohammed promotes professionalism by having a friendly attitude toward students but maintaining a defined student-teacher relationship. Mohammed likes biking on weekends, playing football, watching movies and baking.



Scott Deeter

Scott Deeter, the welding program director at the All-State Career campus in Pittsburgh, is a sparkling example of learning by doing. After graduating high school and taking a few business management courses, Scott started working in the welding business in 1997 and mastered each of the major welding processes before moving into management positions and becoming a business owner. "My education comes from many years in the welding industry and careful attention to each task performed," he says. Along the way, he saw many young adults who attended trade schools but graduated unprepared for employment. Scott turned to teaching to provide the necessary training for future welders, which involves getting to know students personally to understand how they learn. His candid conversations with struggling students center on their responsibilities to themselves and their families and the absence of a substitute for hard work. Scott has been married for 25 years and has two sons and two daughters. His pastime passions include playing acoustic guitar and working on classic cars.



Dr. Erik Eudy

Dr. Erik Eudy is an adjunct instructor of anatomy and physiology, microbiology, and nutrition at Fortis College in Columbia, South Carolina. Erik served six years in the Air Force and was self-employed as chiropractic practice operator from 2013 to 2017. After humbly realizing that the entrepreneurial life wasn't his calling, Erik got a part-time teaching job for about a year then switched to full-time. Erik uses story telling to inspire students, who commonly tell him years later that the stories are what they remember best. His wife is a nurse anesthetist, and Erik often uses inspiring stories about her experiences to convey the critical responsibility that nursing entails. Erik tutors struggling students several days a week but draws a line. "Sometimes," he says, "a student just has too many excuses." His students also must comply with a dress code and sometimes are sent home to change their clothes. Erik graduated Palmer College of Chiropractic, Florida with a doctorate in chiropractic and the University of North Carolina Charlotte with a bachelor's degree in biology. His favorite quote comes from Louis Pasteur: "Chance favors the prepared mind." Erik is married with two kids, three-year-old Micaiah and seven-month-old Aria. He enjoys bowling, reading, watching movies, travel, woodworking and tackling DIY projects around the house.



Lynette Jacobs

Lynette Jacobs, ST/SPT instructor at the Houston South campus of Fortis College, worked as a certified surgical technologist before she started teaching five years ago, acquiring various operating-room skills that prepared her for the classroom. Lynette earned an associate degree in applied science and completed the surgical technologist program and medical assistant program at Sanford Brown College. She had planned on becoming a cardiovascular technologist before she turned to teaching. Lynette has been an instructor at EA for five years. She draws daily motivation to teach from her students. Her A-HA! experiences include helping foreign students overcome language barriers and other obstacles to successfully complete the ST/SPT program and gain certification and employment. Her favorite quote embodies a passion for performance: "Excellence makes the difference and failure is not an option." Lynette is the proud mother of two young adults, Shannon and Stephen, and has three grandchildren: Stephen, Jr., Samantha and April Lea. In her spare time, Lynette collects items for distribution to the needy.



Gene Haus

Gene Haus is program director for HVAC/R at the Fortis Institute in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. Prior to joining EA four years ago, Gene was an HVAC technician and instructor for 45 years. His A-HA! experiences include working with students who were told they would never succeed but ultimately graduated and got jobs with large companies or became business owners. He followed his path to teaching through the Air Force, which sent him to Europe to work as a special training instructor for NATO. He takes a simple approach to promoting professionalism by asking students to imagine what image a customer would expect them to convey. Gene says one of his best classroom activities is a discussion-based review of course material: "I only tell the class how many questions they have wrong." It is up to them to distinguish right answers from wrong ones, and "I don't interfere unless I hear something wrong being said." Gene is married and has a son, Jared, and two grandsons, Joshua and Ethan.



John Allen

John W. Allen is an HVAC instructor at Fortis College in Smyrna, Georgia. Before joining EA three years ago, John taught at Laurus Technical Institute as an HVAC instructor and worked as a service technician at R&B HVAC and M&M Heating and Air Conditioning. His A-HA! experiences at Fortis include encountering students who firmly believed they were unable to understand schematics before realizing that they could read and draw them. The "secret sauce" of his success as an instructor could be called the Three P's because John strives to be positive, patient and professional. He motivates and inspires students by regularly updating them on their performance in class and constantly reminding them of what their future employers will expect from them. His best classroom activities include asking students to draw and assemble electrical circuits on boards. John credits a positive attitude as the key element in his everyday approach to teaching. His favorite quote reflects that positive approach: "Every day is a good day."



David Lund

David Lund, an HVAC teacher at Fortis College in Salt Lake City, started part-time before teaching became a full-time passion. Even his favorite quote has an educational theme: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." He completed an apprenticeship with an electrician and graduated Fortis with an HVAC diploma. David, whose hometown is Herriman, Utah, has 14 years of experience working as an electrician, and he has brought that background to EA, where he has taught for eight years. His active teaching style makes a technical subject less abstract. David says he stages "as many labs as possible ... to make teaching as hands-on and visual as possible." To new students, David also delivers life lessons on such subjects as being accountable and focusing on the future. He says he makes "students the center of attention in the classroom ... Always 'putting the ball in their court' empowers students to be responsible for their achievements."



Dr. Angel Baez

Dr. Angel Baez is a general education instructor at Fortis College in Cutler Bay, Florida, who joined EA 20 months ago. Angel has prior experience in teaching that included working as an instructor in the medical assistant and medical billing programs at the Cutler Bay campus of CBT college. A resident of Homestead, Florida, Angel also got a well-rounded understanding of the health care industry by working as a medical office manager, a job that involved working closely with physicians, nurses, medical assistants and technicians, and insurers. Angel has a medical degree from PUCMM in Santiago, Dominican Republic, and a bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences from Interamerican University in Puerto Rico. Angel has a flexible teaching style and says he "will implement every way of teaching I know until it works." His classroom often serves as a stage for presentations by student, which help them learn not only about course material but also public speaking and even "a little bit of teaching," Angel says. He is married and has a six-year-old daughter.



Peter Falzarano

Peter Falzarano serves as lead instructor, general education, at Fortis College in Columbus, Ohio. He joined EA five years ago. Peter previously taught biology, organic chemistry, anatomy and physiology at Columbus State Community College. He also worked with Lifeline of Ohio as a tissue recovery technician who scrubbed into a surgical suite and dissected tissue for transplant. Peter says his work at Lifeline of Ohio helped him to appreciate the fragility and complexity of the human body, a perspective that he brings into the classroom at Fortis. He graduated Ohio State University in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in biology and psychology, and Drexel University in 2012 with a master's degree in biological sciences. Peter says he engages his students with "a combination of words, pictures, videos, animations" and sometimes resorts to drawing images on a whiteboard to explain course material. Promoting professionalism is a priority, he says, "but I also promote a relaxed classroom environment" with interactive discussions of such subjects as "medical errors and how they might have been avoided." Peter's favorite quote is, "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it." Peter is married with a newborn daughter, Leah.



Jennifer Hall

Jennifer Hall serves as dental assisting instructor and campus OSHA coordinator at Fortis College in Orange Park, Florida. Jennifer has been an expanded-functions dental assistant since 1979. Her experience includes working as an office manager in a dental office. In 2015, Jennifer achieved dental assisting national board certification, and she completes continuing education courses every year for re-certification. Jennifer regards teaching as a calling to change lives. Among her best classroom activities is role-playing. She says the "secret sauce" of her success at Fortis is exercising patience and empathy with students "while still enforcing structure." When discouraged students want to quit, she pushes them to overcome obstacles. Jennifer leads by example in the classroom to promote professionalism, and she puts an emphasis on feelings, not just facts and figures. One of her favorite quotes comes from Maya Angelou: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Jennifer is married and has two sons, Christopher and Joseph, as well as two pit bulls, Ruger and Roxy. Her pastime pursuits include riding motorcycles with her family.



Dr. Erick Santana

Dr. Erick Santana is an adjunct professor at Fortis College in Cutler Bay, Florida, who joined EA four years ago. Erick formerly worked as a high school general science teacher. He graduated Universidad Iberoamericana with a doctor in medicine degree. One of his biggest revelations as a teacher has been the tendency of students to seek both instruction and personal advice. Erick says the "secret sauce" that makes his teaching style effective is "repetition, the mother of learning." The everyday approach to work behind his success is positive and empathetic. "I know that people have problems throughout the day, so I tell myself not to take things personal," Erick says. "I also believe that having a positive mindset will help you have a better day. So, I always smile." Asked to identify his daily motivation as a teacher, he says it is "being able to make the community a better place." Erick's favorite quote comes from Mahatma Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world."



Gary Wilson

Gary A. Wilson is a CDL (commercial driver's license) instructor at the All-State Career campus in Baltimore, Maryland. Gary, 68, is motivated to come to work every day by the opportunity to share his knowledge as professional truck driver with students. Gary joined EA 16 months ago with 40 years of experience as a professional tractor trailer driver and as owner of three trucking companies. Gary also helped to start the CDL program at North American Trade Schools. He says the "secret sauce" of his personal success is his resolve to "wake up each day prepared to face whatever challenges come my way." Gary motivates students with anecdotes and explanations: "I always explain the whole training process to the students to minimize surprises. I also share my CDL life story of how I traveled about 650 miles to school with no car when I was 23 years old." Gary is married with a son and a daughter, two granddaughters and one grandson. His hobbies include gospel singing, riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle, fishing, hunting and traveling with his wife in their recreational vehicle.



Cathy Ceccio

Cathy Ceccio is a nursing instructor at Fortis College in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. Prior to joining EA four years ago, Cathy worked as a director of nursing for people with developmental disabilities and an assistant professor or nursing at other colleges, among other positions. Cathy's career as a teacher is a natural extension of teaching and learning in every other position she has held. As a nursing instructor at Fortis, she has found that about half of her students lack focus for a medical reason or because they worry about their families and their jobs. So, Cathy constantly tries to establish a "competitive advantage" in commanding their attention. When students stop attending her class, she always tries immediately to contact them by email, and she tries to get them on the phone if they don't respond by email within 24 hours. Cathy promotes professionalism by listening respectfully to her students. She is married and loves to swim.



Michelle Cohen-Fesman

Michelle Cohen-Fesman serves as clinical coordinator at Fortis College in Cincinnati, Ohio. Michelle is a seasoned educator who has held nursing instructor positions with several employers including ITT Technical Institute and Brown Mackie College. She honed her marketing skills working for her family's business Queen City Medmart. She graduated South University with a bachelor's degree in nursing. Michelle says Fortis appeals to her because the school allows teachers to pay more individual attention to students than is possible at larger colleges and universities. Her interactive teaching style involves classroom discussion about evidence-based articles about the nursing profession. Michelle motivates by reminding students of their goals. She helps failing students by tutoring them and discussing strategies for studying and learning. Michelle says her best classroom activities center on group activities that allow students to "brainstorm together. I have an RN question and answer game that they have played in teams." Michelle has a 35-year-old daughter, Erica, who has a master's degree in nursing, and a 35-year-old son, Evan, a medical products salesman. She also has two cats and two dogs, and her hobbies including golfing, bowling, bicycling and making jewelry.



Yvonne Harrison

Yvonne Harrison serves as lead instructor at Fortis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, and she knows firsthand the obstacles to higher education that adults often face. "I tell them to prioritize and set goals, and it can happen," Yvonne says. "I once was a single mother raising three young men and working a full-time job and being a full-time student." She credits a proactive approach for getting absent students back into class: "I will call them and talk to them and ask if I can be of any help to them. 'How can I get you back in class?'" Yvonne believes knowledge is power. She has a bachelor's degree in business management and she's pursuing an MBA. Her A-HA! experiences run the gamut of encounters with students, from advising and encouraging them to "listening to their problems ... and just being a shoulder to lean on and cry on," Yvonne says. She sums up the attitude that underlies her personal success by saying, "If you can dream it, believe it. Then you can achieve it." Yvonne has three sons (ages 26, 27 and 28) and five grandchildren, and she loves singing, dancing, reading and vacationing.



Greg Mach

Greg Mach serves as part-time instructor and cyber security program lead at Fortis College in Centerville, Ohio. A resident of nearby Huber Heights, Greg has worked for 20 years in the field of information technology and for 11 years in IT education. Greg says his professional and educational experience helps him to "show what works and what doesn't work" in the classroom, and his instructional motivation comes from "seeing the 'light bulb' moment when students grasp a concept." Asked why he became a teacher, Greg replied, "Ask Mrs. Snyder from fifth grade. It's been a fire in my belly for a long time." Frank evaluation is critical to Greg, whose favorite quote comes from Thomas Paine: "He who dares not to offend cannot be honest." Greg inspires students to succeed to telling them to invest so much time and effort that they take pride in their school work. In working with students who struggle, Greg inquires and sometimes finds manageable fixes for problems that seemed insurmountable. Married with two sons and one daughter (plus two dogs and a cat), Greg moonlights as the announcer for the local high school band.



Wilmanie Robert-Dossous

Wilmanie Robert-Dossous is assistant director of nursing at Fortis College in Orange Park, Florida. Before joining EA four years ago, she worked as an oncological, orthopedic and cardiac nurse. Wilmanie says her background prepared her well for teaching: “Instead of teaching my patients about their medications and disease process, now I can teach my students about the same.” Asked why she became a teacher, Wilmanie says the opportunity to educate women – and single mothers in particular – was a major reason: “Single mothers make up a huge portion of individuals in poverty. Teaching is my contribution to change that.” She inspires students by encouraging them to aim high and cultivate their potential for greatness. Struggling students can get tutoring from Wilmanie, and they can expect an emailed inquiry from her when they are absent from class. Her favorite quote is, “Success occurs when your dreams get bigger than your excuses.” Wilmanie is married with three children and enjoys reading, cooking and watching movies.



Tracy Pannunzio

Tracy G. Pannunzio is a member of the nursing faculty at Fortis College in Indianapolis, Indiana. A suburb of Indianapolis called Zionsville is her hometown. Before she joined the nursing faculty, Tracy worked as a critical care nurse and an acute care nurse practitioner, and she has practiced at the health science centers at the University of Virginia and the University of Texas. Tracy attended the University of Virginia earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing in 1993 and a master’s degree in nursing with an emphasis on acute care practice in 1998. Her teaching style includes what Tracy calls a “pair share” approach: After explaining a complex concept in the classroom, she asks students to work in pairs and recount the lesson to each other. She sees teaching as motivating, not simply a transfer of knowledge, and she inspires peak performance by students by reminding them of their goal to work in nursing. Tracy is married with three teenage kids and enjoys photography and boating in her spare time.



Kathleen Williams

Kathleen Williams is a nursing instructor at the Fortis Institute in Scranton, Pennsylvania. A registered nurse since 1995, Kathleen worked in hospital and skilled nursing setting for 17 years before joining Fortis. She graduated cum laude in 1995 with a bachelor’s degree in nursing after graduating magna cum laud in 1991 with an associate degree in arts from Keystone Junior College with an emphasis on business. She dismisses criticism of the for-profit educational model: “Medicine is a business. Why can’t education be a business?” Kathleen encourages prospective students to consider the programs a school offers, not its non-profit or for-profit status. One of the best classroom activities she conducts is role-playing in an imaginary clinical setting. Rather than simply lecturing, Kathleen says she is willing to “put on a wig and be the patient.” She will help a struggling student by having a one-on-one meeting to understand why their attendance or grades have declined. Kathleen says watching a successful student graduate is a “priceless” experience. Indeed, her favorite quote is, “It’s not how you start. It’s how you finish.” She and her husband James have been married for 22 years and they have four children: James, Sarah, Matthew and Elijah.



Jaqueline M. Johnson

Jaqueline M. Johnson is lead instructor, MA program, at Fortis College in Cincinnati, Ohio. Jaqueline worked for more than 25 years in long-term care and social services and the last 10 years as an MA instructor. She encourages prospective students to enroll in the MA program at Fortis because it allows them to jumpstart a career in the medical profession within a year. Jaqueline engages students by establishing a rapport with them, giving them a sense of support and belonging, and she motivates students by constantly reminding them of their educational goals. Jaqueline teaches more than just textbook topics by advising students on behaving, dressing and speaking in a professional manner and by encouraging honesty, reliability and teamwork. Her favorite quote comes from Oprah Winfrey: “Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.” Jaqueline has two children who reside in Cincinnati and one in San Diego, California, plus seven grandchildren and one great grandson. Her hobbies include traveling, gardening and reading.



Melanie Thompson

Melanie Thompson is assisting dean of nursing and success coach at Fortis College in Salt Lake City, Utah. Before joining EA three years ago, Melanie worked as a bone marrow transplant nurse and a nursing clinical instructor. She has bachelor's degrees and master's degrees in both business administration and nursing. Melanie attended Bellevue University, Creighton University, and Nebraska Methodist College. What motivates her to come to work every day? "I adore the people with which I work, staff and students," Melanie says. "While you here, you feel as though you are with family." Melanie says that family feeling has practical benefits for aspiring graduates. "If students know and can feel that you are their champion, then they will be more willing to reach out to you for assistance and feedback," she says. Among other techniques for engaging students, her teaching style embraces a bit of doodling in class. "I love having my students draw on the whiteboard. It helps engage all types of learners. The students always complain at first, but it is so fun to see what they come up with," Melanie says. Her favorite quote comes from Plutarch: "The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited." Speaking of vessels, she loves kayaking.



Mary Banayat

Mary A. Banayat, a member of the nursing faculty at Fortis College in Phoenix, Arizona, is still learning new lessons herself. Mary, who started her nursing career as a nursing assistant, is now three classes away from earning a master's degree in nursing education. Before joining EA four years ago, Mary taught in two licensed practical nurse programs and worked as a registered nurse on a medical surgical unit. Her motivation to come to work each day is the "light bulb" moment when students grasp a concept and can apply it with critical thinking and compassion. "Nursing programs are highly stressful," says Mary, who says the secret of her success as a teacher is "to never forget what it was like to be a student." Asked how she deals with struggling students, Mary says she starts before the struggle ensues by getting to know them and sharing her own obstacles to becoming a nurse. Mary is married with one adult daughter, and she shares her home with two dogs: a rescue Pitbull and a Boxer/Pitbull mix that she has trained as a service dog for her husband.



Sandra Curtis

Sandra Curtis is an academic coach and nursing faculty member at Fortis College in Cincinnati, Ohio, with over 20 years of experience as a nurse educator. Her favorite quote originated with Socrates: "I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think." Sandra graduated University of Mount Sinai in Cincinnati with a bachelor's degree in nursing and Capella University with a master's in nursing education. Asked to identify her greatest on the job revelations, Sandra says that "sometimes those A-HA! moments are because I learned something from the students." Sandra says her favorite teaching activities include "creating experiences for students to really have to 'think like a nurse' in class." Asked to share her on-the-job strengths, Sandra says "my 'secret sauce' is still my secret. Other than that," she advises others in her line of work, "just be yourself and transparent with students." Sandra has three grown children, one grandson, and a pit full named Red.



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