

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to the Yale School of Nursing (YSN).

Nurses occupy a unique niche in the healthcare system. YSN prepares different kinds of nurses, including nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, Doctors of Nursing Practice, and Ph.D. prepared scientists. They are, at first glance, clinicians, researchers, managers, policy makers, or educators. Take a longer look and you see people who are also equity advocates, wellness promoters, paradigm re-shapers, and healthcare visionaries. They don't just dream about the future of healthcare; they are creating it. That's your future job.

Part of your professional responsibility – an important part – is to consider and understand the larger forces that shape a healthcare system that is at once the most advanced in the world and yet one that tolerates disparities in outcomes for many patient populations. Your job as a nurse is not to just treat illness and injury, but rather to foster wellness that is equally attainable for all.

The pandemic was devastating in many ways, not the least of which was the way in which it revealed the existing inequities in access to healthcare and the consequences – measured in lives lost – of those inequities. The CDC agreed, saying that, “The population health impact of COVID-19 has exposed longstanding inequities that have systematically undermined the physical, social, economic, and emotional health of racial and ethnic minority populations and other population groups that are bearing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19.”

As nurses, we must deliver state-of-the-art care that is compassionate and effective. But we must also be unflinching, unstoppable advocates for equitable access to such care, recognizing that care denied to some causes harm to all because it's a failure to deliver on the country's promise of a nation in which everyone is entitled to “certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Author/advocate Heather McGhee (*The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*) calls out those who falsely state equity as a zero sum game – *if you gain, I lose*. She instead speaks of a “solidarity dividend” in which everyone benefits from greater systemic equity. The healthcare system could well be the ultimate example of this. Equity of access to wellness would translate to *reduced* long-term medical costs, *reduced* health insurance costs, *increased* worker productivity, and *increased* social cohesiveness.

Healthcare equity is the goal. Nurses have a pivotal role in our quest to attain that goal.

It begins here, and now, with every person in the Yale School of Nursing community. We need to step back *and* step forward – back in order to pause, take a breath, and see the larger picture of why gaps in access to healthcare exist, despite the enormous wealth in this country. Then we need to step *forward* and deploy our knowledge, understanding, know-how, and moral determination. This means preparing students in the Yale School of Nursing to see the root causes of healthcare disparities. It means understanding why population health needs to be a major focus, and why nursing needs to address the social determinants of health just as it addresses the illnesses that

are the outcome of those social determinants. The scope of the nursing profession vision has expanded, much to our credit.

We are one of the nation's leading schools of nursing. We have the facilities, faculty, and commitment to make a difference. We have a global perspective, a dedicated Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, a meaningful DEIB plan, an enviable record of research on fundamental health-related issues, and most important, an environment and ecosystem that empowers and encourages *everyone* to be an agent of change.

We are building a YSN community that models equity, access, collaboration, cooperation, diversity, belonging, and safety. It is a community with awareness of and respect for all the communities with which we interact, locally, nationally, and globally.

This fall we celebrate the centennial of the Yale School of Nursing. For a century, we have graduated succeeding generations of nurse-leaders. As we look ahead to all that needs to be done, let's commit to being the leaders in moving the nation toward full healthcare equity.

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Pronouns: she/her