

DIMENSIONS

Spring/Summer 2021

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On the Front Line



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Methodist College
UnityPoint Health

7600 N. Academic Dr. | Peoria, IL 61615



Chancellor's Letter

Greetings, Methodist College Alumni!

This note finds us more than one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. March 21, 2020 was the day the State of Illinois began a stay at home order and our daily lives changed dramatically. Even though Methodist College educates essential, frontline health care professionals, higher education institutions across the country were not considered to be an essential business. As an institution of higher education, we quickly moved to all online instruction based on state guidelines. These actions were aimed at mitigating the spread of the coronavirus.

Prior to COVID-19, many of us believed pandemics were things that happened in the past or in far-away locations. We learned something quite different! And today, our mitigation efforts have placed us in a position of moving forward from a pandemic world. That is exactly what we are doing at Methodist College, we are moving forward!

The year 2020 was a year of minimal social activities for everyone. At Methodist College, activities such as graduation celebrations, scholarship breakfasts, and alumni banquets were held virtually. Today, our mitigation efforts have paid off and we are moving forward, as a College, a community, and a nation. In January 2021, our students re-entered clinical rotations fully, even caring for COVID-19 positive patients. We also returned to face-to-face instruction using masks, social distancing, and the magic of streaming live from one classroom to another. Our students were also provided information regarding how to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine.

A true sign of our moving forward was holding in-person graduations on May 15, 2021 and the preceding evening's pinning and celebrations ceremonies for our nursing, social work, health sciences, and medical assisting graduates. It was exciting and refreshing to celebrate our graduates in person and with a limited number of guests. Methodist College students faced many challenges and changes in achieving their career and educational goals over the previous year. And they persevered! It was energizing to hear our graduates speak about their appreciation of our faculty and staff who facilitated their ability to navigate their education through a pandemic.

I hope you enjoy catching up with the activities of Methodist College through our spring edition of the Alumni Newsletter. And I hope you are moving forward from COVID-19 too.

Be Safe and Be Well,

Tracy L. Poelvoorde, PhD, RN
Interim Chancellor

Alumna Visits Campus and Donates Memorabilia

Recently, Methodist College welcomed alumna Patricia (O’Neal) Scott to campus. She was accompanied by her daughter, Alyce Scott. Patricia is a 1953 graduate of Methodist Hospital School of Nursing.

Patricia and her daughter brought several items from the 1950’s to donate to the Methodist Alumni Archives. Among the treasures she donated was a booklet for potential students titled “Registered Nurse, Noblest of Women.” It follows a student through acceptance, labs, coursework, and social time in Peoria. The booklet even included her acceptance letter, detailing uniform order guidelines. She also included a framed photo of the 46 graduates in the class of 1953.

A very special item donated was a personal scrapbook Patricia kept during her years at Methodist. It’s a wonderful insight of memories and friendships made during school. Her 1953 yearbook, *The Premier*, gives another glimpse into nursing school in the 1950’s.

In the photo, Methodist College staff display Patricia’s nursing school uniform and cape that she donated to the archives. The cape was also used by Patricia’s sister, Joan O’Neal ’59, during her time at Methodist. She also donated memorabilia from Crestlawn, a former dormitory for student nurses. There was also the *Seventy-five Years of Service* booklet from Methodist Medical Center of Illinois (now UnityPoint Health – Central Illinois) that details the hospital history from 1900 – 1975.



Patricia’s daughter, Alyce, served as the Coordinator of the Digital Imaging Program at the Illinois State Library (ISL). She was part of the team that developed the Illinois Digital Archives. A few years ago, the Methodist College Library received an Illinois History Digital Imaging Grant from the Illinois State Library. Many of our archive documents are digitized online through the very program Alyce helped develop.

We were excited to meet Patricia and listen to her talk about her time at Methodist. Her donation is quite the collection of Methodist history and memorabilia and we are grateful to have it in our archives.

Pictured from left to right: Meghan Smith, Alumni Relations and Communications Coordinator; Alyce Scott; Patricia (O’Neal) Scott ’53; Dr. Pam Ferguson, Dean of Nursing; and Dr. Blanca Miller, Chair of Undergraduate Nursing. Dr. Miller is holding Patricia’s uniform and cape.

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On the Front Line of a Pandemic



Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our alumni have been on the front lines. They've jumped into the unknown, adapted, developed new programs, and found new callings in their career. While much of the nation was advised to stay home to protect others, our alumni were out there caring for others. They didn't see family and friends for days, weeks, sometimes even months. They came home to the new routine of taking work clothes off immediately to wash and showering before having family time. At work they wore multiple masks, face shields, and gowns over clothing. They posted photos on social media, that while you couldn't see faces, they were smiling behind the mask. They endured stress of the unknown, long work hours, and heartache for communities with surging cases. Our alumni are incredible and resilient. On the following pages are a few of those stories and we'll continue this series in the next edition of the newsletter.

The COVID-19 pandemic led **Morgan Skinner '18**, to a new career path in nursing. When Morgan graduated, she worked in a coronary and cardiovascular intensive care unit and worked her way up to acting as a preceptor and charge nurse.

Morgan's first travel experience was in response to the pandemic. Nurses were asked to go to Chicago, and she agreed. She said, "After experiencing the pandemic firsthand, I knew I needed to take action and continue providing my services to the patient population in need." She left a job she loved to continue travel nursing during the pandemic. She started at a small hospital in a southern suburb of Chicago, with paper charting and outdated equipment, that taught her the importance of quality nursing care that did not rely on technology. Since March 2020, Morgan has been primarily working with COVID-19 patients, specifically critical care.

Unfortunately, working in the critical care setting, she has seen more patients pass away than leave the hospital due to COVID-19. With critical patients and families not allowed in hospitals, she had to adapt how to communicate with families and patients. She had to focus on caring for patients in an emotional role, as well as physical. Morgan said, "I am very thankful for the education I received, as it taught me to care for the family as a whole system, not just the patient."

While difficult at times, travel nursing has provided nothing but opportunities for Morgan. Travel assignments can range from two to thirteen weeks. If there is a state you want to visit, there is a travel nursing need within that state with jobs in every specialty.

Morgan is currently working on a doctorate degree in nursing. She plans to work as a nurse educator to undergraduate students and in-patient nurses. She also plans to continue working in cardiovascular care as an advanced practice provider. Morgan enjoys going to Cubs baseball games, concerts, and kayaking in the summer.



The 2021 Alumni Reunion Luncheon will be presented in a virtual format.
There will be a special 50-year celebration for the Class of 1971, details available soon.
The reunion recording will be available at www.MethodistCol.edu/Alumni in October.

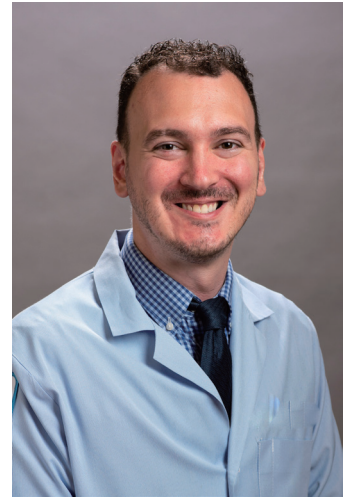
Bobby Lucia '15 found his role changing dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bobby worked with COVID Digital Response and Acute COVID at Home, a program primarily funded by a grant from the State of Illinois. He worked with the COVID Digital Response team. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Methodist College.

The program was initially established to answer questions about COVID-19 when there was little known and limited access to testing. As COVID-19 testing capacity increased, the team was able to get patients scheduled for tests and offer video and telephone appointments for care. Bobby states, “The goal was to provide high quality care in the patients home environment.” The digital team partnered with the Acute COVID at Home program to offer home monitoring solutions to patients. The program, while out of OSF in Peoria, served anyone in the State of Illinois. The provider team saw 100+ patients per day, while the RN triage team handled a much higher patient volume daily.

Bobby was one of two lead providers for the program. When the pandemic began, he worked in the digital unit as a provider and later asked to take a leadership role to assist with clinical and operational components as the program began to grow. Bobby thinks the program was incredibly successful helping patients. While digital medicine was new, it was a time to re-invent the wheel to provide high quality patient care from a computer or home.

COVID-19 has dramatically changed his current role. The leadership role he took in the COVID Digital Response team has opened other leadership opportunities, for which he is thankful. When the classroom courses at Methodist College went remote, while he primarily taught online prior to the pandemic, he was able to adapt quickly. What became challenging was converting traditional courses to online courses. Thanks to dedicated faculty, like Bobby, students were able to continue their studies.

Bobby felt it was a huge benefit that his doctorate is in family practice. It allowed him to understand health needs for all the patients the response team served. Bobby says, “Overall, the pandemic has been awful in every way imaginable. I think it has made us take a closer look at the healthcare services that we provide and figure out to best incorporate modern technology into those services.”



In May, **Katherine Wells '21** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in the middle of a global pandemic, a world our students couldn't imagine when they started their journey at Methodist College.

Katherine says, “School during a pandemic has been unlike anything I could ever imagine.” Just before the pandemic began, she learned about pandemic preparedness in a community health clinical, feeling it was an abstract concept and wouldn't experience a pandemic. Just months later the world was thrown into a pandemic. Classes and clinicals went online in a matter of days. Katherine, like most students, missed being able to interact with patients, instructors, and peers in person.

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(Pictured right: Katherine Wells in her school nursing uniform holding her great-aunt Alice Ulfers Braman '69 senior photo.)



On the Front Line Continued...

When asked about going into healthcare in a pandemic or post-pandemic, Katherine says, “Initially I was apprehensive, I know there are very few people who ever anticipated caring for individuals during a time of such fear and change. That being said, I am honored to be able to care for individuals during this time.”

She attributes her success in college to instructors at Methodist College saying, “It was evident from day one that all the instructors at the college loved what they were doing and were passionate about educating nurses.” Their mentorship guided her to the career path in pediatrics. Katherine will work on the pediatric cardiac/respiratory unit at the University of Iowa Children’s Hospital.

Katherine has always had an interest in helping others. At a young age she watched her great aunt care for family members and knew she wanted to care for others too. While in high school Katherine did a summer shadow program at a hospital in her hometown. Katherine will never forget the time she comforted a newborn during the program as the moment she “fell in love” with nursing.

Katherine’s great-aunt [Alice Ulfers Braman ’69](#), also inspired her to go into nursing. Alice was an alumna and worked at Methodist Hospital, and she is remembered by Katherine for always caring for family. In fact, she tried to find a photo with her great-aunt but only found one, as Alice was “in the background at family gatherings, making sure everyone was cared for and happy.” Katherine says, “My great aunt passed in 2012, after a courageous battle with breast cancer. At the time of her passing I did not know I would be a nurse; I did not know I would go to Methodist College. However, I am honored to follow in her footsteps.”

Methodist College is honored to have multi-generational alumni! Congratulations to Katherine on her graduation in May 2021!

Virtual Book Club

We’re starting a virtual book club! Join the Methodist Alumni Association book club and read along with other alums throughout the country.

The first book selection is titled *Station Eleven* by Emily S. John Mandel. The book follows a group of traveling actors through a pre and post pandemic world. We’ll begin reading on August 15.

The book club is a great way to join in alumni activities that can be done from anywhere and on your schedule.

- Visit www.GoodReads.com and create a profile, if you aren’t a member already. There is no cost to join.
- Go to the Community tab and select “Groups” from the drop-down menu.
- In the groups search box enter “Methodist Alumni Association Book Club”.
- Request to join the group, answer the question, and a moderator will accept you into the book club. The book club is private and only open to alumni.

Purchase the book at book stores or online. To obtain a free copy try your local library. The Methodist Alumni Association has a limited supply of books, email msmith@methodistCOL.edu for a copy; while supplies last.

Class Notes

Lisa Preston '94 earned a Doctor of Education (EdD) from Allen College.

Matt Culp '96 received the Rosemarie Murdock Advanced Practitioner of the Year Award at UnityPoint Health - Central Illinois

Matt Rice '13 received the Methodist College Outstanding Staff Person of the Year Award.

Bridget O'Brien '15 is now the Neurology/Medical Nurse Manager on Methodist 8 Crescent at UnityPoint Health - Central Illinois.

Adam Holt '18 received the 2020 Employee of the Year for Nursing Award at UnityPoint Health - Central Illinois. He recently accepted a position for Clinical Charge Nurse in Adult Behavioral Health at Methodist Hospital.

In Memory

Marjorie Beall '53, November 16, 2020; Peoria, Ill

Vicki Garner '81, February 19, 2020; Peoria, Ill

Marilyn Matthews '55, June 30, 2020; Iowa City, IA

Tammy Spenny '94, September 14, 2020; Peoria, Ill

Alice Lord '62, December 22, 2019; Princeton, Ill

Submit your good news and achievements within the past year for Class Notes. Please include graduation year, major, and limit notes to two sentences. Submissions may be edited due to space limitations.

In Memory remembers those who have passed away.

If you have updates for Class Notes or In Memory, please send submissions to msmith@methodistcol.edu.

Student Undergraduate Awards

The Methodist College Student Awards are a prestigious group of awards given to three high achieving undergraduate students annually. The Student Development Committee reviews all student nominations and submission materials.

Methodist College Undergraduate Academic Excellence Student Award - Megan Henderson '21

Methodist College Undergraduate Leadership Award - Alayna King '21

The Methodist College Undergraduate Community Engagement Award - Kim Knollenberg '21



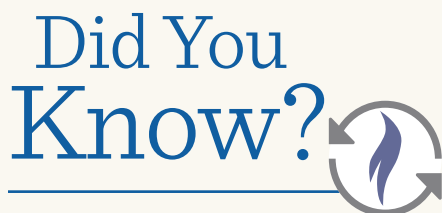
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Check with your classmates that they are receiving alumni communications.

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www.MethodistCOL.edu/Keeping-in-touch