

Igniting the Spark

Tuesday, June 28, 2022



The bright beacon of service is a calling card for Darius Love with his dual passions of neuroscience nursing and nurturing leadership in others.

"I did not select a leadership role – it happened to me. Early in my career, a nurse manager saw potential within me and opened the door to self-discovery. It is my joy to inspire others to recognize their own leadership talents through a Baptist Health partnership called Tipping the Scale that partners high school students with nursing managers to gain real-life exposure to the healthcare field. I hope to ignite the spark for these young people to find their own path to leadership" says Love.

As a high school graduate determined to become a classical

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music vocalist, Darius was offered several scholarships but, after benefitting from an opportunity to watch a nurse anesthetist at work in an operating room, he decided to enroll in nursing school and eventually opted to pursue the fascinating specialty of neuroscience.

Currently the director of neuroscience and oncology at Baptist Health in Florida, Love previously served as neuroscience department director at Cone Health in North Carolina, director of nursing at Munroe Regional Medical Center and assistant nurse manager in neurology at University of Alabama Medicine. After earning a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of North Alabama, he completed a master's degree in health care administration & management from University of Saint Francis.

To earn his terminal degree, Darius enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program through UNH Online, graduating in spring 2022. The pleasure of meeting leading educators in the nursing field was equally matched by the opportunity to network with students across the country, Love says. Preferring to deliver his final presentation on campus, Love attended commencement in person while his Alabama family watched the ceremony via Zoom. He smiles about the anticipation of new leadership challenges made possible with the DNP.

"UNH offers an excellent online DNP program with summer classes that make it a shorter time commitment, while their low residency requirement makes it manageable for working professionals. The program content is immediately applicable to my work and the benefit of interacting with students across diverse backgrounds has the potential for lifelong connectivity. The UNH Online program is a heavy hitter for the next generation of nursing leaders," says Love.

Love's final DNP project focused on the re-integration of licensed practical nurses (LPNs) in the acute care setting to enhance

hospital staffing resources during an extreme shortage of registered nurses. With the goal of achieving the 75th percentile for patient satisfaction, within three months this rose to the 85th percentile. Love points out that the LPN role opens the door for a new demographic range of candidates with opportunities for training and growth that can form a pipeline for future registered nurses. Pleased with these results, Baptist Health plans to implement this initiative across all its campuses and Love has received inquiries from other medical communities about his model.

"Nurses are called upon to tend patients in their most vulnerable state and help them navigate back to better health. I believe that nursing teams who provide empathetic patient support deliver the best version of holistic care, sharing the collective workload while leveraging the unique skills of each team member," Love says.

His own torch burning brightly, Love carries a vision for starting a nonprofit group to mentor young professionals who are drawn to leadership. Founded on the belief that quality engagement attracts people committed to healing, his goal is to amplify the type of energizing support received from many experienced nursing professionals along his own career path.

To find occasional refuge from life's demands, Love sometimes buys a ticket to an early show at the local cinema, where he shuts off his cell phone and loses himself in an engaging story, he says. He understands that every dedicated professional needs to find their own self-renewing activities to refuel the fire that burns within.

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