



Aiming High

When you reach for the stars, aim for the highest one

Thursday, February 8, 2024

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“Although education provided the tools to accomplish my professional goals, my greatest satisfaction lies in achieving something far beyond what I thought possible,” says Lolita Brown ’23G. “I always align my goals with the highest star. Any obstacles in my path were mine to master.”

Born in Jamaica, Brown emigrated to the United States and raised a family while working two jobs to pay for her studies. She began her career in healthcare after graduating from St. Francis University School of Nursing, earned a bachelor’s degree in science from Immaculata University and completed a master’s degree as a nurse practitioner from Widener University. Brown’s first online student experience began with her enrollment in the UNH psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) graduate certificate program. In 2023, she graduated from the UNH Doctor of Nursing degree (DNP) online program.

Brown’s career includes employment as a charge nurse with Mercy Hospital, a nurse with Rutgers University Correctional Health Care and a family nurse practitioner with Rutgers University Community Health Center. She also worked in an urgent care setting with Spectrum Healthcare before accepting a position as liaison for veteran mental health services with Charlie Norwood Veterans Administration Medical Center in Georgia. A former member of the National Guard, Brown recognizes the importance of careful evaluation of new patients due to the higher suicide rate among veterans versus the general population.

A frequent focus of Brown’s nursing career surrounds the mental health needs of two seemingly different populations: geriatrics and patients from the correctional system. Although the former population resides within society and the latter lives in a controlled environment, she notes that they face similar health challenges. Says Brown, “Everyone has the right to autonomy over their own health.”

While the need for mental healthcare has gained broader acceptance, Brown sometimes sees a residual resistance or stigma attached to this branch of medicine. As a woman of color, she has first-hand knowledge of bias both in her work as a nurse practitioner and in her personal life. These circumstances, however, do not deter Brown from her purpose. “I am a firm advocate for my patients and I have learned not to let negative events impact my personal goals,” she declares with a firm nod. “Instead, I see this as an opportunity to foster change through education.”

Drawing from her experience in geriatrics, the topic of Brown’s DNP quality improvement project centered on the critical need to improve training among medical professionals during their assessment of the decision-making competency of senior patients. Appalled by what she sees as a system that strips away a person’s dignity when they require advanced care, Brown strongly believes in the right to privacy and nourishes a dream that every care facility resident should occupy their own room. She encourages her patients to proactively write their advanced directives as a guide for care professionals if they are unable to speak for themselves during a health crisis.

As a student of the DNP online program, Brown established a disciplined schedule, dedicating a block of time every day to work on assignments. Although her photographic memory was helpful for recall, she says, she consciously refined her study skills to fully integrate new material into her nursing repertoire.

“I enjoyed my experience with the online nursing program at UNH. The course software was easy to use and my instructors were accessible and supportive. I recommend the UNH DNP program to my colleagues because I know they will benefit from the individualized faculty attention and high-quality education,” Brown says.

With an eye always trained on the highest star, at the end of a busy day Brown breathes into a sense of peace when she works in her flower garden. But even with her hands in the earth, she can see stardust on her fingers.

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