In Nashville's arguably most economically depressed area, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing (VUSN) and nonprofit housing organization Urban Housing Solutions provide consistent and accessible health care through a community health clinic called the Clinic at Mercury Courts. Now in its fifth year, the nurse-managed health clinic uses a comprehensive and collaborative interprofessional team-based model integrating nursing, pharmacy, social work and medicine.

- Mercury Court was launched with a Title VIII grant focusing on interprofessional collaborative practice in 2012.
- The clinic provides primary care to approximately 900 patients annually.
- Approximately 90 percent of patients live below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines.
- Seventy percent of these patients live in public housing.
- More than 30 percent are either homeless or have experienced homelessness within the past 12 months.
- 56 percent do not have health insurance; many that do struggle to afford premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

From 2012 to 2016, the clinic improved blood pressure control in patients with hypertension from 18 to 61 percent, increased the number of patients with established self-management goals for their chronic disease (diabetes, hypertension or heart disease) by 82 percent, and improved blood glucose control in diabetic patients from 15 to 30 percent.

Although the clinic provides valuable training opportunities for VUSN students, its interdisciplinary nature helps other students. It has been part of the clinical education for approximately 200 students from 14 Middle Tennessee colleges and universities.

Meeting medical and behavioral care needs

In Mercury Court's first five years, its health care team realized that its community suffers from a significantly higher rate of substance abuse and mood disorders than the general population. The clinic population experiences more than four times the prevalence of substance abuse than the national average. A new U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title VIII grant has allowed the clinic to add a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner and a social worker. With their addition, the clinic has on-site mental and behavioral health support for its vulnerable patients and allows the team to screen and treat both medical and behavioral health needs. Going forward, psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner students will be added to the trainee groups that rotate through the clinical site. As part of its goals, the integration project will also be able to provide screening and intervention for anxiety, PTSD, depression, alcohol abuse, substance abuse and adult ADHD, as well as reduce emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

HRSA awards $1.2 million to School of Nursing for future faculty

Vanderbilt University School of Nursing recently received a $1.2 million U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) grant to support doctor of nursing practice students who plan to become nursing faculty. The award brings the funds the school has received from the program
since 2008 to $8.1 million. Health care experts nationwide have warned that with the growing and aging needs of our population, the demand for nurses will only intensify. Vanderbilt responded to the need for increased numbers of doctorally prepared faculty by growing its Ph.D. in nursing science program and launching its doctor of nursing practice (DNP) program. In April, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing reported that nursing schools turned away 64,067 qualified applicants in 2016; most listed faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting the applicants.

Q&A with Nurse Faculty Loan Program participant

Alissa M. Samoya, DNP, RN, CPN, CNE
Assistant Professor, Nursing
Interim Admission and Progression Coordinator
Clinical Liaison for Greenville Health System
Greenville Technical College

What drew you to teaching? To be honest, I probably never would have considered the academic track if I not had the opportunity to utilize the NFLP. Seeing the information and exploring the possibility of assistance with paying off debt accrued as a result of pursuing higher education caught my attention and brought me into academia.

How did the Nurse Faculty Loan Program grants help you? Having the nurse faculty loan makes a difference when deciding whether to pursue an academic position in this area of the country. The salary for nursing instructors is not competitive in comparison to roles within a hospital system, so I probably would not have been able to go into teaching here without the assistance to pay back my debt for school.

What do your students do after leaving Greenville? Currently half of our associate degree nursing graduates enter the workplace as registered nurses, with many of them working while they complete a BSN. The other half are recognized as RNs at Greenville Technical College and take the NCLEX before transferring to a four-year university to complete a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Why do you teach? Preparing new nurses is a responsibility that I do not take lightly, and I feel blessed and fortunate to have had the opportunity to have a part in their journey into our profession.

Accomplishments through Title VIII since 2008

• 312 DNP graduates and 32 Ph.D. graduates since program started, with 271 graduates participating in the Nurse Faculty Loan Program. VUSN started the DNP program in 2010 to increase the number of doctorally trained nurses who can serve as faculty in nursing schools, part of the solution to increasing the number of nursing students.

• 57 persons of color have earned doctor of nursing practice degrees from Vanderbilt since the school began its DNP program.

• 4,456 master of science in nursing graduates since 2008. School of Nursing graduates can be found in rural and urban areas, with alumni in all 50 states, D.C. and U.S. territories. More than 40 percent of VUSN alumni provide health care in rural areas.

• Title VIII funds allowed VUSN to develop its innovative and nationally recognized blended course programs, which combine intense visits to campus with distance learning elements. Students in rural areas can earn advanced degrees while continuing to reside and work in their home communities.

• Other Title VIII grants helped VUSN launch its Nurse-Midwifery specialty in 2000. That program has been ranked as the No. 1 Nurse-Midwifery education program in the U.S.

Certified Nurse-Midwives like alumna Tanesha Reynolds (with patient Lauren Jordan) help ease the shortage of maternity care providers in the U.S.