As we approach the end on another academic year in the College of Nursing (CON), I reflect on the opportunities, challenges and achievements.

Even though the University had a decreased enrollment, the enrollment in the College of Nursing was stable and we welcomed in a robust fall and spring cohort of students. We also had a spring admission on the coast campus for the first time since Katrina. In addition to a stable enrollment, we graduated more PhD, DNP, and MSN students than in recent years. This increase of graduate student is consistent with the recommendations of the Institutes of Medicine Report and meets the predicted needs of the nursing workforce.

The formal groundbreaking of our new CON building, Asbury Hall started the academic year with excitement and anticipation. The construction of this three story, 81,000 square feet building is progressing well with a target completion date of June 2016. We are thankful for all who have made this dream a reality.

In addition to the new construction in Hattiesburg, construction has started on a new classroom on the second floor in our CON on the Gulf Park campus. This classroom will be equipped with video conferencing equipment.

This was an academic year of many faculty and student accomplishments. In addition, two new programs, the Veteran’s Pathway to the BSN program supported by funding from a HRSA grant and a BSN to DNP Leadership tract in partnership with the College of Business will expand the breath of options for our potential applicants. We will offer a post masters graduate certificate for Family Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing to meet the needs of our community for advanced nurses who can deliver integrative practice.

This academic year we say goodbye to two of our faculty, Dr. Lois Sumrall and Ms. Jenny Lutz-Graves. We look forward to welcoming new faculty that will be joining us in the fall. We close this academic year with the announcement that the graduate nursing program at The University of Southern Mississippi has been ranked as the state’s best and also included among the top programs nationwide in a recent assessment by U.S. News & World Report.

Breaking New Ground, Transforming Health Care
The graduate nursing program at The University of Southern Mississippi has been ranked as the state’s best and also included among the top programs nationwide in a recent assessment by U.S. News & World Report.

A total of 503 nursing schools with master’s or doctoral programs accredited by either the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education or the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing were surveyed. The newly expanded rankings mark the first time U.S. News has rated graduate nursing programs.

Of the programs surveyed, 246 were eligible for inclusion in the publication’s rankings of master’s programs. Of the six graduate nursing programs in Mississippi, Southern Miss ranked the highest nationwide at No. 102.

“It is an honor for the College of Nursing to be nationally ranked in the prestigious US. News & World Report,” said Dr. Katherine Nugent, dean of the College of Nursing at Southern Miss. “This ranking validates the dedication and commitment of the faculty and staff who teach our students and who represent our program. Our graduate programs are built on the principles and standards of our national professional accreditation and credentialing organizations.”

For the U.S. News Best Nursing School 2016 rankings, the publication chose to rank master’s programs because they account for the largest graduate enrollment in nursing, with approximately 500 accredited programs. Nurses with master’s degrees play a vital role in administration, education and management. Beginning next year, U.S. News plans to separately rank both master’s and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs.

At Southern Miss, the Nurse Practitioner (NP) Program is a two-year academic plan that prepares graduates to provide primary care using an innovative scientific and research-based approach – a requirement for advancing practice nursing in today’s health care environment.

At the completion of the NP Program, students receive a Master’s of Science in Nursing, which allows them to sit for national certification examinations and state licensure. There are currently 188 students enrolled in the College of Nursing graduate program.

Dr. Melanie Gilmore, associate professor in the Department of Advanced Practice, College of Nursing, notes that the graduate program is vital to Southern Miss and the region as a whole.

“Mississippi’s citizens suffer inordinate burdens of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and renal disease, as well as higher rates of teen and infant mortality,” said Gilmore. “As a poor, rural state, many Mississippians lack affordable, accessible and appropriate health care. With the NP Program at USM, we are contributing to meeting the health care needs of the people in our state and region.”

To see the entire list of graduate nursing program rankings, visit: http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-nursing-schools. To learn more about the Southern Miss College of Nursing, call 601.266.5454 or visit: http://www.usm.edu/nursing

The students, faculty, and staff at the Gulf Coast College of Nursing have been on a roll as of late, being recognized on campus and in the community.

On April 21, 2015 at the USM Gulf Park Campus Awards Day Ceremony we had the following students receive awards and recognition: Elizabeth Blackmon, Haleigh Smith, Stephanie Parks, Mary (Diane) May and Alexandria Carter.

On April 23, 2015 at the Golden Eagle Beach Bash our College of Nursing Team won the “Winning Team “ award. The team members were: Alexandria Carter, Diane May, Britney Irwin, Elizabeth Currie, Brianna Evans, Sherry Merritt, Marysa Colley and Dr. Patsy Anderson.

On April 24, 2015 at the Student Government Associations we had the following students, faculty and staff receive nominations and awards: Mary (Diane) May, Alexandria Carter, Kimberly Lacap, Dr. Cynthia Chatham, Judy Parker and Dr. Elizabeth Holman who won the “Faculty/Staff Advisor of the Year” award. At the same time our new Student Government representatives were announced. They are Pepper Grinder and Jennifer (J.D.) Niezgoda.

Biloxi Regional Medical Center, INC Donates $20,000 in Support of the College of Nursing
Dr. Butts Honored by USM Foundation

Dr. Janie Butts received a framed certificate as a member of the USM Foundation Honor Club. This was the result of her donation to pay for an office in the new building of the College of Nursing. Pictured with Dr. Butts is Kerri Paul from the USM Foundation.

CON Celebrates Nurses Week

The College of Nursing celebrated National Nurses week was May 6th - 12th, with a beautiful cake!

CON Reaches 100% Giving

The entire College of Nursing reached 100 percent giving; this includes faculty and staff from the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses! This marks the first time an ENTIRE college has reached 100 percent giving!

Dean’s Cabinet Retreat

The Dean’s Cabinet retreated on May 13th and 14th to discuss the future of the College of Nursing. The meeting was held off-campus at Woodall Advanced Technology Center. Look for future updates in your departments for retreat results.
The College of Nursing recognized all of the Class of 2015 graduates from the PhD, DNP, MSN, RN-BSN, and BSN programs for all of their hard work and accomplishments!

A reception was held on the Hattiesburg campus for the students’ friends and families at the Trent Lott Center, and the recognition and pinning ceremonies were held in Bennett Auditorium. The Gulf Park campus hosted their reception and pinning ceremonies at the Fleming Education Center.