The following special graduation edition of CU Nursing shines a light on several members of the class while highlighting their accomplishments, unique interests and talents, and future plans. In addition to charting their own path, our grads have unique experiences and stories that help make our College great.
Originally a pre-med student and aspiring neonatologist, Karina Mays-Briscoe took a detour after the birth of her first child, Jayden, in 2008. “In that moment my life changed forever,” said Mays-Briscoe. Jayden was born prematurely with an unexpected terminal illness that held a poor prognosis. Severely disabled, physically and mentally, Jayden seized up to 100 times a day, was G-tube fed, had multi-organ impairment, and was also deaf/blind, and nonverbal.

Intrigued by her 3-pound son, “I was terrified of the new life that laid before us. I saw all of the dreams we had for him vanish as I looked into his tiny bloodshot eyes and held onto his hand that was no bigger than a small baby doll’s.”

Jayden bravely fought for nearly four years before losing his battle in August of 2011. “His life was full of love, smiles, and an unthinkable amount of suffering,” recalled Mays-Briscoe. It was during this journey with him that she and her husband realized just how important and special nurses are. “Often times it was a nurse who went the extra mile to give many of our extended hospital stays some semblance of a ‘normal’ life,” said Mays-Briscoe.

It was a group of nurses who would sit and hold and talk to Jayden so that she and her husband could sneak away to the cafeteria late at night to eat a meal together. According to Mays-Briscoe, “The fact that he could not hear, see, or talk back is what amazed us when it came to the nurses talking to him as if he could.” Not everyone was as comfortable interacting with him knowing this about him.
GET TO KNOW

Shelley Howard

Recipient of the December 2018 BS Student Leadership Award

In addition to completing the accelerated nursing program, Howard was able to train, enter and finish the Colfax Marathon, Mohab Behind the Rocks and Dead Horse Ultra – all intense races. Using her long training runs to reset and refocus for school, Howard found a good pace in school. “The program moves fast, but it helps you prepare for the real world,” Howard said. “The pace allows you to develop your own skills and be self-sufficient, if you choose. It jump starts your nursing career.”

“Nurses played the role that I always imagined for myself. This became only more apparent when two of our three subsequent children also spent time in the NICU. Again, it was the nurse who left the lasting impression on our family.”

In the midst of it all, Mays-Briscoe graduated from the University of Colorado in 2013 with a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Business. This after making the decision to step away from medicine and focus on her grieving family. After graduation, she felt a stronger pull each year to pursue a nursing degree. “But I was nervous that it would not align with my goals as a homeschooling mom to our three children who were all under the age of 5,” said Mays-Briscoe. Her fears were alleviated when she learned of CU Nursing’s accelerated program and enrolled in 2017.

Throughout this year, she has constantly reaffirmed her commitment to serving others while growing a deeper understanding that she is exactly where she is meant to be. “I am honored to be given the opportunity to be a part of some of the most private moments life brings -- from witnessing new life coming into this world to being there to provide comfort while a life is exiting. What a great privilege we as nurses hold!”

Kaitlyn Paul’s nursing career began at a young age when she used to bandage her Beanie Babies. “I knew my passion was in science and health,” Paul said. Now, in 2018, she is graduating from the CU College of Nursing.

Paul pursued her passion for science with a Medical Technician degree and while working in the Microbiology Lab at Children’s Hospital Colorado. But she realized that she had not developed her health-centered skills beyond Beanie Baby levels. That realization led her to start her nursing journey at CU in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, also known as UCAN.

During the course of 12 months of intensive education, she also found time to get married and buy a house! Three major life-changing events that most people choose to undertake over the course of several years – not months.

Although she just bought a new house, for Paul, CU (Anschutz Medical Campus and South Campus) became her home away from home. “It was amazing to be a part of this campus in so many ways...especially because of all the support from faculty and fellow students,” she recalls. While she appreciates both campuses, she loves the intimate setting of South.

As school wraps up, Paul is grateful for her journey at the College, grateful for the support she received, and ready to assume a new role at Children’s Hospital—not as a microbiologist but as a newly minted nurse. And to the incoming cohort of CU College of Nursing students, Paul says, “You are going to worry a lot, but that is okay, just be nice to yourself. The support is there to catch you.” Congratulations, Kaitlyn!
I have wanted to be a nurse ever since I was a child,” said Betzabe Karagozian. Growing up in a small town in Peru, Betzabe Karagozian saw nurses knocking on doors, educating people about vaccines and their health. According to Karagozian, “My passion grew from watching these nurses educate and vaccinate. I was so excited about what I saw, that when I played with my friends I always wanted to play the nurse who was vaccinating. My desire for helping others grew from watching the nurses and seeing how their dedication improved people’s lives.” Her enthusiasm drove her to earn a Bachelor’s degree in nursing at the National University of San Agustin of Arequipa, Peru. “It was my dream to continue my education in the nursing program at CU – one of the best and most prestigious universities in the US and the world. I took a risk and bet on myself to give my best to succeed.”

With a goal of becoming an ICU nurse and eventually attaining her NP, Karagozian is currently working as a PRN-CNA and studying for the nursing licensing exam, NCLEX.

BSN, MSN, MPH and now PhD ▶ After a family member died of AIDS in the early 1990s, Jamie Mignano distinctly remembers wanting to work in HIV from that moment forward. At the time, Mignano’s parents educated her about the stigma toward marginalized populations, like the LGBTQ community and people living with HIV.

Having been drawn to the field of HIV, Mignano has spent most of her professional career at the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine developing programs to reach people at risk for or living with HIV. She holds a BSN, MSN, and MPH – from Johns Hopkins University – and is graduating with her PhD from CU Nursing. Currently, she is executive director of an HIV and Hepatitis C outreach organization. “I love working in HIV because it involves intersections between policy, advocacy, community mobilization and direct service to patients. Most people that work in my field are dedicated and passionate about giving a voice to those that do not always have one,” said Mignano.

Mignano’s PhD dissertation identified community and individual characteristics of persons living with HIV (PLWH) who returned to their HIV provider after a gap in care. “My overall goal is to contribute to decreased incidence of HIV through more widespread identification and treatment of the disease in urban communities disproportionately impacted by HIV,” said Mignano.

Mignano chose CU Nursing for her PhD because, “I was motivated by the work that I was doing to be more equipped to be the best version of myself.”