

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL BRANCH AT GALVESTON



Dr. Kathryn Fiandt

Dr. Kathryn Fiandt, Distinguished Chair in Nursing, Creates Improved Health Care Opportunities for Galveston's Medically Underserved

The University of Texas Medical Branch's School of Nursing, poised to celebrate its 120th anniversary, is recognized for its leadership in progressive teaching, health care and research practices. Its history is full of faculty members who refused to settle for the status quo but instead challenged their students and themselves to raise the standards of patient care.

Dr. Kathryn Fiandt, professor and associate dean for graduate programs and clinical affairs, continues the nursing school's time-honored tradition. The inaugural holder of the Lena Finke Distinguished Chair of Nursing Arts, Fiandt uses the interest generated by her faculty position's endowment to support an innovative project called the Center for Nursing Practice Development. The Galveston center enables nurses to take the lead in helping medically underserved patients manage complex chronic conditions.

With a \$1.5 million endowment, the Finke Distinguished Chair is the largest endowed chair among all nine UT System nursing schools. It was established in 2004 by UTMB alumna Mary Cade and her late husband, Dr. Robert Cade, inventor of Gatorade. Cade, who graduated the School of Nursing in 1951, named the distinguished chair in memory of her favorite nursing instructor.

Fiandt has used the financial support of the Finke Distinguished Chair to help operate the Center for Nursing Practice Development, located at UTMB's St. Vincent's Clinic in central Galveston. The center's six nurse practitioners care for the poor and uninsured—some 60 patients each week. But unlike conventional health clinics, they take the time to learn more about their patients' health and medical history by

asking questions related to their circumstances.

A recent case highlights the clinic's unique and comprehensive approach. A 28-year-old woman arrived for care with her three children in tow. Fiandt prescribed treatment for the woman's ear infection, but she went beyond that to also ask if her children had health insurance, describing a state-sponsored plan available for them. Later in the visit, Fiandt asked the woman about her last well-woman examination. The young mother replied that she had a cervical cancer screening three years ago that yielded abnormal results, yet never followed up, so Fiandt arranged an appointment for her to see another of the faculty clinicians at St. Vincent's to have further evaluation.

The Finke Distinguished Chair has been invaluable in supporting efforts like this, funding the work of a research assistant who collects patient outcome data to help determine best health care practices. The center is implementing an electronic medical record system as well to ensure easier, more accurate access to patient information. All of this ultimately supports curriculum for the UTMB School of Nursing's graduate degree program to train advance practice nurses, with the school planning in the near future to elevate the program to the doctoral level.

"I'm excited that more and more faculty are coming to me about wanting to practice nursing at the clinic," Fiandt said, adding that the Finke Distinguished Chair's support for collecting patient data and outcomes helps her receive grants that fund additional studies. "The Finke Distinguished Chair is one of the reasons I came to UTMB."