Ave Maria University Nursing Department Updates April 17, 2026

Campus Update

April 18, 2026

A Thriving Nursing Program: Celebrating Growth, Service, and Innovation at Ave Maria University

The Ave Maria University Nursing Department is celebrating a remarkable year marked by unprecedented growth, service to the campus community, and innovative educational initiatives. This spring, the department graduated its largest cohort to date—24 accomplished nursing students—who are now poised to make a difference in healthcare settings across the nation. Their success is a testament to the rigorous training and compassionate formation they received throughout their time at Ave Maria, and to the dedicated faculty and staff who guided them on their journey.

Beyond the classroom, the nursing community demonstrated the heart of their calling when they answered an urgent call to serve during a measles outbreak on campus early in the spring semester. Under the leadership of Department Chair Dr. DiAnn Ecret and supported by faculty, staff, and adjunct instructors, nursing students and faculty worked tirelessly in a round-the-clock clinic alongside the Florida Department of Public Health, HealthCare Network, and university administration.

The department also introduced innovative clinical and educational experiences that deepen students' clinical competence and compassionate care and launched a new collaboration with the Ave Maria Nursing Department and Health Care Network where our students will assist in screening beyond the Ave Maria school population to other locations across Collier County later this semester and in the fall. Senior and junior nursing students participated in a cardiac screening program on April 8th and 9th, training to use EKG equipment to detect life-threatening heart rhythm changes in athletes—an effort designed to prevent sudden cardiac death. Junior nursing students also completed a groundbreaking simulation program called "Hearing Distressing Voices," which challenges students to understand and empathize with patients experiencing psychiatric symptoms. These programs represent the nursing department's commitment to educating not just skilled clinicians, but thoughtful, empathetic healers.

Perhaps most gratifying is the recognition of student excellence and research. Two student teams won awards for their poster presentations at the Annual Symposium: “Preventing Pressure Injuries in Patients with Mobility Restrictions by Implementing Turn Teams in Hospitals”, Kalia Clary, Sophia Egger, Grace Frye and Gabby Sjostedt earned the Nursing Education award, while Gianna Crawford, Maria DeCleene, Katherine Farrell, and Olivia Leonardo received the Nursing

and Prevention award for their research on classical music therapy in psychiatric care, “Effectiveness of Classical Music Therapy in Psychiatric Illness”.

Kudos to Dr. DiAnn Ecret, Nursing Department Chair and the full-time faculty, and supportive staff and adjunct faculty for providing outstanding alternative clinical experiences for students when a selected hospital site declined student access during the measles outbreak. While the situation caused distress for faculty & students alike, plus an increased workload, many benefits resulted with all students completing their required clinical hours and new community and interdepartmental collaborations were established. These are very positive outcomes for the department and the university.

As the nursing profession continues to evolve and face new challenges, the Ave Maria Nursing Department stands ready to produce graduates who are not only clinically excellent but also grounded in the faith and compassion that define our university's mission.

Read online for photos and videos:

https://alumni.avemaria.edu/news/ave-maria-university-nursing-department-updates-april-17-2026-1776446203288