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University of Pennsylvania Announces New Tuition-Free Program to Recruit, Train and Deploy Nurse Practitioners to Underserved Communities Across the U.S.

\$125 Million Gift from Leonard A. Lauder to Transform Nursing Care

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In the News

The University of Pennsylvania today announced the [Leonard A. Lauder Community Care Nurse Practitioner Program](#), which will recruit and prepare a diverse cadre of expert nurse practitioners to provide primary care to individuals and families in underserved communities across the U.S. The \$125 million donation by Leonard A. Lauder, Chairman Emeritus of The Estee Lauder Companies, to create this first-of-its-kind, tuition-free Program is the largest gift ever to an American nursing school. Mr. Lauder is a Penn alumnus. The gift comes at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the nation's [acute shortage](#) of primary care providers, and persisting inequities in access to quality healthcare.

"This is the most timely and consequential gift not only for our university but for our country. It is unprecedented in its potential to address America's most critical need of providing primary health care to all who currently lack it by investing in nurses," said former Penn President Amy Gutmann.

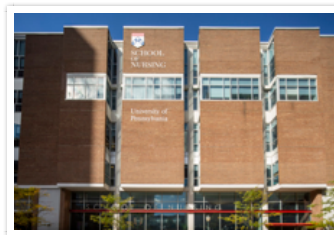
"Growing the number of nurse practitioners who are prepared and committed to working in underserved areas is the most practical and inspiring way to ensuring a healthier country. I am grateful and honored that Leonard would make this gift to Penn Nursing, and thrilled to know that it will have an immediate impact that will last far into the future."

Nurse practitioners are leaders on the front lines of care, a role [never more important](#) as Americans confront a primary healthcare shortage in their communities. With their advanced clinical training and graduate education, nurse practitioners have the knowledge and skill to supervise and manage critical aspects of care in a decision-making capacity, from patient diagnosis, to ordering and interpreting tests, to prescribing medication. Nurse practitioners deliver high-quality primary care to people of all ages, such as treating common illnesses, managing chronic conditions, and providing preventive care that helps patients stay healthy.

Nurse practitioners are also able to take on key leadership roles, from managing and operating walk-in or community clinics to leading interdisciplinary teams within health systems. The new Program will better the lives of patients and communities most in need, while providing a pathway for the many nurses interested in advanced education who may not otherwise have the means to pursue it.

The Program:

- Structure: Leonard A. Lauder Community Care Nurse Practitioner Fellows will enroll full-time in a two-year, rigorous Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Program at Penn Nursing.
- Community Practice: Fellows will complete at least 50 percent of their clinical education at community partner sites in the greater Philadelphia area that provide direct patient care, an invaluable experience that will prepare Fellows to meet the complex needs of patients and families throughout their careers. Every Fellow will be expected to commit to practice or service in an underserved community for two years after graduation.
- Recruitment: Penn Nursing will select 10 Fellows to begin classes this fall, growing the program enrollment



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through 2026 when it will reach its annual target enrollment of 40 Fellows, continuing in perpetuity. By 2027, the program will have enrolled 140 excellent nurse practitioner students. Fellows will need to show a demonstrated commitment to working in underserved neighborhoods, where they are needed most, and to promoting health equity.

- Tuition: All participants in the program will enter the workforce free of graduate school debt, receiving student aid to cover their tuition and fees and thereby eliminating any potential financial barriers for nurses and others who wish to enroll. Fellows with greater financial need will also receive stipends to help with living expenses.
- Program Leadership: Penn Nursing will name the first endowed Leonard A. Lauder Community Care Nurse Practitioner Professor, who will oversee curriculum innovation, support of community sites, and program implementation.
- Penn Community Partnership: Penn Nursing will provide support for select community partner sites to support the clinical education of Fellows while providing professional development and networking opportunities and access to School and University resources.

“Penn Nursing has a long history of advancing science, promoting equity, practice excellence, and preparing leaders. That’s why Mr. Lauder’s gift is so meaningful. The synergy between Penn Nursing and the Program will improve the health of underserved patients and families, by uniquely preparing primary care nurse practitioners, who will work with them in their communities. The sustained investment in the education and careers of primary care nurse practitioners and communities is unprecedented. We are excited by the opportunity to lead this important Program and to extend its impact beyond Penn Nursing,” says [Penn Nursing Dean Antonia Villarruel](#). “We are deeply grateful to Mr. Lauder for recognizing and investing in this critical need, and for partnering with us in this ambitious endeavor.”

Stephen P. Fera, Executive Vice President of Independence Blue Cross, which is one of the community partners that will be involved in the new initiative, noted that nurse practitioners are key to improving individual and community care. Said Fera: “Bolstering the nurse practitioner workforce is a means to improve access to care and strengthen the health care safety net provided by health centers. This is a key priority of the Independence Blue Cross Foundation and our partnership with Penn Nursing has been synergistic in efforts to prepare nurses to work in community-based settings. The Program will build and strengthen our individual and collective efforts toward improving the health and well-being of communities.”

“Now more than ever, the country needs greater and more equitable access to quality primary care—and highly-skilled nurse practitioners are the key to making that happen,” said Leonard A. Lauder. “The program will ensure that more Americans receive the essential health care services that everyone deserves, and I’m so pleased to be working with Penn Nursing on this initiative. I look forward to welcoming

our first class of future nurse practitioners this fall. I know their expertise will be matched only by their commitment to serving our communities.”

[Social Justice](#)

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