



UCI Sue & Bill Gross
School of Nursing



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALOPTIMA HEALTH GRANTS \$5 MILLION TO SUPPORT NURSING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AT UC IRVINE *Grant will help to fund UC Irvine's launch of NURSE-OC program as part of CalOptima Health's workforce development strategic initiative*

ORANGE, Calif. (June 5, 2024) — Leaders from the UCI Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing, CalOptima Health and Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley gathered today to announce a \$5 million grant approved by the CalOptima Health Board of Directors for the NURSE-OC program and tour the state-of-the-art Simulation Center where students receive training. UCI's new NURSE-OC program supports training for a diverse population of nursing students and expands the workforce available to deliver quality care for Orange County's Medi-Cal members. The grant is part of CalOptima Health's Provider Workforce Development Initiative, which aims to address health disparities and better secure the future delivery of medical and behavioral health care for vulnerable residents.

NURSE-OC will offer externships to 60 prelicensure nursing students and residencies to six graduate students pursuing Family Nurse Practitioner and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner licensure. The externships and residencies will include a specialized curriculum to educate the future clinicians about Medi-Cal members' social support needs beyond traditional health care. The five-year program will aim to recruit more than 50% of participants from underrepresented groups or low-income backgrounds to promote a workforce that represents CalOptima Health members. NURSE-OC participants will receive a financial stipend and networking support to find work with CalOptima Health provider organizations upon graduation.

"Our Provider Workforce Development Initiative is intended to increase access to high-quality, equitable care for our members by investing in the education of students," said Michael Hunn, CEO of CalOptima Health. "Seeing UCI's commitment to an industry-leading education for future caregivers is exciting. I have worked with nurses throughout my career and admire how they blend knowledge and compassion to serve vulnerable patients. Our Medi-Cal members will be in good hands, especially with the NURSE-OC specialized training on social support needs and whole-person care."

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“The NURSE-OC program emphasizes excellence and dignity in addressing nursing workforce shortages, with the goal of fulfilling the critical need for providers in Orange County,” said Mark Lazenby, Dean of the UCI Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing. “Our diverse student body reflects the communities in which they serve, and this grant will support the program’s goal of advancing health care equity and expanding access to the most vulnerable populations.”

“Nurses and nurse practitioners are the backbone of our health care system,” said Supervisor Katrina Foley, Orange County Board of Supervisors, Fifth District. “In consideration of health care worker shortages, this \$5 million CalOptima Health grant invests in the next generation of nurses and nurse practitioners in Orange County by offering financial support during their training in exchange for a pledge to work in our community. Maintaining public health relies on a sufficient workforce committed to patient-centered care. I extend my gratitude to CalOptima Health and UCI for their pivotal role in safeguarding the well-being of Orange County families.”

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ABOUT:

About CalOptima Health

A county organized health system, CalOptima Health provides quality health care coverage for low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities in Orange County, California. CalOptima Health’s mission is to serve member health with excellence and dignity, respecting the value and needs of each person. CalOptima Health serves more than 928,000 members with a network of 10,900 primary care doctors and specialists and 39 acute and rehab hospitals. Visit www.caloptima.org.

About University of California, Irvine

Founded in 1965, UC Irvine is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities and is ranked among the nation’s top 10 public universities by U.S. News & World Report. The campus has produced five Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UC Irvine has more than 36,000 students and offers 224 degree programs. It’s located in one of the world’s safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County’s second-largest employer, contributing \$7 billion annually to the local economy and \$8 billion statewide. For more on UC Irvine, visit www.uci.edu.

About Supervisor Katrina Foley, Orange County Board of Supervisors, District 5

Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2022 to represent the newly established District 5, which includes the cities of Aliso Viejo, Costa Mesa, Dana Point, a large portion of Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Newport Beach, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, as well as the unincorporated areas of Coto de Caza, Emerald Bay, Ladera Ranch, Las Flores, Rancho Mission Viejo, Stonecliffe and Wagon Wheel. This is her second term on the Board of Supervisors, where she previously served District 2. Visit <https://bos5.ocgov.com/>.

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