



The main entrance at the Miller Pavilion of Cleveland Clinic.

# Kent State Works at Cleveland Clinic

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—Zack Nichols, university and higher education relationship manager for Cleveland Clinic

More than 2,300 Kent State University graduates call Cleveland Clinic their workplace.

The internationally renowned healthcare system, with sprawling facilities across Northeast Ohio and beyond, employs Kent State alumni from a large array of academic disciplines.

About half of the Kent State alumni who work for the clinic are College of Nursing graduates. They fill a variety of roles, working as registered nurses, nurse managers and nurse practitioners, as well as filling specialized nursing positions. Numerous medical technicians and clinicians also work there.

Cleveland Clinic also employs Kent State alumni in dozens of other fields, including marketing and communications, business administration, architecture, art therapy and laboratory research.

Brent Hicks, MA '19, who earned a master's degree from Kent State's School of Information, has worked for the clinic since 2009 in roles of increasing responsibility within information technology. Currently, Hicks is an enterprise application architect responsible for leading healthcare IT teams focused on developing innovative technologies.

In 2020, the School of Information named Hicks its Alumnus of the Year, noting his work on the digital front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. That work included helping engineer the massive shift to telehealth and virtual visits for Cleveland Clinic patients and their healthcare providers.

## KENT STATE IS A TOP SCHOOL FOR CLEVELAND CLINIC NURSING HIRES

Zack Nichols, university and higher education relationship manager for Cleveland Clinic, says he plans nurse recruiting events at Kent State at least once a semester, sometimes more.

“Kent State was our No. 1 school last year in terms of nursing hires,” he says. “The Kent State graduates are great. They come in, they are well prepared, they do clinical rounds with us, so they already are familiar with the clinic. Kent State is one of our top schools.”

Nichols says the ongoing national nursing shortage means that recruiting is very important for Cleveland Clinic, which has job openings for nurses in nearly every department. Currently, there is a particular need to hire nurses interested in working on medical-surgical floors to care for patients preparing for and recovering from surgery. (Elective surgeries and procedures postponed during the height of the pandemic have caused a backlog of deferred treatment—putting a strain on healthcare providers also dealing with labor shortages.)

In addition to making regular visits to the Kent Campus, Nichols says he typically sets up recruiting events at all of Kent State's Regional Campuses that offer the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

## KENT STATE GRADUATES HELP CLEVELAND CLINIC PROVIDE WORLD-CLASS CARE

It was at one such recruiting event that Shannon Pengel, BSN '97, got her start at Cleveland Clinic, beginning her career working on a cardiothoracic surgery floor. Employed by the clinic for 26 years, Pengel is now chief nursing officer for the clinic's main campus.

“The Kent State program prepared me very well for clinical roles and leadership roles,” she says. She chose Kent State because it was close to her hometown of Burton, Ohio, but also because of the reputation of its nursing program.



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—Shannon Pengel, BSN '97, chief nursing officer for Cleveland Clinic's main campus

In her current role, Pengel says she can see how the Kent State/Cleveland Clinic partnership benefits both the university and the hospital system.

The clinic's nursing assistant program, she says, employs nursing students in their junior and senior years, allowing them to work alongside a registered nurse and get one-on-one, firsthand experience beyond their required clinical rotations.

“Cleveland Clinic is a great place to learn,” she says, adding that Kent State is known for the quality of its nursing students.

Nursing is a wide and varied field, and Pengel says the clinic has provided her with many opportunities she could not have imagined as a student. Her advice for Kent State nursing students: “Take every opportunity you have. You never know where it's going to lead.”

—By Lisa Abraham



Nursing students attend a recruiting event in February 2023 hosted by Cleveland Clinic in Room 208 of Henderson Hall, a skills lab for the College of Nursing on the Kent Campus.

# KENT STATE/CLEVELAND CLINIC CONNECTIONS

- Cleveland Clinic is a partner in Kent State University's Brain Health Research Institute; 14 Cleveland Clinic Foundation researchers are individual members of the institute.
- Kent State University and Cleveland Clinic's Lerner Research Institute maintain a cooperative graduate training program leading to the doctoral degree in biomedical sciences.
- Cleveland Clinic's Head & Neck Institute, Section of Audiology at Cleveland Clinic, the School of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at The University of Akron, and the School of Speech Pathology and Audiology at Kent State have combined resources to form the Northeast Ohio AuD Consortium. The program's emphasis is on the principles and practices underlying diagnosis, treatment and provision of hearing healthcare services.
- In addition to providing clinical rotations for Kent State College of Nursing students, Cleveland Clinic works with the university as a program affiliate in these areas where students receive clinical training:
  - Athletic Training
  - Audiology
  - General Counseling
  - CT Scan Technology
  - Diagnostic Medical Sonography
  - Dietetic Technology
  - Exercise Physiology
  - Mammography Technology
  - Nuclear Medical Technology
  - Occupational Therapy Assistant
  - Patient Education/Center for Consumer Health Information
  - Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Institute
  - Physical Therapist Assistant
  - Podiatry
  - Radiation Therapy
  - Radiology Technology
  - Respiratory Therapy
  - Social Work
  - Speech-Language Pathology
- Several Kent State professors have grant-funded ongoing research projects conducted in conjunction with Cleveland Clinic.
- Kent State recently entered into an agreement with Cleveland Clinic to be a founding academic research partner for the clinic's new Discovery Accelerator (a joint center established by IBM and Cleveland Clinic to advance healthcare and life sciences research). IBM installed the first private sector, on-site quantum computer at the clinic's main campus, with an aim to help Cleveland Clinic accelerate biomedical discoveries. The agreement gives Kent State researchers access to the state-of-the-art quantum system. ➤



## KENT STATE ASHTABULA'S CLOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH CLEVELAND CLINIC

**“The pandemic emphasized the already existing need for more respiratory therapists”**

—Yvonne George, RRT, MEd, director for respiratory therapy at Kent State Ashtabula

Kent State University at Ashtabula offers degree programs in nursing, respiratory therapy and a variety of other medical fields that provide a constant supply of well-trained employees for one of its closest neighbors: Cleveland Clinic's Ashtabula County Medical Center (ACMC), which is two miles from campus.

“That close proximity is a significant benefit to us,” says Leonard Stepp Jr., ACMC Healthcare System president and CEO. “The students who complete their clinical rotations here are well-educated and well-trained. Many of them join our team of caregivers after graduation. The nurses, occupational/physical therapy assistants, radiology technologists, respiratory therapists and medical assistants who graduate from Kent State Ashtabula and choose to work at ACMC are integral to our ability to provide high-quality care to our patients and our community.”

### MEETING THE DEMAND FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

The two institutions are always looking for ways to collaborate. A collaboration announced in 2022 allows Kent State Ashtabula to offer an associate degree program in respiratory therapy at the clinic's main campus in Cleveland.

Participants train for the in-demand profession of respiratory care. The program also supports career growth for graduates and practicing respiratory therapists by providing a path to admission for the online Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory care Kent State Ashtabula offers.

“We are excited for this opportunity to partner with Cleveland Clinic to offer our program on

its main campus,” says Yvonne George, RRT, MEd, academic program director for respiratory therapy at Kent State Ashtabula. “The pandemic emphasized the already existing need for more respiratory therapists—the ‘ventilator experts.’ We hope this partnership will provide easier access to education for individuals looking to start their professional life or who have decided to make a career change.”

Courses in the respiratory therapy program are delivered live and remotely through online instruction by Kent State Ashtabula faculty. Laboratory instruction and clinical rotations are completed at Cleveland Clinic, where students learn alongside experienced respiratory therapists. Prerequisite coursework can be completed through a combination of online and in-person classes through the Kent State system or credits can be transferred from another institution.

“We are pleased to collaborate with Kent State University at Ashtabula to offer a respiratory therapy training program at our Cleveland Clinic main campus location,” says Umur Hatipoğlu, MD, MBA, enterprise director of Respiratory Therapy at Cleveland Clinic. “This program will contribute to our mission of educating those who serve by providing our local community with an opportunity to enter a high-demand licensed healthcare profession after completing two years of training.” ⚡

—Lisa Abraham and Jason Tirotta

*Learn more about the respiratory therapy program at [www.kent.edu/ashtabula/rt](http://www.kent.edu/ashtabula/rt).*



The first cohort of students enrolled in the Ashtabula Respiratory Therapy Associate Degree Program at Cleveland Clinic, which was first offered in spring 2023. Pictured (left to right): Victoria Smith (adjunct faculty), Jeanine Ng, Jaclyn Burdette, Cassidy Pescatrice, Angela Mathews, Diane Rozier, Umur Hatipoglu, MD (program medical director and Enterprise Medical Director of Respiratory Therapy at Cleveland Clinic), Tasoni Burgess, Crystal Lavelle, Akira Caldwell and Karla Balasko (senior director for Enterprise Respiratory Therapy at Cleveland Clinic)