Education Without Boundaries
Welcome back to Spectrum. In this issue, we focus on SHRP’s activities related to international education and outreach. As one of the nation’s leaders in health-professions education, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to build bridges to other countries and cultures.

One of the U.S. assets most desired by the rest of the world is our educational system, particularly our health-education system. Through consultation, exchange programs, and exporting our educational offerings, we in the School of Health Related Professions are improving the quality of health care throughout the world and building positive relationships that impact how the world views not only UAB, but the United States as well. In return for these contributions, the school’s students and faculty receive outstanding opportunities to broaden their cultural horizons, study health care in other countries, and develop mutually beneficial research relationships.

The school has a wonderful past, present, and future in building these international bridges. From the beginnings of our outreach efforts to China, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe in the 80s and 90s to the current activities across the globe highlighted in this issue, the school has been a leader in international outreach. In the next few months, we will meet with senior educational leadership in China to expand health-professions education in that country; we will exchange our first students in clinical laboratory sciences as part of a new transatlantic consortium; and we will begin discussions to explore mutual ventures with an international firm involved in health workforce issues around the globe.

But we must also continue to build bridges here at home. We must continue to develop programs that serve individuals and communities remote from UAB’s campus. By expanding offerings that allow students to be educated within their local communities while continuing their current jobs, we can improve the lives of individuals and produce a better health workforce for our communities. We currently offer many programs that bridge that distance, including entire B.S. programs in health information management and health sciences that are available over the Internet. We provide second-year clinical education in nurse anesthesia at community sites. We offer an executive MSHA program that is delivered largely as an online experience requiring students’ presence on campus for only a few weeks a year. New offerings include a post-professional DScPT degree, the B.S. in radiation therapy, and in the near future a bridge AAS-to-B.S. degree program in respiratory therapy—all programs that can be completed from a distance. Even more opportunities to provide educational bridges from the campus to our communities are just on the horizon.

Finally, though, we also need to continue to build bridges to you, our alumni and friends. Your assistance, through your vocal support and promotion of our programs, through serving as clinical preceptors and mentors of our students, and through the donation of your time and financial resources at a time of limited state resources, is critical to our success. We need your help to continue the tradition of excellence in the School of Health Related Professions and to become “the recognized national leader in health-professions education, shaping the future of health care”—both at home and abroad.
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Top Ten Once Again:
*U.S. News Recognizes HSA Department*

For the second year in a row, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked SHRP’s graduate program in health services administration in the top 10 nationwide. The rankings were listed in the magazine’s annual report on colleges and universities.

UAB was tied for 10th in that category in 2002 but now holds that ranking all by itself, says Gerald Glandon, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Health Services Administration.

“It’s very important to be in the top 10—it’s a crucial factor in recruiting the best students, and if we don’t recruit the best students, we can’t produce the best graduates,” Glandon explains. “We pride ourselves on historically recruiting great students, and the top-10 ranking is one of the things that makes people notice.”

The achievement is particularly notable given that UAB is a relatively young university competing with large, established schools, he adds. “Virtually all of the schools that are ahead of us are part of larger institutions, and we are fast becoming part of an organization that is really very much like many of those others,” Glandon says. “We are young, but we are growing, and we’re playing with the big boys now. We’re a major player on the medical side and certainly on the research side.”

Two other UAB schools—the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health—also have programs ranked in the top 10 in their respective categories, and SHRP’s own Department of Physical Therapy achieved a top-20 national ranking.

Glandon says his department will push itself to rise even higher in the rankings, and he hopes to be in the top five before long. The department will continue its emphasis on research—and step up its marketing efforts with respect to research and its unique paid administrative residency—to help make that a reality.

“It’s going to be a challenge, because there are some very, very good schools ahead of us—and there are also some good schools behind us that are trying to get ahead. It’s not a static situation by any means,” Glandon says. “But we have the environment, the resources, the people, and the history to make a credible run at the top five—in fact, we think we’re already there.”

**Former SHRP Professor Named ILSI Executive Director**

Suzanne S. Harris, a former assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition Sciences, was named acting executive director of the International Life Sciences Institute in July. ILSI is a non-profit foundation started in 1978 to improve the general public health through a greater understanding of issues such as nutrition, food safety, toxicology, and the environment.

After getting her bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Vanderbilt University, Harris came to UAB to earn her Ph.D. in biochemistry. She joined the SHRP faculty in 1976 as an assistant professor in the nutrition sciences department, but she served in many other areas at UAB, including the comparative medicine and international public health departments, before leaving for Washington, D.C., in 1985 to become the deputy assistant secretary for food and consumer services at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Harris left the federal government and joined ILSI in 1989 as the executive director of the organization’s Human Nutrition Institute. In that position, she represented ILSI before groups such as the World Health Organization and the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization.

As executive director, Harris directs ILSI’s global programs and coordinates efforts across the various branches of the organization. She will continue to oversee the group’s research foundation, which encompasses the Risk Science and Human Nutrition Institutes.
SHRP Nutritionists Say
It’s Time to Bone Up
on Osteoporosis Knowledge

The Department of Nutrition Sciences has offered Tone Your Bones as a series of informational programs designed to start the process of osteoporosis prevention as early as possible. Now, in addition to the toll-free hotline (1-888-934-BONE), Tone Your Bones has a Web site [www.toneyourbones.org] to further spread the word about this common, but preventable, disease.

The site walks visitors through a six-step process of evaluating osteoporosis risk and then setting up diet and exercise plans to counteract it. Special features include an online guide to nutrition supplements and a “Calcium Calculator” that will help Web surfers find out how much calcium they’re consuming in the course of an average day—and whether it’s enough.

Funded by a grant from the UAB Health Services Foundation, Tone Your Bones is offered by the UAB Osteoporosis Prevention and Treatment Clinic, which provides clinical and therapeutic services in addition to educational programs. The clinic brings together specialists from various health-related departments to help patients increase bone density and prevent osteoporosis-related fractures through medication, physical activity, and proper diet.

Department of Critical Care
Finding New Ways to Educate

SHRP’s departments have been quick to expand educational opportunities through “distance learning,” and one of the latest examples of that trend is the Nurse Anesthesia Program, which recently expanded to six new sites through teleconferencing. The program brings together 21 students on the UAB campus and 38 others, in groups of five to seven, in Alabama and Mississippi.

“It is a synchronous interactive program, and it’s working very well,” says Ed Huechtker, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Critical Care. “It keeps the students from having to move to Birmingham or commute—we sort of take the program to them. It’s a ‘You don’t have to move to move ahead’ type thing.” Huechtker adds that this distance-learning system may be expanded to include the Respiratory Therapy Program next semester.

Another member of the critical-care faculty, Patricia Jennings, M.H.S., PA-C, is helping to spread health information through an online continuing-education course on HIV/AIDS. Jennings, who recently came to SHRP from the University of Kentucky’s College of Allied Health Professions, has given presentations nationwide on HIV/AIDS-related issues; the online course she assembled is designed to help participants be better prepared in explaining basic information about the disease, how it’s transmitted, and how its spread can be prevented—as well as ethical issues that have arisen as a result of the disease.

Designed for “primary-care physicians, allied health professionals, pharmacists, dentists, dental hygienists, and social workers,” the online course grants two Category 1 credits toward the AMA Physician’s Recognition Award.
In a Chinese village, a man with emphysema receives life-giving oxygen from a respiratory therapist. In Ecuador, a woman receives trauma surgery after a fall. In Sweden, an elderly man recovering from a stroke gets help with his daily exercise routine from a young physical therapist.

What do these three patients have in common? All of them, without knowing it, are being touched by the outreach of UAB’s School of Health Related Professions. At a time when the concept of “globalization” is a driving force in world affairs—from society to economics to politics—SHRP is working to strengthen and expand its ties with health-care professionals in other countries, from underserved populations to innovators in high-tech treatment delivery.

“Our school has a long history of involvement in international health-care education,” says Harold Jones, Ph.D., dean of SHRP. “Our efforts began in the 1980s under the leadership of [former dean] Keith Blayney, with partnerships in China and the Middle East, and have grown to include Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, South America, and other parts of the world. In fact, we were one of the first health-professions schools to become involved internationally. Now we’re refocusing our efforts to take advantage of new opportunities.”
CHANGES IN CHINA

SHRP’s collaboration with West China Medical School, at a time when allied health had no foothold in the country, was “a truly incredible achievement,” Jones says. It spurred the development of China’s first professional training programs in those areas. The relationship with West China continues today, with faculty from West China currently visiting the school to improve their skills.

One of those professionals is Qing Jum He, one of the first graduates of her Chinese university’s nursing school and a teacher of respiratory therapy. “Medicine in China has changed dramatically in the past decade,” she says. “In the old times, nursing was strictly a matter of on-the-job training, so the transition to modern clinical medicine has been very hard at times. But now we have a master’s degree program, and graduates can get good jobs in hospitals and continue to grow professionally.”

As a child, Qing Jum spent a lot of time with her aunt, a physician who operated a small clinic in the countryside near Chengdu: “In the countryside there wasn’t any specialization. The doctor had to deal with everything,” Qing Jum recalls. “Seeing my aunt diagnose and treat such a wide range of patients was the biggest thing that influenced my decision to go into medicine. It’s been great to be in the U.S., but I’ll be glad to see my family again, and return to my teaching.”

Howard Houser, Ph.D., professor of health services administration at SHRP, has had an insider’s view of China’s recent transformation. He first did a sabbatical at Xian Medical University in the ancient capital of Xian City in 1984; in the years since, he’s made 21 trips to China, and has helped welcome more than a hundred Chinese students, scholars, and visiting dignitaries to UAB. On his 10th trip, he met the Chinese woman who would eventually become his wife and who would go on to earn two degrees of her own at UAB.

“China still has inadequate resources to supply all its citizens with health care, particularly in the rural areas, but the cost of health care goes with modernization, with drugs playing an increasingly important role. They’re responding by developing joint ventures and the ability to manufacture pharmaceuticals within the country, and are experimenting with various types of insurance. So it’s a challenging and interesting time.”

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL POLICY: UAB GOES TO SWEDEN

It’s a long road from China to Sweden, but the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm has been another of SHRP’s international partners since Karolinska’s faculty sought out a U.S. collaborator several years ago to help develop partners for the clinical education portion of its physical therapy curriculum.

The resulting exchange program has been an important window on the world for students from both Alabama and Sweden, according to Carolyn Sherer,
P.T., assistant professor of physical therapy: “The experience of studying at Karolinska really broadens students’ perspective on health care and the different forms it can take in different societies,” she says. “One of the most important things they learn, I think, is how closely health care is tied to social policy.”

Sweden’s comprehensive health-care system does come at a price: In some parts of the country, sales tax is as high as 25 percent. But unlike Americans, Swedish citizens undergoing physical rehabilitation are supplied by the government with all the services they need for as long as they need them.

LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT:
A MISSION TO ECUADOR

A very different health-care environment greeted Stacie Porter, an occupational-therapy student at SHRP, when she joined colleagues on a medical mission trip to Ecuador in February. “It was a totally different world from any I’d ever seen, with major poverty,” says Porter, who graduates this December. Mission organizers chose her partly for her fluency as an interpreter, as she had grown up with Puerto Rican grandparents and minored in Spanish at UAB. “Resources are in such short supply that they do small cost-saving things—recycling disposable gloves, for instance. Everything we used on our trip, from drugs to operating room monitors, was donated and shipped down on a plane,” Porter explains. “The mission is an annual event that’s been going on for 12 or 13 years, so people know it’s coming. Because they don’t have insurance, they depend on the clinic, and they turn out in high numbers. They show so much appreciation for what we do for them—even seemingly small things like giving them a bottle of lotion for a scar.”

Porter’s time in the southern half of her own hemisphere left her with two main impressions: “Mainly, it’s made me more appreciative of what we’ve got here in America. I don’t think most of us realize how fortunate we are.” But it also confirmed her ambition to practice her profession—occupational therapy with a special interest in pediatrics—in another country. “I’d like to get some experience here in the States first, and then work in Mexico,” she says.

DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS—OR LANGUAGE BARRIERS

In fact, Jones says the Spanish-speaking populations of the Western hemisphere—particularly Central and South America—represent a new frontier of opportunity for health-professions education that SHRP will be pursuing in the coming years. “The fact that the Hispanic population has grown to be the largest minority group in the U.S.,” says Jones, “has caused us to realize that we must educate professionals who are responsive to the needs of the Hispanic community. That realization, and the steps we take to respond to their needs, should help us to move past what’s been a major barrier so far in becoming involved with Central and South America—the language.

“If you don’t speak Spanish, working there effectively is difficult. As we train more students who are capable of delivering quality health care to Hispanic populations, it makes sense to offer some of our programs bilingually, and that will open up new opportunities in our own hemisphere.”

“Resources are in such short supply that they do small cost-saving things—recycling disposable gloves, for instance. Everything we used on our trip, from drugs to operating room monitors, was donated and shipped down on a plane.”

— Stacie Porter
Two new countries soon will be added to the list of destinations for SHRP exchange students: Spain and Great Britain. A recent grant from the Transatlantic Health Science Consortium paves the way for partnerships with the University of Cadiz in Spain and the Universities of Wolverhampton and Central Lancashire in the UK, according to Vic Skrinska, Ph.D., chair of diagnostic and therapeutic sciences; the exchange program also incorporates the Linkoping University in Sweden. American universities, in addition to UAB, include the Universities of Kansas, Kentucky, and Puerto Rico. American students will receive credit at their home universities for overseas studies, and the grant provides them funds and living expenses. UAB and the other U.S. universities will accept international students for equivalent courses here.

“Programs in health-related professions and clinical laboratory sciences have recently undergone significant expansion, offering accreditation in other countries around the world,” says Skrinska. “There are clearly many differences in the way health care is organized and delivered from culture to culture, and it’s important for our students today to understand those differences—especially as we approach a global set of academic standards for many of those institutions.

“Exchange programs give the institutions, as well as the students, great experience in how the standards of different countries compare, and they equip students to work in a global academic environment.”

Jones agrees: “As the world’s major superpower, we often receive mixed reactions to the things we do. But one thing the world looks to America for is the export of our educational system and our knowledge about the delivery of quality health care. This sharing of intellectual capital is some of the best foreign aid we can offer. Through this exchange, we can influence the hearts and minds—as well as the economic development—of other countries.

“Through international programming, we have the ability to serve as a valuable resource to other countries, while providing opportunities for our students and faculty to learn and develop through experiencing the diversity of other cultures and health-care systems. Everybody’s perspective is broadened, and everybody wins.”
Harry Nurkin, Ph.D.

Shaping the Next Generation of Health-Care Executives

BY MICHELLE BRANHAM

During his 21 years as CEO of Carolinas HealthCare, Harry Nurkin, Ph.D., turned a single failing community hospital into a thriving two-state, multi-institutional health-care system. Now he’s putting his winning strategies to work for SHRP as the new executive-in-residence and director of the Executive Master of Science in Health Administration Program, positions he enthusiastically accepted January 1, 2003.

“So many people have helped me learn, through either direct experience or observation,” Nurkin says. “Now I feel I have the obligation to give back through teaching, to help students learn the things I have learned so that they can be successful.”

A HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP—AND SUCCESS

Nurkin has come full circle with his return to Birmingham—and to academia. Before becoming CEO of Carolinas HealthCare, he served as chief operating officer of the UAB Hospital from 1974 to 1981 and concurrently taught classes in SHRP’s Health Services Administration program. He says his decision to return to UAB was simple: Even though he had achieved all his career objectives, he was not ready to retire.

Nurkin says he also felt he could assist in creating a new, stronger generation of health-care executives—an important and difficult charge, he admits, amid the looming challenges of an increasingly complex national health-care system. One executive he has already helped to achieve success is Mike Tarwater, Carolinas HealthCare’s new CEO and a former student of Nurkin’s from the late ‘70s.

In his current role with SHRP, Nurkin directs the Executive MSHA Program and counsels residential MSHA students on how to select and be selected for administrative fellowships or residencies. He is also available to provide guidance to professors, administrators, and others who might benefit from his years of firsthand experience in the health-care industry.

“Dr. Nurkin brings us both the academic credentials and an absolute wealth of experience in terms of real-world success,” says longtime SHRP professor Howard Houser, Ph.D.

BETTER LIVING THROUGH COOPERATION

One of the strategies Nurkin applied as CEO of Carolinas HealthCare—and a lesson he hopes residential and executive MSHA students will take to heart—is the value of openly considering the opinions of others and applying a win-win approach to negotiations and decision-making.

“The key is not to see who is the winner or loser, but to see how you can take the strengths of two entities—two people, two systems, two hospitals, two doctor groups—and by combining the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses, make them far stronger than they ever would have been separately,” he explains. “And that comes through negotiation and compromise.”

Nurkin’s approach is to look ahead long-term, rather than simply making decisions that seem to be immediately advantageous. “My theory is that the score at the end of a decade is more important than the score at the end of the day, especially in building health-care systems,” he says.

It is this approach to business, Nurkin says, that has helped make Carolinas HealthCare the system it is today. While CEO of the health-care system, Nurkin drew heavily upon the expertise of its board members, which included CEOs of Fortune 500 companies such as Bank of America, Wachovia, and Duke Power.

PREPARING TOMORROW’S HEALTH-CARE LEADERS

Nurkin says he is proud to be heading up the Executive MSHA Program at UAB because it offers such a unique and highly effective forum for learning. The program, which meets for one intensive week at the beginning of each semester and is continued via the Internet and informal meetings, draws upon the expertise of UAB professors as well as executives from major corporations. It provides an interactive forum for its students, who are professionals already in the workforce at a variety of levels and health-care settings.

“What UAB offers to these students is a broader view of the world and of issues that they face,” Nurkin says. “We offer the opportunity to interface with professors, practitioners, and fellow students who come from foreign countries and different parts of the United States and bring different perspectives to the table.”

Nurkin says no major changes are immediately planned for the MSHA Program, as recent surveys indicate students are very satisfied with its results. Looking ahead, however, he says he plans to work with administrators to further enhance the learning opportunities within the program and to expand from its current size, about 20 to 25 students.

“I think we’re making a contribution to a better health-care system through this program, so I’d like to see it grow,” Nurkin says. “There will always be a need for well-trained hospital administrators up and down the entire hospital organization. And I think our program addresses that need.”
With 23,600 total new cancer cases projected in Alabama in 2003, according to the American Cancer Society, the need for health-care professionals in the oncology field will only continue to rise. Many alumni of SHRP’s Radiation Therapy Program are already leading the fight against cancer as administrators, department managers, and CEOs at major cancer treatment centers throughout Birmingham and Alabama.

Barry Brown, B.S.R.T.(T.), who graduated from SHRP in 1987 with a bachelor’s degree in allied health administration, is now the radiation therapy manager and chief therapist in the Department of Radiation Oncology at UAB’s Comprehensive Cancer Center. Brown began his career as a staff radiation therapist at UAB Hospital; today he oversees the operations of radiation therapy planning and delivery for more than 100 cancer patients each day. He also directs the delivery of care provided by a team of 13 radiation therapists, four radiation therapy assistants, and a hospital aide. Brown also assists his staff in providing care whenever necessary.

While he has much more responsibility than he did when he accepted the management position five years ago, Brown has no reservations about the career path he has taken or his role at UAB’s Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“I really enjoy the patients,” says Brown. “Caring for them during the most difficult times of their lives is very rewarding. I also thoroughly enjoy helping younger therapists develop their skills. Several of the therapists I have managed in the past have moved into management positions themselves. While it was sad to see them leave, it was also very gratifying to see them advance in their careers.”

Kathy K. Jackson, R.T.(T.), was one of those employees who worked for Brown before moving on to manage her own department. Like Brown, Jackson launched her career at UAB, at the Lurleen B. Wallace Tumor Institute in the Comprehensive Cancer Center, after graduating from SHRP’s Radiation Therapy Program in 1988. She soon became a staff radiation therapist at UAB, a position she held for almost 14 years before accepting a position as manager of the Radiation Oncology Department in The Bruno Cancer Center at St. Vincent’s Hospital in 2000.

Despite the many added responsibilities she now has during a workday—from payroll and billing to managing her staff and overseeing installation of new equipment—Jackson says her number-one concern is still her patients. She says she remains focused on the little details that can mean so much to her patients, such as ensuring that they’re happy with their daily appointment times and pleased with the care they receive from therapists on her staff.

“What I like most about my career role is being able to handle the business side of our radiation therapy department as well as the treatment side,” Jackson says. “I have the best of both worlds. I would never want to lose my therapy skills or my technical skills, and working here at St. Vincent’s lets me maintain both.”

Billy Connelley, R.T.(T.), administrative director of the imaging services/cancer program at Medical Center East, graduated from SHRP in 1987 and worked as a radiation therapist at UAB before moving on to St. Vincent’s Hospital and then accepting a position at Medical Center East about 10 years ago. After achieving several positions of increased responsibility at Medical Center East, Connelley was offered his current position in 1999 and now oversees all cancer treatment for the hospital, managing seven departments and more than 70 employees. What Connelley is most proud of, however, is the number of cancer-support services he is able to offer patients at Medical Center East.

Other RT alumni leading the way in cancer treatment include Keith Whiteley, currently CEO of the Southeastern Cancer Network, and Lynn Morgan, head of radiation oncology at Baptist Medical Center-Princeton and Baptist Medical Center-Montclair.

“It’s nice to know our program has played some part in shaping the way cancer care is delivered,” says Laurie Adams, Ed.D., R.T.(T.), director of SHRP’s Radiation Therapy Program. “It’s also wonderful to have the support of those alumni who often give of their time and clinical facilities to ensure that the cycle of producing quality radiation therapists can continue.”

From left to right, Kathy Jackson, Billy Connelley, and Barry Brown have all risen to positions of great responsibility in the field of radiation therapy—and credit SHRP’s Radiation Therapy Program for giving them the experience and preparation needed to provide top-quality patient care.
Timothy Garvey, M.D.
Investigating Nutrition’s Unsolved Mysteries

BY SANDRA BEARDEN

Timothy Garvey, M.D., has spent most of his professional life working from coast to coast as a detective. His mission: to unsnarl the mysteries of human metabolism and to target dangerous diseases—diseases that take far more lives than mass murderers and remove more dollars from the economy than any corporate scandal.

Garvey, the new chair of the Department of Nutrition Sciences in UAB’s School of Health Related Professions, has made clinical metabolic research his life’s work. At the University of Colorado, the University of California-San Diego, Indiana University, and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), he has studied the causes and results of diabetes, insulin resistance, and obesity.

Garvey says UAB’s strong research environment and skilled faculty “who are doing interesting things” attracted him to Birmingham. The city also has a large African-American population, an ethnic group twice as susceptible to diabetes as the general population.

“I’d like to see strong links in the chain between basic research and community-based research,” says Garvey. “That will help us identify molecules that contribute to diseases and the roles of those molecules in human metabolism and genetics. Through translational research, we can convert this research to practical measures.”

Much of Garvey’s previous work takes this approach. While serving as director of the Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Medical Genetics at MUSC, he studied a group of African Americans living on barrier islands and in coastal communities of South Carolina.

“This is one of the most genetically homogeneous groups of African Americans in the country,” Garvey says. “We’re continuing genetic studies of diabetes in this population and have found some candidate genes for obesity. The National Institutes of Health also have conditionally agreed to support whole-genome scan studies of DNA in this group. This will identify regions of chromosomes containing genes that cause diabetes to be inherited within families.”

While metabolic disorders are particular problems for African Americans, they also plague the entire population. “Diabetes and its complications account for one in every seven health-care dollars expended in the U.S., with costs reaching more than $100 billion a year. It’s a major cause of patient morbidity and mortality,” Garvey says.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE—IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Obesity, another growing problem, isn’t totally a problem of will, Garvey adds. “There is a strong genetic basis for obesity, and there are metabolic and physiological differences that predispose some people to gain weight,” he says. He acknowledges that increased fat consumption and sedentary lifestyles have fostered obesity and diabetes (“I would put warning signs on Whoppers and Big Macs,” he laughs), and he adds that lifestyle changes can make a difference.

A fit man with a neatly trimmed beard, Garvey himself practices what he preaches by jogging, running, and watching his diet. “As we grow older, our metabolism slows down and our muscles become smaller,” he says. “So we need to remain active to help our metabolism and lessen our risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.”

Garvey has assumed leadership of a department that is second among all nutrition sciences departments in NIH funding. In addition, U.S. News & World Report ranked it second among the nation’s nutrition programs.

“We want to bring our department into an even higher position of national prominence,” Garvey says. “We can make an important contribution to solving the puzzles of many life-threatening diseases.”
Michelle Oliver
Overcoming Obstacles to Help Others

Michelle Oliver is a great communicator. She greets visitors to her modest temporary cubicle with a dazzling smile and the aplomb of a politician. A tall, athletic blonde, she’s turned heads both at beauty pageants and on the softball playing field. By any measure that counts, she excels in everything she attempts.

Some would call the UAB senior cytotechnology student “handicapped” or “disabled,” because she’s had a hearing impairment since birth. But because Michelle refuses to acknowledge them, she has no handicaps—only challenges.

She faced the first one early.
“When I was two, my parents took me to the ECHO Foundation for the deaf (now closed) because I wasn’t talking. There, they used positive reinforcement that encouraged me to make sounds,” Oliver says. “For instance, if I wanted to go out to play, I couldn’t just point at the door. My teachers required sounds. When I ‘asked’ with sounds, I received a treat and was allowed outside. That was the beginning of my speech therapy.”

At the ECHO Foundation, Michelle learned to speak and read lips. Later, at the George C. Wallace Speech and Hearing Center in Montevallo, she learned how to study and interact with others. Nowadays her speech is remarkably clear. Although she uses a sign language interpreter in class and in other special situations, it’s evident that she lip reads much conversation and anticipates answers before her interpreter does the signing.

Since her first years of schooling, Oliver hasn’t let her hearing impairment slow her down. By sixth grade, she was ready for regular classrooms. “My parents, Marc and Jackie Neas, were and still are tremendous influences on me. They always supported me and encouraged me to do anything and everything. All my life, people have told my parents and me what I can not do,” Oliver says. “My parents never accepted that.”

Oliver says her father is her role model and biggest supporter. A goal-directed man who is now a vice president and chief financial officer for Hoffman Media, Neas believes in positive thinking and action. He put his daughter on the swim team and coached her softball team. Oliver also took dancing and gymnastics lessons and was a majorette at Pelham High School, where she was an honor student.

How does a deaf person dance to music or keep step in front of a marching band? “Michelle could feel the beat of the bass and drums when she was dancing or marching with the band,” explains Neas. “Also, she learned how many steps to take before turning. And her eyesight is so keen that she made use of her acute peripheral vision to see what others were doing.”

At Jacksonville State University, Oliver made the dean’s list and earned a degree in exercise physiology. But in spite of her athletic ability, her hearing problem was a drawback. Still interested in a field that would combine science and service, she looked up programs on the UAB Web site. The answer? Cytotechnology.
“When I saw the description of the cytotechnology program, I decided it would be perfect,” Oliver says. “It’s the correct career for me because it requires little oral communications. But it’s very visual, because it involves examining and evaluating cell samples under microscopes to detect cancer and other diseases. It’s like being a medical detective.”

Oliver recognizes the importance of the profession she’s chosen. “There’s a lot of pressure to study the cells, be very specific, and not overcall or under call the evaluation,” she says. “It’s the job of the cytologist to evaluate cells. Then, if he or she thinks they’re abnormal, the pathologist takes a look. If the cytologist doesn’t detect the problem to begin with, the pathologist will never see it.”

At UAB, Michelle attends classes with interpreters, hired and assigned by the university, who translate lectures and class discussions into sign language for her. A fellow student makes copies of class notes. Most quizzes involve correct identification of slide projections showing cells. In labs, teachers explain as students examine slides of cells under microscopes. Oliver’s unusually good eyesight and careful work habits have enabled her to excel in class.

“It’s not an easy course,” comments Judy Apple, who often interprets class lectures for Oliver. “But she has done very, very well.”

Although cytotechnology jobs aren’t plentiful in the Birmingham area, Oliver won’t look elsewhere. Darby Oliver, her husband, owns a local landscape business. However, she’s confident the right job will come along.

She’s also confident in her ability to handle the work. “Cancer is very serious,” she says. “You can’t afford to miss.”

In addition to her cytotechnology studies at SHRP, Michelle Oliver has taken on pursuits including swimming, softball, and even being a majorette at Pelham High School—all without the benefit of hearing.
Steve Howe, M.S., P.T., received the 2003 Loretta R. Boger Award for Excellence in Clinical Education. A 1989 graduate of the Department of Physical Therapy, Howe is the center coordinator of clinical education for Physiotherapy Associates in Birmingham, and is also the clinical director of their Roebuck office. He has served as a clinical instructor for UAB students at two different medical facilities since 1990. The Boger Award was established in 1980 to recognize significant contributions to clinical physical-therapy education.

John McCarthy, P.T., presented a tutorial lecture called “Adaptive Responses and Optimizing Performance with Combining Strength and Endurance Training” at the Southeast Regional American College of Sports Medicine Annual Meeting in Atlanta in February. In May, he also traveled to the ACSM’s National Conference in San Francisco to give a poster presentation titled “Triceps Surae Muscle-Tendon Architecture Differences in African American and Caucasian Women.”


Darcy Anita Davis (A.S. medical records technician ’87) worked in the tumor registries of the medical records departments at both UAB Hospital and DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa before obtaining certified tumor registry status. She now does consulting work as a certified registrar for hospitals throughout the state of Alabama.

June Hanks (M.S. physical therapy ’87) is on the physical-therapy faculty at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, but she has also spent time in Haiti leading student teams on international clinical experiences. She has made several trips to Haiti since her first one in 1998, including a sabbatical two years ago.

Marcos A. Vargas (B.S. health sciences ’88) recently graduated from Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, with a master’s degree in health-care administration.

Mary Jane Wells (M.S. physical therapy ’92) has been busy with mission trips to Ecuador, including one recent trip for which she raised money from her community to purchase special splints for children in Ecuador who needed orthotic supports. In the course of her trips to South America, she’s increased her fluency in Spanish and has used that ability to provide interpreting services for the Jefferson County public-health department’s maternal and child health clinics.

Georgiana (Warren) Davis (OTA Program ’93) recently returned to school in Panama City, Florida, where she earned her registered nurse’s license. She is now working as an RN in a cardiovascular intensive-care unit and as a COTA/L in area nursing homes.

Jean (Schaible) Feece (M.S. physical therapy ’93) moved to San Jose, California, in 1994, and has now been married for five years, with two children: Blake, three years old, and Kaitlyn, one. She works as an aquatic therapist at the Community Hospital of Los Gatos.

Greg Wilson (A.S. applied science ’94) currently works on the Pulmonary Unit at Children’s Hospital of Alabama, working primarily with chronically ill children and ventilator patients.

Ron E. Reed (B.S. allied health ’99) just earned his master’s degree in health informatics at SHRP and has been appointed to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Advisory Committee on Interdisciplinary Community-Based Linkages, which advises Congress and the HHS secretary on education policy and program development in interdisciplinary health professions. His term is scheduled to run until 2005.
New Faculty

Jamy Ard, M.D.

Ard is a new assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition Sciences. He comes to SHRP from Duke University, where he attended medical school, did his internal-medicine residency, and had a fellowship in general internal medicine. His research interests include behavioral interventions for cardiovascular risk-factor reduction and obesity, with particular emphasis on minority populations; he has also focused on hypertension in African Americans.

Timothy Garvey, M.D.

Garvey is the new chair of the Department of Nutrition Sciences. Garvey, who comes to SHRP from the Medical University of South Carolina, earned his medical degree from St. Louis University and completed an internal-medicine residency at Washington University; he has done clinical metabolic research at the University of Colorado, the University of California-San Diego, and Indiana University. (Read the full story on Garvey, page 12.)

Michael Humber, M.S., CRNA

Michael Humber joined the nurse anesthesia faculty as an assistant professor on August 18.

Patricia Jennings, M.H.S., PA-C

Patricia Jennings is a new assistant professor in the Surgical Physician Assistant Program. She comes to UAB from the University of Kentucky, where she was an assistant professor at UK's College of Allied Health Professions. Some of her work at Kentucky involved expanding AIDS education to health-care students and providers; she has given presentations on her AIDS/HIV research all over the United States. She was also recently elected to the Southeast Chapter Board of the American Academy of HIV Medicine, where she is the only non-physician on the seven-person panel.

Doris Rapp, PA-C, PharmD

Doris Rapp joined the Department of Critical Care on July 1 as the new director of the Surgical Physician Assistant Program. She previously served as site coordinator for a joint physician assistant program with Morehead State University and the University of Kentucky.

Retiring

Jo Ann Clelland, P.T.

Jo Ann Clelland retired from her position as associate professor in the physical therapy department on December 31, 2002. However, Clelland will remain active in teaching, instructing several SHRP courses on contract.

Garvice Nicholson, P.T.

Garvice Nicholson, an associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy, retired effective May 31.

Spreading the word

Nutrition researcher's obesity study goes national

Scientific research isn’t a career that comes with a great deal of celebrity attached, but one researcher in the Department of Nutrition Sciences has seen his work make the news in places he couldn’t have imagined.

During his research into the role of race and genetics in obesity (featured in the spring 2003 issue of Spectrum), Jose R. Fernandez, Ph.D., was contacted by a production company called ScienCentral that creates science and technology-related content for TV and the Web. ScienCentral came to Birmingham to film Fernandez at work, and the video report they created already has been aired on 20 local TV affiliates nationwide.

Fernandez confesses that it was a little “scary” at first to have his name pop up in so many places—from Alabama to New Haven, Green Bay, and Albuquerque—but he’s glad that people are paying attention to his findings. “It’s good that things are getting out,” he says.

The specific aspect of Fernandez’s obesity research that ScienCentral focused on deals with his study into higher rates of obesity among African Americans, and whether their “genetic admixture” plays a role.

“We found that the higher the level of African genetic admixture—or the more African you are based on the genetic markers we tested—the greater the likelihood of having higher body fat, higher fat-free mass, and higher bone density,” Fernandez says. “There is a genetic component influencing the racial differences in these traits.”

Controversy is inevitable in any study that deals so closely with race, and Fernandez says his latest research hasn’t been immune. “I think people would feel more comfortable if I were to say, ‘This is a consequence of socioeconomic status,’ because it is something that can be fixed, if the next generation of people can become empowered to do so,” he explains. “But if you bring in genetics, it becomes more complicated, because we cannot change our genes.

“But I think it’s part of our scientific responsibility not to ignore these genetic differences, but to approach them in a scientific manner,” he adds, “particularly if we want to create initiatives that will help fight diseases related to obesity.”

Obviously, Fernandez didn’t enter the field of nutrition research to become a celebrity—but he’s happy that people know his work is producing results.

“I think we researchers have a responsibility to the community—we get funded through taxpayer money to do the work that we do,” he says. “So when word gets back to the community, it makes you feel that you’re doing what you’re supposed to do.”
Hope Bryant Smith, M.T.

BY DOUG GILLETT

Hope Bryant Smith dedicated her life to two pursuits, the first of which was caring for the health of others. She was the supervisor of immunology at UAB Hospital for more than 15 years, performing complex laboratory procedures, and she also cared for her bedridden mother until her mother’s death in 1996.

Hope’s second pursuit, her friends remember, was caring for her own health. A resident of Birmingham for 45 years, Hope was a member of the Birmingham Bicycle Club and Birmingham Track Club, and as an avid runner, biker, and swimmer, she traveled to participate in races and triathlons.

Hope was first diagnosed with breast cancer in the spring of 1995. But her friend Mable Tatum remembers that she continued to run and bicycle, even through the hardships of radiation and chemotherapy, for as long as her body would let her. And though she retired from her position at UAB Hospital, Hope continued to work hard to improve the health of those who suffered from diseases such as hers—by devoting herself to volunteer work for a number of local cancer charities.

Hope used her experience with Team Magic, a triathlon group in Birmingham, to organize Birmingham’s “Race for the Cure,” a fund-raising event for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. She served as race chair for two years, and served as volunteer chair in 1999; the extensive work she did for the Komen Foundation eventually earned her the Foundation’s National Lifetime Volunteer Service Award in 2001.

“I think there was a definite bond between us,” says Tatum, Hope’s co-chair in 1999 and a breast-cancer survivor. “My tumor was large and I had several nodes that had tested positive, but Hope’s tumor was even larger than mine—and when I saw the energy and enthusiasm that she had, and that positive attitude, it always gave me the inspiration to go on. She inspired so many people in the organization—we said, ‘If Hope can do it, I can do it.’ ”

After her initial treatment, which lasted about a year, Hope was cancer-free for about five years, according to her older brother Rick. “Her attitude was extremely positive through the whole thing,” he says. “She was a fighter, and she wasn’t going to give up—she wanted to live.”

When the cancer returned in 2001, the news was even worse than the first time: Rick says the cancer had spread to her liver and lymph nodes, even her bone. But even then, as she returned to the rigors of chemotherapy, her attitude remained positive. “Whenever she would get bad news, she would meet it with strength and determination,” remembers her friend Kathy Goolsby, a fellow M.T. who works at UAB Hospital. “She’d say, ‘We’re going to keep on going, we’re just going to explore other options.’ On the outside, at least, it still didn’t faze her.”

And Hope continued her volunteer work with both the Komen Foundation and her church, Trinity United Methodist. Even while suffering severe headaches from chemo, she traveled to Washington, D.C., to serve as the Birmingham affiliate’s representative to the National Race for the Cure.

Hope Bryant Smith passed away on April 5, 2003—less than two months after receiving the Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Montevallo, where she did her undergraduate studies. Mable Tatum remembers her as being positive to the very end.

“She sent an e-mail to a group of us that said, ‘I’m in my final phase,’ so she knew what was coming—but she still had that positive attitude,” Tatum says. “She still smiled. That was just Hope.”

Even after her breast cancer returned, Hope Smith continued her work with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, earning their National Lifetime Volunteer Service Award in 2001.

Michael C. Tarwater, Ph.D.

BY RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

The School of Health Related Professions has always been a leader in producing health-care executives—and that status is underscored by the naming of alumnus Michael C. Tarwater as the new chief executive officer at Charlotte-based Carolinas HealthCare System (CHS).

Tarwater assumes a position previously held by one of SHRP’s top administrators, Harry Nurkin, Ph.D. The selection of Tarwater came as no surprise, since he had been working with Nurkin at the UAB hospital since graduating from UAB in 1978. In 1981, Nurkin accepted an offer to head a major teaching hospital in Charlotte and asked Tarwater to join him.

When they arrived in Charlotte, the hospital was the third-place hospital in what was then a three-hospital market. Over the next two decades, that medical facility went from a single hospital to the system now known as CHS, leading the market with $2.5 billion in revenues, employing 23,000 people, and becoming the fourth-largest public hospital system in the country, according to Modern Healthcare magazine. In 1989, Tarwater became the chief operating officer for the system, with Nurkin serving as the CEO.

Tarwater gives credit to the education he received at SHRP—then known as the School of Community and Allied Health—as a major factor in his success, because the curriculum stressed process rather than content. Students should be taught to focus on processing change.
Larry Sanders, FACHE

BY DOUG GILLETT

Larry Sanders returned to UAB in May to speak to students in the health-administration program, but first he stopped by the spot on the edge of campus where he lived as a student in the 70s. “I thought, ‘Let me drive by and see if that ratty old place exists,’” he says with a grin, “and I got confused, because what was an apartment building 30 years ago is, not surprisingly, a huge parking lot today. The whole landscape around here has changed.”

The same is true for the entire health-care field, which has grown to encompass a bewildering array of new issues, requirements, and pitfalls in that 30-year span. But those new challenges are what keep the field exciting, Sanders says—and rising to meet those challenges is what has propelled him to the position of CEO at Columbus Regional Healthcare System (CRHS). Based in Columbus, Georgia, CRHS is a non-profit network of medical centers and physician practices across the Chattahoochee River valley.

Sanders began his health-administration studies at the onset of some trends that have come to define the current health-care business. One of them was an increased emphasis on information. “I remember that in one readings course, we would walk in every Monday and be handed a stack of Xerox copies of articles that would be literally three inches thick,” he says. “I think what they were trying to prepare us for—maybe without stating it directly—was that in our role we were going to be dealing with a tremendous amount of information, and we were going to need to call on it unexpectedly.”

But even that information overload pales in comparison to what today’s students face, he points out. “The young men and women in this program are probably doing more in a semester in terms of information assimilation than we did in a whole curriculum,” he says. “It’s just coming at them that much faster.”

Another aspect of his education, Sanders recalls, was “a little bit of social experimentation” regarding teamwork and interpersonal skills. That was still uncharted territory 30 years ago, but Sanders says it helped him do a better job of relating to both patients and employees. In addition, Sanders’s teamwork and leadership abilities helped him become the chair of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), an international professional society boasting more than 30,000 members.

Sanders’s responsibilities as the ACHE chairman include making appearances at numerous state hospital association meetings, but he’s also written articles for industry publications on topics such as ethics and management styles—and, of course, speaks to students every opportunity he gets.

“They’re the lifeline to the future of our profession,” he says. “I’m not sure I’d even get admitted to the graduate program in health administration today, the demands that are placed on students are so tremendous. These folks are incredibly talented.”

Larry Sanders remembers three-inch-thick reading assignments from his days at SHRP, and says he admires today’s health-administration students for being able—and willing—to assimilate even greater amounts of information.

I’d even get admitted to the graduate program in health administration today, the demands that are placed on students are so tremendous. These folks are incredibly talented.”

rather than memorizing content, Tarwater explains, because content evolves along with everything else. “So if you learn how to process rather than memorize content, you’re that much ahead of the game,” he says.

In his new position as CEO, Tarwater does not see a big shift in CHS’s objectives, reflecting the philosophy of Nurkin’s management team for more than 20 years. With Tarwater being a major part of the team that developed strategy and guided the system during that period, the strategy, direction, tactics, and philosophy of the company will likely remain similar to the policies that brought CHS such success over the last two decades. “That doesn’t necessarily mean that I’m going to approach everything the same way Dr. Nurkin did,” Tarwater points out, “but I do think that my transition to CEO was fairly seamless. Our styles are different, but because the two of us had worked together so effectively, there wasn’t a need for huge changes within the organization.”

In reflecting on his ascension from COO to CEO, Tarwater says that letting go of the operations aspect of his previous job was the most difficult change for him to make. “In one day, you go from being the guy who has his hands on all of the details to being the person who’s supposed to set the course and share the vision,” he says. “You have to extract yourself from the details of the operations and let others handle them.”

But he adds that he’s energized by the challenges and opportunities presented by his new role. “I’m honored that the board has shown this confidence in me,” Tarwater says, “and I’m looking forward to playing a part in the advancement of medical care in our region.”
Scott Ryland Memorial Scholarship Fund to be established at UAB

Scott Ryland was a graduate of the Master of Science in Health Administration (MSHA) Program and a candidate in the doctoral program in health administration at the time of his death in May 2003 at the age of 33. The Brewton, Alabama, native now is being memorialized by family and friends through the establishment of a scholarship in his name for the MSHA Program at UAB. The organizers of the scholarship drive hope to endow the scholarship so that it will become a lasting tribute to Scott’s memory and will be available in perpetuity to assist deserving students who share his desire for furthering their education in health administration.

UAB requires a minimum of $25,000 in contributions to establish an endowed scholarship. The contributions for an endowed scholarship are invested, and annual earnings from the investments are used to make the scholarship awards each year.

Gifts may be made by check payable to UAB and mailed to: Ryland Memorial Scholarship, SHRP Dean’s Office, Webb 616, 1530 Third Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35294-3361. Gifts also may be made by credit card or by donation of appreciated stock. If you would like more information about the scholarship or ways to make a gift or multi-year pledge, contact Cathleen Erwin, Development Director, UAB School of Health Related Professions, at (205) 934-4159 or at cerwin@uab.edu. All contributions are fully tax-deductible.

The Howerde E. Sauberlich Endowed Award

Encouraging Excellence in Nutrition Sciences Research

Howerde E. Sauberlich, Ph.D., enjoyed life to its fullest, and he applied his seemingly boundless energy and enthusiasm to pursuing excellence in everything from academics to music and roller-skating. Colleagues and students fondly remember Sauberlich as an inextinguishable and dedicated scientist, an inspirational and illuminating teacher, and an internationally recognized pioneer in micronutrient research. His landmark experiments in vitamins A and C substantially advanced the body of knowledge about human nutrition and remain notable in the literature of the field, while his discovery of 5-formyltetrahydrofolate has made a significant impact on chemotherapy used to treat cancer.

He earned numerous awards, including the Meritorious Civilian Service Award from the Department of the Army for his research on using ionizing radiation in food preservation, the Mc Lester Award for his research in human nutrition, the Canadian Clinical Chemistry Society Award, and the American Institute of Nutrition Borden Award. Sauberlich authored and coauthored two well-known, widely read books and more than 300 publications in peer-review scientific journals, and he received many prestigious appointments and served with distinction as a member of numerous scientific honorary societies and professional organizations.

In 1982 Charles E. Butterworth, then chair of the newly created Department of Nutrition Sciences, recruited Sauberlich to UAB, where he continued his research and taught until his death in May 2001. During his distinguished career at UAB, he played a key role in developing the Ph.D. program in Nutrition Sciences and served as the program’s first director.

To perpetuate both his memory and legacy, Mrs. Sauberlich, along with family members, friends, colleagues, and admirers, have established an endowed award fund in the School of Health Related Professions. This endowment will be used to provide annual research awards to graduate students who are enrolled in a degree program in the Department of Nutrition Sciences.

School of Health Related Professions Advisory Board

The SHRP Advisory Board exists to work in partnership with the dean to advance the school toward its goals of excellence and achievement in education, research, and service. Recognizing the importance of health-related professions education and the continuing interest of alumni and both government and industry leaders, the board is dedicated to the creative development of the School of Health Related Professions.

The membership consists of business and community leaders drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds that mirror the diversity of the school’s six departments: health-care administration, nutrition science, physical therapy, occupational therapy, critical care, and the diagnostic and therapeutic sciences.

2003-2004 Members

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Olive Elizabeth Whitehead, P.T.

Michael Stephens (center) received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2002 from UAB’s National Alumni Society, recognizing him for his career and community service accomplishments, as well as his contributions and service to UAB. As a result of this honor, two scholarships were made available to students in the Master of Science in Health Administration Program from which Stephens graduated in 1975. A committee selected MSHA students Curtis Black (left) and Taylor Williams from a pool of applicants to receive the scholarships.
Your support will help SHRP fund scholarships, technology upgrades, and other tools and educational enhancements needed by our students and faculty.

Put your lunch money to work for SHRP.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send your brown-bag gift to SHRP today.

**IT MIGHT** not seem like a lot, but over the course of a week or two it can really add up. Instead of eating out every day, why not make a pledge to bring your lunch to work for just one week? Then send the lunch money you save to the SHRP Annual Fund.