New Horizons
The Changing Face
of Health Professions
A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

HAROLD P. JONES, PH.D.

First, let me give my warmest regards to each of you as we come to the end of the holiday period and the beginning of the new year. It has been an exciting year in the school, with record enrollments and widespread national recognition for the school, our faculty, and our students. We enter the new year with exciting plans for increasing our school’s standing as a national leader and for beginning the process of expanding our facilities to accommodate the more than 1,600 students currently enrolled. And finally, we begin the new year with a new name—the School of Health Professions.

Our new name is symbolic of both the evolution of the school and the evolution of health professions across the country. As a leader, we are constantly looking at our programs to determine how we can best serve the needs of the state and beyond, while allowing partners in other institutions to focus on the areas where they can best contribute. As you will read in the cover story, our program mix has dramatically changed through the school’s history and will continue to do so as societal needs change. However, what has not changed is our commitment to excellence and the outstanding quality of health professionals who graduate from the school.

Our success over the years is attributable to outstanding leadership from our faculty and student and alumni leaders. Others from the community have played major roles in the development of our school. One of these leaders is Charles Webb Jr., who recently passed away and is featured on page 15 of this issue. His personal interest and energies coupled with the investment of his time and resources have played a significant role in the development of the school—especially with regard to our efforts in nutrition sciences research and services. We are most grateful for his interest and commitment to improving patient care and the quality of life and health status of the general population through nutrition services and research. Friends like Charlie continue to play important roles in the advancement of our educational and research missions, which benefit our community and world.

In the coming year, we look forward to more great things we will accomplish together.

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Howard Houser, Ph.D., has been appointed associate dean for faculty and staff development in the UAB School of Health Professions. Houser, a professor in the Department of Health Services Administration, will lead a new professional development initiative for faculty and staff in SHP.

“Dr. Houser was the obvious choice in our search for an individual who could lead the school’s efforts to develop faculty and staff,” said dean Harold P. Jones, Ph.D. “He is widely respected for his expertise and success in guiding people and projects to greatness. This position is a logical extension of his career-long emphasis on mentoring others.”

Houser has been on the faculty at UAB since 1970 and boasts a wealth of experience in health services administration education. His major interest is the U.S. health-care system—its history, development, changes, and the social issues continuously confronting it. Another of Houser’s professional interests is the development of international health-service delivery systems and educational programs. He has participated in health-services education programs in the People’s Republic of China, Jamaica, Peru, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Saudi Arabia.

International Students Take Advantage of Opportunities in Clinical Laboratory Sciences

The professional entry track in the graduate-level Clinical Laboratory Sciences Program (CLS) is making the most of its connections to UAB international students. The program is part of a cross-disciplinary group working to prepare international students from Uganda and Mali in laboratory-medicine practices.

Participating students include Boaz Iga Davidson, Lawrence Osuwat, John Odda, and Muzawalu Waiswa from Uganda and Daniel Yalcouye from Mali.

Milena Vanegas of Honduras, a Fulbright grantee sponsored by the LASPAU Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas in affiliation with Harvard University, began the professional entry track this fall.

Another international student, Michael Omondi, is a student in the advanced post professional track and currently works at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Originally from Kenya, he says he plans to return there to continue working in laboratory sciences.

Additionally, the undergraduate-level Medical Technology Program is participating in an exchange program with four European university CLS programs. This grant is sponsored by the U.S. Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) and is its only international exchange for clinical laboratory science students.

In 2005 Sofia Andersson and Caroline Lilja came to UAB from Jonkoping University in Sweden, while UAB students Tommy Hayes and Matthew Box went to Jonkoping for clinical practice experiences. Two other students from Jonkoping, Mika Arieiklo and Emma Broberg, are completing clinical practice courses at UAB this fall.
Faculty from the School of Health Professions will be members of a new Comprehensive Neuroscience Center (CNC), which was approved by the UA System Board of Trustees this fall.

The center will lay the foundation for developing a world-class program in interdisciplinary neuroscience research, clinical care and education at UAB.

“Neuroscience represents one of the most important areas of modern biomedical research,” says Robert R. Rich, M.D., senior vice president and dean of the UAB School of Medicine. “Despite significant advances in understanding many basic neurological processes in the past 15 years, development of more effective treatments for neurologic and psychiatric diseases is a large and growing unmet medical need in this country.”

Among the initial listing of center members were SHP faculty C. Michael Brooks, Ed.D.; Pi-Ling Chang, Ph.D.; Isao Eto, Ph.D.; Clinton Grubbs, Ph.D.; Douglas C. Heimburger, M.D.; Donald L. Hill, Ph.D.; Vivian Ho, Ph.D.; and Timothy R. Nagy, Ph.D. More faculty may be added as the center’s research efforts continue to grow.

The center will link a variety of disciplines, including neurology, psychiatry, neurobiology, neurosurgery, psychology, vision science and biomedical engineering. In addition to Health Professions faculty, members will include faculty from the schools of Medicine, Optometry, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Dentistry, Engineering, and Public Health.

“The UAB Comprehensive Neuroscience Center will be among the first of its kind in the United States and will serve as a model for other institutions to emulate,” Rich said. “It will allow UAB clinicians and scientists to make meaningful progress in understanding the mechanisms of brain function and dysfunction, and ultimately to develop disease prevention and treatment strategies for a host of neurological disorders.”

Rich said the CNC will place UAB in the forefront nationally in efforts to understand and treat nervous-system diseases such as brain and spinal-cord injury, dementing illnesses, schizophrenia, depression, movement disorders, multiple sclerosis, autism, and other neurological and psychiatric diseases.

“One in three Americans will be affected by nervous-system disease during their lifetime,” says Kevin Roth, M.D., Ph.D., UAB professor of pathology and director of the new CNC, “and the economic cost is estimated at $500 billion per year in the United States alone.”

The UAB CNC will oversee the development of six thematic programs of neuroscience investigation: neurodevelopment and neurogenetics; neurodegeneration and experimental therapeutics; neuroregeneration and plasticity; behavioral and cognitive health; glial biology in medicine; and neuroimaging. “The CNC will be the epicenter for neuroscience research at UAB, facilitating the efforts of existing centers, such as the Center for Glial Biology in Medicine, the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute, the Civitan International Research Center and the Alzheimer’s Disease Center,” says Roth.

“By interacting directly with existing centers and establishing coalitions of centers and neuroscience subdisciplines, the CNC will help UAB to effectively meet the challenges of modern neuroscience investigation.”

The CNC builds on other recent advances in neuroscience at UAB, including a $8.6-million grant from the National Institutes of Health to establish the Alabama Neuroscience Blueprint Core Facility awarded earlier this year.
New Horizons

The Changing Face of Health Professions

Spend any time around the Webb or Scrushy Buildings at UAB and one thing quickly becomes clear: The students and graduates trained within these walls aren’t “related” to modern health care—they’re an integral part of it. And so the decision was made—after many discussions and much internal polling—to unite under the new name UAB “School of Health Professions.”

By Russ Willcutt

“The change is really indicative of the evolution that has occurred both within the school and in health-care education in general,” says Harold P. Jones, Ph.D., the school’s dean. “As the disciplines we teach have grown more rigorous, we realized it was time for the school’s name to reflect that shift—recognizing that our graduates are now central players on the medical team, as opposed to being seen as simply providing support to their activities.”

While that answer certainly explains the basic truth behind the name change, a deeper and more complex evolution is at work in the world of health care—one that began with one man’s dream of a Great Society.

ACCESS FOR ALL

“When Lyndon B. Johnson was laying out his vision, he saw access to health care as a central issue, so he made federal funds available for training in a host of related fields,” Jones explains. “The obvious ones came first, such as medicine, nursing, and dentistry, but then lawmakers realized there were hundreds of other professions related to health care, and they didn’t want to write bills for

Occupational therapist Tosha Gaines works with children at the Early Intervention Center.
every one of them. That’s when the term ‘allied health’ came into use, with the basic definition being ‘if you don’t belong to these seven professions, then you’re classified as allied health.’ So you were basically defined by what you were not.”

Recognizing an opportunity, universities began looking at what programs they had and where they were housed on campus. “Sometimes you’d find health administration in the business school and physician-assistant studies in the school of medicine, so the idea was to bring them together to form a new school of allied health professions,” Jones says. “That was really the genesis for the creation of these types of schools around the country, and it was an organizing element as well.”

Then the definitions began to change. Certain professions were reclassified as “non-allied health” programs, which called for some schools to come up with a different descriptor. As they rethought the issue, the name most popular in the early days—schools or colleges of “allied health”—began to lose favor, and it is now the third most-used name behind “health sciences” and the leading choice by far, “health professions.”

“I think the new name communicates the seriousness of what we do, while at the same time it’s a small enough change that we don’t risk compromising our identity in the process,” Jones says. “Plus it’s flexible enough to allow for the continued evolution of the programs we offer.”

A COLLABORATIVE MODEL

As the first dean of the school once it became solidly established within the university, Keith D. Blayney, Ph.D., had a front-row seat at the leading edge of that evolution. “When the school was established—with the help of a Kellogg grant and funds provided by the School of Medicine at UAB—it was called the School of Community and Allied Health Resources,” he says. “But we didn’t have any resources, so we changed the name to the School of Community and Allied Health.”

The school then became involved in the Appalachia Program, which focused on the public-health needs of three northern Alabama counties, eventually completing a health-needs assessment of 47 of the state’s 67 counties. This spurred yet another change—to the School of Public and Allied Health—made to reflect the school’s growing involvement with public health. UAB’s School of Public Health, in fact, originated within the allied health school before it became a freestanding entity.

With additional funds from the Kellogg Foundation, Blayney also oversaw the establishment of the Regional Technical Institute Linkage Program, or RTI, which forged a bond between the school
“Over the years we’ve seen professions clarify themselves and rise to a higher level.”

“And that’s just one example of what I see as the hallmark of the way UAB has always operated,” he says. “With the administration’s support, the university has always focused on developing strong relationships both on campus and beyond. And I think it’s clear that the tradition continues to this day.”

**ACADEMIC EVOLUTION**

Still, one tradition—the formal relationship between community colleges and the school—was discontinued in the early 1990s. While the reasons for this were numerous, it primarily had to do with the fact that the degrees being awarded in certain disciplines had begun to shift, and the junior colleges decided to develop training programs of their own.

Stephen N. Collier, Ph.D., a professor and director of the Office of Health Professions Education and Workforce Development, was in charge of the RTI program during the 1980s. He sees the program’s demise as a result of a natural evolution within the structure of health-care training programs. “Over the years we’ve seen certain professions begin to clarify themselves and rise to a higher level of academic instruction,” he says. “A good example would be physical therapy, where a P.T. assistant is still trained at the associate-degree level while a physical therapist would pursue a master’s degree or their doctorate, which is a D.P.T. in this instance. And since we’ve never really offered an associate degree—just a certificate in conjunction with an associate degree awarded by a community college—it just makes sense that each of us focuses on our particular strengths.”

And as part of a major medical teaching and research institution, SHP is particularly well suited to adapt to the rising demands placed on its graduates. “When you look at occupational therapy or hospital administration or physical therapy—among others—you’re seeing fields that are definite and legitimate professions, with graduates going into private practice or remaining within academia. And the faculty within those disciplines are generating significant research of their own,” Collier says. “Not only are they consuming more of the material, they’re contributing to that body of work as well.”

Dean Jones provides an interesting insight into this develop-
ment: “Many of the so called ‘allied-health’ professions grew up at the bedside,” he says, “where people basically acquired their skills as an apprentice to a practitioner. So what we have are fields that have migrated from the clinical into the academic environment, rather than the other way around. In light of this, it just takes a little more time to begin building up a faculty base who are involved in what are viewed as ‘credible’ academic pursuits. Take a field like philosophy, which has been around for thousands of years in the academy, as opposed to something like physical therapy that has only existed in an official capacity for the past 40 or 50 years. That makes this a very exciting time for us. As these fields grow and develop, we must keep up with what’s required from an educational standpoint.”

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

And those requirements are rising with each passing year, according to assistant dean Claire Peel, Ph.D. “We’ve seen a real increase in the responsibilities our graduates are encountering in the workplace, and we’ve had to elevate our training methods in response to that,” she says. “These increased responsibilities are due to changes in health care, where sicker people are being sent home or to outpatient clinics sooner, so the professionals who take care of these patients really must possess a high level of skill.”

Another of these changes has to do with the development of a team approach to providing health care, instead of placing most of the weight on the physician’s shoulders. “These days you’ll often find that when a patient asks their doctor what they can do after surgery from a physical standpoint, the physician will often defer to the physical or occupational therapist. And we also have physician assistants and others coordinating care, so there is much more of a team-based effort in the clinical setting, with the patient being the center of the team’s focus.”

Even beyond the evolution of existing fields, new disciplines such as genetic counseling are emerging, which Peel sees as a natural fit for the school. “We’re currently in talks with the Department of Genetics to collaborate on a master’s-level training program, so that’s something we hope to introduce in the next couple of years.”

The point is that the School of Health Professions is a vital enterprise that continues to evolve and define its purpose, Peel says. “I think there was a time when ‘allied health’ was viewed as providing ancillary services, and I believe the message we’re now sending is that we are providing high-level training to graduates who are really making a difference in health care.”

Physician assistant Wendy Cornelius (above) is part of a profession that is becoming increasingly important to modern-day health care.
ever was so much owed by so many to so few.”

The situation in modern health care may not hold the same level of drama as when Winston Churchill spoke those famous words, but growing shortages in a variety of health-care fields may lend them a new significance in coming years. As medical and nursing schools race to meet growing workforce demands, other health-care occupations—such as those linked with the School of Health Professions—are seeing similar shortages, and in many cases they are worse than most people realize.

**DAUNTING NUMBERS**

“When you look at the job vacancies, the largest shortage in terms of raw numbers is in nursing,” says Stephen Collier, Ph.D., a professor in the School of Health Professions. “And people tend to notice shortages of doctors and nurses because the raw numbers are so imposing, even though there might be a higher vacancy rate in other areas. For example, if you look at vacancies in a particular geographic area, it may show nurses with 10.5 percent vacancy, whereas physical therapy or respiratory therapy may have a vacancy rate of 15 or 17 percent.”

So naturally, a report that shows a need for 400 nurses and only 20 respiratory therapists will draw the attention of the media and many in the general public while the actual percentages show a greater need in other areas. With that in mind, Collier says

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many of the health-care fields represented in the UAB School of Health Professions will have greater demands as nursing and physician shortages worsen in coming years. Facing shortages of both primary-care physicians and specialists, the medical community will, in the short term, turn to others, such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

“Probably one of the biggest areas where we will need more personnel nationwide is physician assistants,” he says. “Nurse practitioners will be in high demand, but we are already facing a nursing shortage. We have all heard about the shortage of physicians in recent years, but now we are facing shortages in both primary-care physicians and specialists. How do you make up for that shortage?”

One obvious answer, Collier says, is for medical schools to increase the numbers of physicians they are producing, but even if all schools could immediately up their enrollment, the earliest that increase would reach the workforce would be six years. “The pipeline from the time you enter the educational system to your arrival on the job is very long, especially when you’re dealing with a shortage in specialists,” says Collier. “The pipeline for physician’s assistants, on the other hand, is about 27 months, and they can work in primary care and specialty care.”

Another idea would be to bring doctors in from schools outside the United States, a method that currently accounts for about 25 percent of all practicing physicians, though Collier says that number is not likely to change in the near future, placing that much more importance on the role of physician assistants and other health-care professionals.

**MEETING DEMAND**

While current physician and nursing shortages create a significant demand for more physician assistants, other factors will lead to similar increases in demand for health-care workers over the next 10 years. Changing population demographics will contribute in a variety of ways. “As we get older, we tend to consume more health-care services,” says Collier. “So we begin to see a greater need for therapists—occupational and physical—as well as in health information management and clinical laboratory sciences.

“Here again, people will look at raw numbers and at professions they are more familiar with, and the press may point out the rising shortage of pharmacists, but there may be a greater shortage in some of our professions, in a relative sense, and that’s a message that needs to get out as well.”
The UAB School of Health Professions ranks in the top two among all allied health schools nationwide in the amount of research funding received from the National Institutes of Health. Several of its programs have ranked among the nation’s best in health-care education.

From a sales perspective, it sounds like a product that practically sells itself. But for recruiters for the School of Health Professions, it’s all about getting the message out—and finding the right customers.

“We take a broad approach to recruitment, from high school students all the way up to four-year colleges,” says April Rollins-Kyle, the school’s marketing director. “With more than 20 programs in the school, we are looking for a large variety of students in terms of interests and career goals, but we also have specific goals with regard to quality and diversity. We want the best students in terms of grade-point average, experience, and personal characteristics, but we also try to increase the diversity of our student body to provide a more complete educational experience.”

To that end, recruiting efforts include visits to high schools, community colleges, and other four-year universities, as well as workshops where high school and college advisers are educated on exactly what the School of Health Professions has to offer. “This event has evolved from a group that could fit into the conference room to a larger group of anywhere from 30 to 50 participants,” says Claire Peel, Ph.D., associate dean. “Education is a big strategy that we use, because most students know about medicine, nursing, and dentistry—because those are the three health-care professionals they’ve seen in their lifetime. But they might not know about all the other options of health care.”

In addition to educating counselors, the school has produced a recruiting CD-ROM for prospective students, along with plenty of brochures and other materials to help expose them to what the school offers. “The CD gives them a lively presentation of what these disciplines actually do,” says Peel. “It helps students think about professions and consider which ones are something they could do for eight hours a day the rest of their life, and they can see not only if that is something they want to do, but if it is something they have the capability of pursuing, in terms of prerequisites.”

Among UAB freshmen and sophomores, as many as 600 are being recruited at any time into health-professions programs. These “pre-students” are identified early and become part of the SHP pipeline to guide students through the right courses before entering a chosen field. “For me, there is a connection between recruitment and potential,” says Bernard Harris, a physical therapy instructor who helps steer pre-students through the pipeline. “Certainly once students get accepted into these competitive programs, the great majority are successful. There is a camaraderie in our student body that seems be an advantage in recruiting.”

“Actually, health care in general is a pretty easy area to recruit students into because the job market is steadily growing, and the pay for these disciplines is fairly good,” says Peel. “So compared to some other fields, it is an area where a lot of students are eager to enter a program. It’s up to us to help guide them into what is going to be the right career field for them.”
LONG-DISTANCE LEARNING

SHP Students Around America—and the World

When the traffic on I-65 is bad or the weather turns nasty, it’s easy for UAB students living in the sprawling Birmingham suburbs to complain about the distance between their homes and the UAB campus. Try telling that to Carol Haddad, who took classes from the School of Health Professions from 6,500 miles away—in Beirut.

Of course, Haddad wasn’t commuting across the Atlantic every morning. She was taking advantage of SHP’s online course offerings, which have become an increasingly popular way of spreading the school’s curriculum—and reputation—not just across the country but around the globe.

Born in Lebanon and raised in Bahrain, Haddad earned a B.S. in nursing and a master’s in public health from the American University of Beirut (AUB), then went to work at the AUB Medical Center. In May 2003 she transferred to AUBMC’s medical-records department and was offered the job of assistant medical records administrator on the condition that she enroll in a health informatics program and pass the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) certification exam. “So I accepted gladly, and I started searching the Internet and applied to two universities, one of them UAB,” Haddad says. “Before that, I never knew that such a program existed.”

Career advancement was also on the mind of Carolyn Kelley, P.T., who attended the University of Texas and Rice University as an undergraduate, then chose Texas Women’s University in Houston for her master’s degree in physical therapy. Kelley later joined the faculty at TWU but decided she needed to earn a doctoral degree “to be able to fully support the mission of our program with excellence in teaching and research.” Fortunately, Kelley’s program director had met SHP physical therapy professor Cecilia Graham, Ph.D., at a national conference, and their discussion of SHP’s online P.T. curriculum helped Kelley begin her journey as a “virtual student” at UAB.

The thought of pursuing a degree from a university hundreds or even thousands of miles away, with a computer as the only connection to the actual campus and instructors, can be daunting for some. However, most of SHP’s online students report that their initial apprehensions fade quickly as they form their own routines and develop a rhythm in taking courses and assembling projects. “I wasn’t really apprehensive,” says Jennifer Twombly, who works in the health information management (HIM) department at Spring Harbor Hospital in Portland, Maine. “I enjoy the online courses because I can work at my own pace. I even went on my honeymoon during finals week and was able to take all my finals early.”

Kelley, who has to juggle academic and clinical duties and the responsibility of raising two teenage daughters in addition to her online courses, also says adapting to her classwork was relatively easy. Like Twombly, she says the biggest challenge is collaborating on projects with fellow online students who also are far away. “In one class I was assigned to provide a presentation with a classmate who also lives out-of-state,” she says. “This is hard to coordinate when both of us are busy and are 1,000 miles apart. Luckily, however, we’ve become friends, and we were able to work on the final touches at the hotel the evening before the presentation.”

Even Haddad, who arguably had the biggest obstacles to overcome in completing her HIM courses from the other side of the globe, says she was able to find a comfortable niche thanks to consistent support from SHP faculty, including adviser Sara Grostick and instructors Pam Paustian, Kay Clements, and Natasha Cauley. “Without them, I wouldn’t have made it,” Haddad says.

“The online courses have forced me to read our professional literature more often, more critically, and in areas that I thought were out of my areas of interest.”
The Department of Occupational Therapy held a reception at the American Occupational Therapy Association’s annual meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina in April. Several alumni, friends and faculty turned out for the event to network and to show their support for Penelope Moyers, UAB’s Occupational Therapy Department Chair as she was tapped as the president-elect of AOTA. We look forward to honoring her at next year’s reception in St. Louis when she is named president.

UAB School of Health Professions alumnus Larry Sanders was awarded the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) 2006 Gold Medal Award. The Gold Medal Award is ACHE’s highest honor bestowed on outstanding leaders who, through a career of service, have made significant contributions to the health-care field.

The award was presented at a luncheon as part of the the National Congress of the American College of Healthcare Executives at the Fairmont Hotel in Chicago.

Also during the week of the National Congress, more than 80 SHP alumni, students, friends, and faculty members attended a reception hosted by the Alumni Association of the Graduate Programs in Health Administration.

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The Alumni Association of the Graduate Programs in Health Administration hosted an alumni reunion in conjunction with the National Symposium for Healthcare Executives in July at the Sandestin Beach Club. Alumni and their families, faculty, students and friends gathered on Friday afternoon for a casual beach and pool-side event.

We plan to make this an even bigger and better event next year and look forward to having you there. The 2007 Reunion will honor the classes of 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, and the current class of 42, as well as Executive MSHA classes of E37 and E42. All alumni are encouraged to attend with their families in addition to the classes being honored. Please look for more information in the coming months regarding this exciting event.
Looking SHarP

Eta S. Berner, Ed.D., a professor of Health Administration in the Health Informatics Program, was recently awarded fellow status in the Healthcare Information Management and Systems Society (FHIMSS). This distinction is added to her fellow status in the American College of Medical Informatics (FACMI) and is typically awarded only to practitioners in the field.

Betty Farley, administrative associate for the Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Sciences, won the staff category of the first UAB Discussion Book Contest. Farley’s essay on The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down was praised for its “exploration of the cultural and medical issues raised by the book from both a clinical and personal perspective.”

Timothy Garvey, M.D., was recently appointed to the Charles E. Butterworth Jr., M.D., Professorship in the Department of Nutrition Sciences.

Shannon Houser, Ph.D., MPH, RHIA, won the 2006 USTA Adult League Tennis Championship and the Southern Sectional Championship in Charleston, South Carolina. Her team advanced to the nationals in Palm Beach, California.

Michael Radden, SHP academic advisor, was recently recognized as the New Advisor of the Year by the UAB Committee on Academic Advising. Michael continually looks for ways to promote the success of all students. His leadership of the SHP Student Government Association, involvement with various committees, and recruitment activities demonstrate his high level of commitment and determination. Bernard Harris, director of student services, says, “Both the quantity and quality of academic advisement at SHP have been greatly enhanced by Michael’s addition to the Office of Student Services.” Michael has been advising SHP students since June 2004.

Nanette Sayles, a graduate of the BSHIM and MSHI programs, was recently named to fellowship status in the American Health Information Management Association. She joins 39 fellows out of a membership of more than 50,000. Sayles is the HIM program director at Macon State College in Macon, Georgia. She joins fellow BSHIM graduate and current faculty member Donna Slovensky, as well as Sara Grostick, HIM program director, both of whom previously received fellow status.

Looking Ahead

Please look for more information in the mail on scheduled SHP alumni events in 2007 including:

- Reception for physical therapy alumni during the American Physical Therapy Association conference, Boston, MA—February 16
- Reception for health informatics alumni during the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society conference, New Orleans, LA—February 26
- Reception for health administration alumni during the American College of Healthcare Executives National Congress, New Orleans, LA—March 20
- Reception for nurse anesthesia alumni during the Alabama Association of Nurse Anesthetists annual conference, Sandestin, FL—April 27
- Reception for occupational therapy alumni during the American Occupational Therapy Association conference, St. Louis, MO—April
- Reception for surgical physician assistant alumni during the American Association of Physician Assistants conference, Philadelphia, PA—May 29
- Annual meeting for the Alumni Association of the Graduate Programs in Health Administration during the 26th National Symposium for Healthcare Executives, Sandestin, FL—August 3
- Reunion event for alumni of the graduate programs in Health Administration, Sandestin, FL—August 3
C. Scott Bickel, Ph.D., PT, joined the faculty as an assistant professor in the Department of Physical Therapy. Bickel received his master’s degree in physical therapy from Old Dominion University and his Ph.D. in exercise physiology from the University of Georgia. Prior to coming to UAB, he was employed at LSU.

The UAB School of Health Professions recognized the first graduates from its Honors Program in a special ceremony last summer. Pictured above are program coordinator Bradley Newcomer; graduates D’Ronrell T. Hamner, Kerri Amanda Haynes, and Elaine Michelle Blankenship; and SHP Dean Harold Jones.

The following individuals were recently awarded emeritus status by the University Board of Trustees:

Janice Hall
Associate Professor Emerita

Susan Perkins
Associate Professor Emerita

James Flege
Professor Emeritus

Special Status

The following individuals were nominated for awards:

- The Nutrition Course was nominated for the Best Course by the class of 2008 (but did not win the category)
- Heimburger was nominated for the Best Small Group Leader by the class of 2008 and won in that category
- Doug Heimburger was nominated as the Best Course Director by the class of 2008 and won in that category
- Frank Franklin was nominated for a special award by the class of 2009 (but did not win the category)

The Department of Nutrition Sciences was well represented last spring at the Argus Society Awards, an event sponsored by UAB medical students.

Department of Nutrition Sciences

NEW FACULTY/staff
The question came during a UAB football game, when a fellow alumnus asked, “What would you do with your life if money weren’t an issue?” Sherri Van Pelt responded immediately, saying, “I would start an arts organization for people with disabilities.”

She was delighted to find that such an entity already existed—VSA arts of Alabama—and that it needed an executive director. Though she was busy with the private occupational therapy practice she’d owned for some 20 years, Van Pelt was drawn to the concept and accepted the position on a part-time basis. It wasn’t long, however, before she decided to turn her practice over to a colleague and become fully involved in the organization. Part of the reason is that its mission resounded so deeply with her own professional approach.

“I worked primarily with children during the last 10 or 15 years of my practice, and I would use the arts to help get us where we needed to go therapeutically,” she explains. “If we were practicing fine motor skills, I’d let the children paint, and if we were working on balance and gait, I’d lead them in a dance. You can even teach dressing skills by letting them put on their own costumes for a play, so the opportunities are just endless.”

Van Pelt has taken advantage of all available opportunities to help VSA arts of Alabama grow as well, and with excellent results. “Our annual budget was $15,000 when I started, and that was basically my salary,” she says with a laugh. “Four-and-a-half years later, our budget is more than $400,000 per year—with 67 percent of that coming from state and federal grants and the rest from private donations—and we’ve just hired our sixth full-time staff member.”

Although it is headquartered at Children’s Hospital, VSA arts of Alabama provides art therapy programs for children and elderly patients alike, working through a host of affiliations with educational institutions and community and health-care organizations across the state. “According to the 2000 Alabama census, more than 21 percent of the population in this state has a disability of some kind,” Van Pelt says, “so that’s a lot of people for us to serve.”

And even though helping these individuals meet their daily challenges can be difficult, Van Pelt says that applying the arts can make all the difference: “That’s because it turns the work into fun.”

For more information go to [www.vsartsalabama.org].

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Janet Stewart, M.S.H.A.

As vice president of Health Information Services at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, Janet Stewart sees herself as a facilitator. “I have the opportunity to work with talented people in all areas of the corporation and turn the information we gather into meaningful data for both my colleagues and our customers,” she says. “We also want to be partners with the hospitals and physicians we work with and share helpful information with them as well.”

One example involves the Alabama Hospital Quality Initiative, which was launched in 2002. Utilizing data-mining software developed by MedMined Inc.—a graduate of UAB’s business incubator, the Office for the Advancement of Developing Industries (OADI)—the project aims to reduce hospital-acquired infections by identifying their potential sources. “What we’re doing is providing member hospitals with targeted information that identifies processes that, if left unattended, could create infections,” she says. “That way they can act on the information in order to avoid potential disease outbreaks.”

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SherrivaNPelt, O.T., M.P.A.
IN MEMORIAM: Charles Blanton Webb Jr.
(September 4, 1924-March 26, 2006)

In the history of the UAB School of Health Professions, the name of Charles Webb Jr. stands alone.

A longtime donor and active participant in the school’s leadership over the past 25 years—most recently as a member of the SHP Dean’s Advisory Board—Webb and his family played an integral role in shaping the school. When Webb died earlier this year, he left behind a legacy that will be felt at UAB and in the community for years to come.

“The UAB School of Health Professions would not exist as it does today without the generous support of Charles Webb and his family,” says SHP dean Harold P. Jones. “His financial contributions have allowed us to expand research through new facilities and programs, and his involvement on the President’s Council, the UAB Research Foundation’s Board of Trustees, and other capacities provided invaluable leadership.”

Born in Birmingham in 1924, Webb attended Phillips High School before going on to graduate from the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey and later Yale University in 1947. He also served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was awarded the Bronze Star for his meritorious service aboard the USS Stanton—a destroyer escort that was credited with sinking two German submarines in one night.

Following the war, he returned to his hometown and began his career with Alabama Metal Industries Corporation as a salesman. In time, he would rise to the position of chairman and CEO, as well as becoming the company’s majority stockholder. Under his management, the company, AMICO, grew to become an industry leader, with 14 facilities in 12 states.

Throughout his academic, military, and professional life, Webb remained active in social and civic organizations. He served on corporate and charitable boards, including those of The Boy Scouts of America, United Way, Compass Bank, and the Birmingham Area Chamber of Commerce, among others.

But arguably his most visible contributions were with the Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust, created in memory of his second wife after her death in 1977. Within the first five years of its creation, that trust directed all grants toward the construction of the Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building.

Since that time, Webb and his family have given generously to UAB and the School of Health Professions, including a recent $1-million gift to create an endowed chair in the Department of Nutrition Sciences in memory of his daughter, Julie.

“I think Charlie always had connections at UAB, but the superlative care that Susan received there served to help form an even closer relationship with the university and the hospital,” says Jane Webb, Charles Webb’s wife since 1978.

Over the past 25 years, both Charles and Jane Webb served on the UAB President’s Council; Charles was co-chair of UAB’s first statewide capital campaign and was an original member of the UAB Research Foundation.

Stewart is quite pleased with the results, as are the 94 hospitals across the state that have joined the initiative so far. “This is tremendous in that five years ago nobody would say the words out loud, and now we’re embracing the fact that, yes, hospital-acquired infections are a part of our world,” she says, “so let’s work together to see what we can do about it.”

Working together involves quarterly meetings hosted by Blue Cross in which best practices are discussed, and the company has funded the vast majority of the project, asking member hospitals to pay for a small portion of the software and other related installation costs while providing grants to help cover the associated monthly fees. As further proof of the initiative’s success, the Alabama model has been adopted by Blue Cross plans in Texas, New York, California, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The real winners, though, are the patients. “Not just Blue Cross patients, but everyone,” Stewart is quick to add, “because this program is helping to avoid unnecessary human suffering. At the same time it’s allowing hospitals to save money, and it ultimately benefits us as well, because it’s a good thing to take care of your members.”

But it’s the hospitals that are really making the difference, she says. “I applaud them for being leaders in the country through this initiative. They’ve been wonderful partners, and my hat’s off to them.”
In the fall of 2005, the Department of Occupational Therapy (OT) launched an effort to establish an endowed scholarship in honor of Caroline (Cat) Amari, who retired in 1998 after twenty-five years of service to UAB. Amari was the program director of occupational therapy for more than fourteen years; many graduates of the OT program continue to refer to themselves as “Cat’s graduates.” She was often known to financially assist many of her students and graduates without ever asking for repayment. Prior to the campaign to establish the Amari scholarship, the Department of Occupational Therapy was the only department in the School of Health Professions without an endowed scholarship to assist outstanding and deserving students.

Thanks to the generosity of alumni, friends, and family members, the Cat Amari Endowed Scholarship has been fully endowed. The first award from the scholarship fund will be made in 2007, and will be given to a second-year student prior to beginning field work.

The advisory committee for the Amari scholarship includes Dr. Claire Peel, associate dean, School of Health Professions; Jo Clelland, PT, professor emerita; Sherri Van Pelt, OTR/L, MPA, executive director of VSA arts of Alabama; Kim Preskitt, OTR/L, Flex Digital; and Larry Zachow, MA, OTR/L, Department of Occupational Therapy.

The levels of admiration for Amari and support for the OT program resulted in the $25,000 scholarship being endowed just four short months after the initial information was mailed to alumni. Thanks to all who were part of this monumental accomplishment.

With your contributions you can be assured you are contributing to the occupational therapy profession, the longevity of the UAB occupational therapy program, and the longtime association of Cat Amari with this program. Anyone interested in making a donation to the Caroline Amari Endowed Scholarship Fund can use the envelope inserted in this publication. Please indicate on the check or on the insert that the contribution is for the Amari scholarship.

For more information about the scholarship fund, contact Katie Davidson, alumni and annual fund specialist, at (205) 996-5469.

Bill M. Grist, an alumni of UAB and a 1974 graduate of the physical therapy program, died April 1, 2006 in Lubbock, Texas, at the age of 59. Grist also earned a B.S. degree from Texas Tech University in 1970.

In the community of Lubbock, Grist owned and operated Rehabilitation Services of Lubbock for more than 30 years. He was a member of the Texas Physical Therapy Association and Texas Sports Medicine Association, holding numerous offices throughout his professional career.

Grist was a friend to everyone and a caring and compassionate physical therapist. Many people benefited from his charitable work and gifts throughout his life. He will be missed by his family, friends, and classmates.

In memory of Grist, all 1974 PT classmates, UAB alumni, and friends are invited to make a gift to the Marilyn R. Gossman Memorial Fund to honor his life and contribution to the profession of physical therapy. (Contributions should be sent to: Marilyn R. Gossman Memorial Fund, c/o Cathleen Erwin, WEBB 616, 1530 Third Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35294.)

David Wayne Fowler, M.D., who received bachelor’s degrees in respiratory therapy (1994) and allied health administration (1995), died this past June. He was 35.

Originally from Attalla, Alabama, Fowler went on to earn a doctorate from the College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kansas City, Missouri. He practiced internal medicine in Florida at Internal Medicine Associates of Tampa Bay and Northside Hospital and Heart Institute.
How much do you spend on lunch each day?

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 saved to the SHP Annual Fund.

Your support will help SHP fund scholarships, technology upgrades, and other tools and educational enhancements needed by our students and faculty.

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