A Call to Serve
Community Service in the Classroom and Beyond
Almost any holiday serves as a moment for reflection on the past, taking stock of the present, and envisioning the future. This Easter, April 16, was a special date for me, for reasons beyond the obvious: It marks exactly five years to the day since I began my service as dean here at SHRP.

The past five years have been an incredible ride—in one sense, they’ve passed very quickly, but they also seem fully packed when I think about all that our faculty, staff, and students have accomplished during that period. Enrollment grew from 1,100 to more than 1,600 students a year. Research funding almost tripled. We added new programs such as the DPT, DSciPT, and Low Vision Program in Occupational Therapy. We opened a new building providing students with wonderful learning environments. Many outstanding new faculty and staff members were added to our existing numbers, allowing the school to build on the legacy created by those incredible pioneers, some of whom retired during this period. New university leadership has created a strategic vision for UAB that is allowing SHRP not only to participate but also to shine.

Today we are poised as a true national leader in health-professions education and research and serve as both a national and international resource improving the quality of health care. Equally important, though, is that we continue to gain momentum. Over the next few years, we will continue to see the school establish its presence to an even greater degree. With new, innovative, creative, and challenging educational programs and curricula; with cutting-edge research that translates our basic understanding of the sciences underlying our professions to compelling and effective therapeutic and diagnostic applications; with service that provides insightful leadership in health-professions education; and through new collaborations with partners across the university and the globe—we are becoming the recognized leader in health-professions education.

In the next issue of this magazine, we will share with you a more detailed picture of what this future may look like and how we plan on arriving there. It should be an exciting ride. I hope that each of you will join us on this journey.
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Health-related headlines from around the school

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How SHRP turns the service-learning ideal into reality

Feature Stories
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Easing the burden for America’s school kids

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Alums who came to learn—and stayed to teach

Spectrum
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Alumni in Action
Otis Story (MSHA)
Beth Whitehead (PT)
Christina G. Stephens (CT/HT)

Latest Developments
Alumni news, development, and class notes
Big Achievements by MSHA Alumni

The alumni of SHRP’s Master’s in Health Administration (MSHA) program have made several additions to their lengthy list of achievements over the past few months, with one of the most notable being the 2006 Gold Medal Award given to Larry Sanders by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). Sanders received the award March 27 during ACHE’s 49th Congress on Healthcare Leadership in Chicago.

The Gold Medal Award is the highest honor given by ACHE and is bestowed upon “outstanding leaders who, through a career of service, have made significant contributions to the health-care field.” According to Stephen J. O’Connor, Ph.D., director of the MSHA Program, Sanders is the first SHRP graduate to win the award.

“Larry Sanders has made significant contributions to the health-care field and has demonstrated exceptional leadership at the local, state, and national levels,” O’Connor says. “He is clearly deserving of this recognition.”

A 1975 graduate of the MSHA program and an ACHE fellow, Sanders has spent nearly a quarter-century in leadership positions with The Medical Center and later Columbus Regional Healthcare System (CRHS) in Columbus, Georgia. From 1981 to 1986 he was executive vice president and chief operating officer of The Medical Center, and he was the hospital’s president/CEO from 1986 to 1992. Since 1989 he has served as chairman and CEO of CRHS. Sanders was profiled in the fall 2003 issue of Spectrum.

Another MSHA graduate, Gordon B. Ferguson (’84), was named president and CEO of Middle Tennessee Medical Center (MTMC) in Murfreesboro this past March. Ferguson had served as interim president and CEO of the hospital for the previous six months; before that, he had served as chief operating officer since 2004, after joining MTMC as senior vice president of support services in 1998.

“At conducting a national search, the [search] committee narrowed consideration to three candidates, including Gordon,” said Ed C. Loughry Jr., chair of the MTMC board. “While the other candidates were impressive, we realized that the best person to lead MTMC was already in place, and the committee unanimously recommended Gordon for the role.”

A Diplomat of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Ferguson received the 1999 Regent’s Award as Young Healthcare Executive of the Year. He is actively involved with the American Diabetes Association and has chaired the organization’s primary fund-raiser, Tour de Cure.

Middle Tennessee Medical Center is one of five hospitals that make up Saint Thomas Health Services, an 8,000-associate faith-based ministry in central Tennessee. It is part of Ascension Health, a Catholic organization and the country’s largest not-for-profit health system.

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SHRP Announces Alpha Eta Nominations

UNDERGRADUATE NOMINEES
Respiratory Therapy
Elaine Blankenship
Christie Gammage
Radiography
Anna Dacy Lee
Jill Woods
Cytotechnology
Whitney Collins
Medical Technology
Reannon Blackwell
Health Information Management
Rachel Lassiter
Haruka Murai
Health Sciences
Jennah Lee Gentz
Emily Ann Miller
Emily Tatum
Nuclear Medicine Technology
Tamisha Collins
Desiree Fox

GRADUATE NOMINEES
Physical Therapy
Stephen Guthrie
Julie Robinson Kiel
M.S. in Health Informatics
Mandar Manohar Gori
Devashish Saini
Medicare Decisions Could Expand Role of RTs

Respiratory therapists around the country got two big boosts to their profession last year thanks to two major decisions relating to Medicare. The first, issued in July, implemented a new Part B benefit that covers smoking-cessation counseling for certain qualified Medicare beneficiaries.

RTs and other health-care professionals can now provide smoking-cessation counseling services, and these services can be reimbursed by Medicare to the practitioners’ employers. The counseling must be performed under the supervision of a physician or other Medicare-qualified Part B provider.

“This is a service that many respiratory therapists are trained to do anyway, but it’s been a struggle all along in that nobody’s been getting paid for it unless it just falls under the general category of patient education,” explains Jonathan Waugh, Ph.D., RPFT, RRT, an associate professor of respiratory therapy and director of clinical education for SHRP. “In the past, respiratory therapists had to do [this counseling] gratis, and if they already had more work than they had time to do it in, then the institution wouldn’t agree to reimburse them for this additional work, and there would be no incentive for them to do it.”

However, last year the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) issued a national coverage policy that effectively allows non-physician health-care professionals to provide smoking-cessation counseling in an outpatient setting, as long as the counseling is “incident to” a physician’s professional services.

“This is a big step in that CMS is providing some type of reimbursement for smoking-cessation counseling,” Waugh says. “So respiratory therapists, nurses, and pharmacists, for example, could provide the smoking-cessation counseling, and if they bill it as an incident to physician service, then the health-care institution would get reimbursement, and the institution pays the salaries of the people who are doing that counseling. Respiratory therapists can’t bill directly, but if they’re working for an institution, they’ll be reimbursed for the services they provide.”

Respiratory therapists looking for additional information and guidance on this issue can visit the Web site of the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) at [www.aarc.org].

The second ruling, issued in November, confirmed that respiratory therapy is a Medicare-covered hospice service if the hospice determines that a patient requires it. The service would then be paid out of the daily rate made to the hospice. In the past, hospices have been reluctant to offer RT because Medicare policy was unclear on whether the service was covered; the recent regulations have taken the guesswork out of providing RT services under the Medicare hospice benefit.
n churches across Birmingham, students and clinicians screen people for health problems they might never have known about otherwise. In a UAB classroom, occupational-therapy students use technology to better the life of a man with cerebral palsy. Elsewhere in town, other OT students take a group of developmentally disabled young girls out for a day of shopping and bowling. And far away in New Orleans, SHRP graduates in a variety of health-related fields use their expertise to aid the residents of a devastated, hurricane-stricken city.

At first glance, these projects might seem like isolated efforts, but they all have one thing in common: They involve SHRP students, faculty, and alumni who are using their health-care expertise to make a tangible difference in their communities and beyond. Far from being just a collection of random occurrences, all of these projects stem from SHRP’s commitment to community service and to instilling those values in its students and faculty.

SHRP’s commitment to service isn’t inscribed in stone anywhere on the UAB campus or explicitly stated in a school code of ethics. It’s simply something that instructors and administrators try to impart to their students as part of their day-to-day learning, in the hope that it will stay with them throughout their health-care careers.

“We teach these values in two ways,” says SHRP dean Harold Jones, Ph.D. “For one thing, we actually involve the students in community-service activities as part of their educational training. Health professions, by definition, mean serving other people, but taking student groups into areas that are underserved—or where there are particular needs that might go unmet otherwise—is one
way of exposing them to community service. A second way is through involvement in community-service projects that aren’t part of the formal curriculum but take students out into the community to use their skills and the skills they are developing.

“The other thing that’s very important—probably as important as involving students in these activities—is for our faculty themselves to serve as models of putting community service into practice,” Jones adds. “As our faculty involve themselves in community and professional service, they model the professional behavior we expect from our graduates. One of the distinctive things about professional education as opposed to other types of education is that role modeling by faculty is just as important as the thoughts they share in the classroom.”

CLASSWORK THAT REACHES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

A shining example of SHRP’s community-service-oriented curriculum is the technology applications class in the Department of Occupational Therapy, which partners students with people in the community needing “assistive technology” to function independently in their daily lives. Assistive technology can include anything from motorized wheelchairs to remote controls that make it easier for people with disabilities to use common devices in their homes.

In 2004, for example, students partnered with Donnie Goodin, a Birmingham man with cerebral palsy. Because Goodin cannot walk or speak in a way that is easily understood, the OT students took steps to make his day-to-day routine at home easier. The students’ efforts included everything from a power wheelchair and an augmentative communication device to programming the speed dial on his cellular phone and modifying his remote controls and home phone to make them easier to use. They even helped him file paperwork with the city bus system for door-to-door pickup.

“This was an extremely rewarding experience,” says Stacey Solomon, an OT student who participated in the project. “I was apprehensive at first, because I didn’t know how much we as students really had to offer this individual. But after meeting with him, I realized how simple some solutions could be for him. . . . I feel that our class has made a difference in this person’s life, and it is a wonderful feeling to know that I was a part of something so great.”

Needless to say, the equipment the students provided for Goodin was expensive. But perhaps as an example of how generosity breeds generosity, all of the equipment was ultimately paid for by a gift from an anonymous donor.

Claire Peel, Ph.D., associate dean for academic affairs, says these kinds of activities are natural fits with the clinical disciplines taught at SHRP. The school goes the extra mile, however, by ensuring that the benefits of meaningful service experiences don’t end when a class or a term is completed. “One example was a physical-therapy course that focused on health promotion and patient education,” she says. “The students went to Agape House, which is a residential facility for people with HIV, and assessed the residents’ knowledge and interest in exercise. Then they designed an exercise and education program for the residents.”


A Call to Serve

SHRP faculty member Bradley Newcomer, left, and a fellow member of Discovery United Methodist Church assist with cleanup efforts after Hurricane Katrina devastated the town of Gulfport, Mississippi.

Many SHRP faculty and students went to the Gulf Coast to aid recovery efforts, while others stayed in Birmingham to organize fundraisers and clothing drives.
then they did a follow-up with the residents to see if the program was effective—to see if the residents were able to continue the exercise on their own,” Peel says. “And it turned out to be very successful.”

Such success is due in large part to the fact that these programs aren’t just for making students feel good or for earning “brownie points” with the community: They focus on the actual needs of the patients and on ensuring positive long-term outcomes. “These projects tie directly into what we’re trying to teach the students—client needs, designing interventions based on assessment results, and the importance of follow-up,” Peel says.

REACHING THE MAJESSES

Signs of student dedication begin appearing long before diplomas are awarded—SHRP faculty members usually don’t have to search for very long to find student volunteers to participate in extracurricular service activities. Such activities include community health fairs that bring together students and clinicians from a number of different UAB schools—including SHRP, the School of Medicine, the School of Dentistry, and many others—to go out to medically underserved communities and screen individuals for various health problems.

The health fair held at Lawson State Community College in April 2004, for instance, screened patients at “stations” focusing on blood pressure, cholesterol, nutrition, health history, and numerous others. Faculty supervised the event, but students were the ones drawing blood and performing other examinations. At the last station on health education SHRP faculty and students joined with physicians and nurses to discuss individual screening results with each patient who participated and to point out potential problems.

The clinicians didn’t stop at telling their patients what was wrong with them—patients with serious health problems were referred to hospitals in the area. “We had social workers from public health there to direct the participants to locations where they could get help,” says Ed Huechtker, Ph.D., M.P.A., chair of SHRP’s Department of Critical Care. “It doesn’t do any good to do all these physicals and then shrug and say, ‘Yeah, you’ve got hypertension. Bye, see you later.’ ”

“We had somebody who was referred to the ER that day, his blood pressure was so high,” recalls Suzanne Henson, coordinator of the EatRight Weight Management Program.

As much help as they provided on their own, the health fairs are just the first step in a much larger project being undertaken by UAB’s Minority Health and Research Center (MHRC). Health data collected at the fairs is being analyzed so that the MHRC can apply for a grant to expand the screenings to more of Alabama’s underserved communities.

SHRP LESSONS, REAL-WORLD VALUES

Of course, it’s one thing for students to participate in community-service efforts while they’re at UAB. It’s another thing entirely to ensure that the importance of service as a value is something they continue to hold dear even after they leave the school. But when students are taught to emphasize serving client needs and follow-through, Peel says their devotion to community service lasts long after they graduate. “If the students are involved in these types of projects, then what I’ve seen is that it tends to carry over into their professional lives,” she says. “As graduates, they tend to be involved in community-related projects.”

There is perhaps no better or more immediate example of SHRP’s community spirit than the ways in which the SHRP student, alumni, and faculty communities responded to the overwhelming crisis of Hurricane Katrina. The school itself set an example by taking in numerous students from the Gulf Coast area and allowing them to continue their studies, and numerous SHRP faculty, students, and graduates took time out of their lives to help serve the urgent needs of people and communities devastated by the storm.

Jenine McFerran, an undergraduate student in health administration who’s also an EMT with Lifeguard Ambulance in Birmingham, went to Slidell, Louisiana, to assist the local fire department and Lifeguard service with search-and-rescue efforts. “We went inside homes, we went up and down looking for people,” she says. “We were looking for both dead and living people, and then we’d mark the doors if we found somebody—we marked how many we found alive, how many we found dead.

“We were picking up what we could find,” she recalls. “We’d pick up a ladder and use that to do more searching. If we found a gas
can, we used that, because we were running out.” Between the scarce supplies and the unease of never knowing what she was going to find when she went inside a house, McFerran says she was constantly on edge, but while it was stressful work, “we were surrounded by good people.”

Faculty members, too, “walked the walk” when it came to demonstrating the importance of community service in real-world situations. Nutrition sciences professor Doug Heimburger, M.D., went to the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center the same day refugees began arriving to help with health screenings and treatment. “Fortunately there weren’t many major health problems, but there were people with chronic health problems who needed connections in the Birmingham area to get care,” Heimburger remembers. “There was one guy who had had a minor surgical procedure just before the hurricane and still had a healing sutured wound, and he had ended up standing in water for a while and just wanted to have his wound checked out. Somebody else had high blood pressure they wanted checked. There was a man with HIV who wanted to connect with HIV care in the community.

“It’s good to have the feeling of being needed, but it also made me feel very grateful for the outpouring of concern and assistance. At least in those first few days, there were more volunteers than they needed by far.”

Bradley Newcomer, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Radiologic Sciences Division, joined members of his church, Discovery United Methodist, in traveling to Gulfport, Mississippi, in October to aid cleanup and rebuilding efforts. They camped out in tents on the lawn of a Gulfport church and spent a week working at the church’s relief center, providing support for hurricane victims and fellow relief workers. “We were all excited to get down there, roll our sleeves up, and do something instead of just sitting around and watching all the destruction and the heartache and the disaster—to actually get down there and do something to try to help those people,” says Newcomer.

It was back-breaking work at times, but Newcomer says he’s anxious to make a return trip sometime this spring. “It was five of the hardest, most physically demanding, but best days that I’ve ever spent,” he says.

It all adds up to a service record of which the school can be justifiably proud, and Jones says this commitment will only be increased in the years to come.

“We are doing a major assessment of four areas within our curriculum—professionalism, leadership, ethics, and civic responsibility,” Jones explains. “And we’re asking ourselves both formally and informally what we’re doing in every program to address those issues and then looking for ways as a school to reinforce them further.

“We are committed as a school to our vision of being the national leader in health-professions education, and to shaping the future of health care through that leadership. To produce leaders of the health-care enterprise, we must educate people who will be committed to community service, and we ourselves must be engaged in an understanding and a commitment to civic responsibility at the local, state, national, and even international levels. We think of ourselves as citizens of all of those.”
The frustrating search for a good night’s sleep has led to an equally frustrating search for qualified professionals to study sleep disorders.

SHRP’s new polysomnography (PSG) certificate program, offered by the Department of Critical Care, creates a convenient way for health professionals to enter this field and for labs to find trained personnel. The program is run in coordination with the UAB Sleep/Wake Disorders Center.

This type of collaborative program between respiratory therapy departments and sleep labs is fairly new. UAB’s is one of about a dozen such programs nationally and is the only one in the state, says associate professor Jonathan Waugh, Ph.D., RPFT, RRT, director of clinical education for SHRP. Currently, sleep labs often go through the expense of training their own employees, then lose them to other clinics, Waugh says.

“There is tremendous demand for these folks,” Waugh says. “It’s even worse than the nursing and other health-profession shortages. The hospitals are pillaging each other trying to lure away staff. The field has grown tremendously, and they just do not have the educational offerings available.”

The new SHRP program will help people suffering from sleep disorders, too. “Right now, the average waiting time to get a sleep test done is two months, and in some places it’s six months,” Waugh says. “That tells you there are a lot of people out there that need to be sleep tested.”

Candidates for the new program are senior respiratory-therapy students who want to take this as an elective specialization option or practicing certified or registered respiratory therapists already working in health-care settings. SHRP’s PSG program is less time-intensive than other avenues to become a registered sleep technologist; the program takes two semesters, each consisting of just two courses with two credit-hours each. Students who successfully complete the SHRP certification program can take the sleep-registry exam immediately.

Diagnosing sleep disorders can change lives, Waugh says. A few years ago, a sleep study showed that some children thought to have ADHD were just having sleep problems. “They begin treating them for their sleep disorders, and it completely does away with their behavior problems during the day,” Waugh says.

Respiratory sleep issues include obstructive sleep apnea, a condition where the upper airways temporarily close off, interrupting breathing, causing arterial oxygen levels to drop, and waking the person enough to disrupt sleep. “Arterial desaturation can affect not only their mental status but also their physiological status, their hormones, their electrolytes, and so forth,” Waugh says.

Sleep disorders are complex and sometimes have mixed causes, he says. “There’s a need for a structured education program beyond the point where people can be trained on the job. We’re happy to be one of the first programs that offer that option.”

For more information, contact program director Wesley Granger, Ph.D., at grangerw@uab.edu or (205) 934-7637, or log onto [www.uab.edu/rt].
hey trudge to and from school, tiny elementary-school students and lanky high-schoolers alike, stooped over or walking awkwardly under the burden of overstuffed back- packs. Students complain and parents worry about the physical toll. A SHRP outreach program is doing something to help by teaching kids how to lighten their loads, or at least how to carry them more safely.

The SHRP program coordinates with the American Occupational Therapy Association’s (AOTA) National School Backpack Awareness Day each September. SHRP students show kids the best ways to select, load, and wear backpacks and how to calculate if their packs are too heavy for their body weight, says associate professor and program coordinator Jan Rowe, OTD, M.P.H., OTR/L. OT students have been the main participants in the outreach program in past years, Rowe says, but physical-therapy students joined the program last year. They have seen some surprisingly heavy backpacks.

“A backpack is not supposed to exceed 15 percent of a person’s body weight,” Rowe says. “We saw a little girl at Mt. Laurel whose backpack was 62 percent of her weight.” That would be equal to a 160-pound adult carrying nearly 100 pounds.

According to the AOTA, one study found six out of 10 students ages 9 to 20 report chronic back pain related to heavy backpacks. Among other health problems, too much pressure on the blood vessels and nerves in the neck can cause tingling in the neck, arms, and hands. “You’re talking about imbalancing muscles and ligaments and lots of strain on the body,” Rowe says. “Especially for a growing body, it can be really damaging.”

Students’ days—and backpacks—are crammed full because of curriculum changes and extracurricular activities. “You’ve got second-graders rotating to several classrooms, so they’ve got to take multiple materials and supplies with them,” Rowe says. “A lot of times, younger children can’t discriminate what they need every day, so they just take everything.”

Schools report that the program has students thinking about how much they should put in their backpack and how to wear them, Rowe says, though she admits it is easier to get younger students to change their habits than high-school students. Rowe offers some other tips on backpack safety.

**How to pick one:** Think of the child’s size and needs. “It really needs to be matched to the individual,” Rowe says. Look for packs with strong, well-padded straps, waist belts, and chest straps or clips. “With some of the really cheap backpacks, the straps break very easily. The kids end up tying off the straps so they can’t be adjusted.”

Rolling backpacks can ease the burden, but many schools restrict them and the packs aren’t usually available in clear plastic, as some schools require. Those retractable handles might not be the right height for small children, too.

**How to load them:** Load the heaviest items closest to the child’s back and arrange items so they won’t shift around. Keep the load to no more than 15 percent of a child’s body weight. Parents of younger children should make sure they only carry necessary items.

**How to wear them:** Wear both shoulder straps and use chest clips and waist belts/ clips to keep the pack close to the body so the weight is more safely distributed.

For the popular one-strap messenger bags, don’t wear them so low they bounce on the thigh; wear them by the hip so the weight is better absorbed by the body.
HOME SWEET SHRP:
Alums Who Came to Learn—and Stayed to Teach

The halls of the School of Health Related Professions are particularly familiar to some faculty members—they were once students. Some went across country and back, while one has practically stayed within a few blocks of the school his entire life. But they all felt a bond with UAB and the School of Health Related Professions that brought them back “home.” A few of them explain how and why they ended up on the other side of the podium.

Pi-Ling Chang, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Nutrition Sciences; associate scientist, Clinical Nutrition Research Center

After being born in Taiwan, growing up in Germany and Saudi Arabia, going to high school in Beirut (right as that nation’s civil war was beginning), and coming to the United States for college, Pi-Ling Chang found that UAB provided a stable, solid environment after she got her master’s degree in nutrition sciences in 1992. “Part of it was my status as a foreigner—when you’re applying for visas it’s hard to move from one place to another,” she says. “But my research was established here, and I was able to get funding to continue it. So that’s why I stayed.”

Chang’s current research focuses on matrix proteins and how “tumor promoters” stimulate them to begin the process of tumorigenesis. “The cells that are initiated in tumorigenesis have permanent chromosomal damage, but they usually remain dormant for quite some time—most of us don’t develop cancer until much later,” she explains. “My question is how do these initiated cells that already have chromosomal damage progress into becoming cancer cells.”

Chang says she’s been grateful for the funding avenues to which SHRP has given her access. But her students and fellow faculty members, too, have made the school an enjoyable setting in which to work. “I’m currently on the honors award committee and the faculty affairs committee, and the people I have come in contact with on these committees have been very nice,” she says. “Both academically and in terms of interaction with colleagues, this has been a very friendly environment.”

Norman E. Bolus, M.P.H., CNMT
Assistant Professor and Clinical Coordinator, Nuclear Medicine Technology Program, Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Sciences

Norman Bolus has filled about every role possible at UAB and UAB Hospital. One could even say he was born to work here.

“I’m an alumnus, I’m a student, I’m an instructor, and I’ve worked at the hospital, so I’ve got all the bases covered. I didn’t realize until a few years ago that I was even born at UAB, so I haven’t gotten very far,” Bolus says with a laugh.

That might be true, but only geographically. Bolus was exploring alternatives to medical school when he discovered a niche he liked in nuclear medicine; he received a B.S. in biology (with a minor in chemistry) in 1988, a B.S. in nuclear medicine technology in 1989, and an M.P.H. in occupational health and safety in 1998. After getting his B.S. and certification in nuclear medicine, he worked at UAB Hospital. Bolus started out as a lab instructor at the SHRP and became
David M. Morris, P.T., M.S., Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Co-academic Coordinator of Clinical Education, Department of Physical Therapy

David M. Morris didn’t know much about Birmingham or UAB when he came here while earning his B.S. in physical therapy at the University of North Carolina. But it was a fortuitous connection. “The person in charge of our clinicals sent me here on my last clinical rotation,” Morris says. “I had no understanding of what this place was like, and basically just fell in love with the medical center.”

Morris was hired to set up the university’s aquatic rehabilitation program in 1983. Being a UAB employee helped him become an alum. “A huge perk for me was that I was able to go on and get a master’s in physical-therapy education and a Ph.D. [in health education/health promotion in 2004] on the education-assistance program,” he says.

Morris took a faculty position in 1991, which he says was an easy transition after completing his master’s at SHRP. He values having been taught by, and now working alongside, nationally recognized educators. “They’re coming from a lot of different philosophies to education and have different teaching approaches,” he says. “It helps me to develop as a much more versatile teacher.”

“The other significant thing here at UAB is an atmosphere conducive to collaboration with other units, as a team, around campus.” For the past 10 years, Morris has been collaborating with Edward Taub, Ph.D., and his team of investigators using a groundbreaking form of stroke rehabilitation called constraint-induced movement therapy. Morris is also past president of the aquatic section of the American Physical Therapy Association and current vice president of the Alabama Physical Therapy Association.

Morris’s fortuitous move to Birmingham changed his life for the better. “I firmly believe being here at UAB and having all the professional development opportunities made a critical difference in my growth within the profession,” he says.

Ingrid Oakley, CRNA, D.V.M.
Assistant Professor, Nurse Anesthesia Program, Department of Critical Care

Ingrid Oakley didn’t want to look back and wonder “what if” she had pursued a different career—so she decided to pursue several.

“I started off with my nursing career, extended into graduate study, and then went into anesthesia,” she says. “But I had known when I grew up I wanted to be a veterinarian.” So she received her D.V.M. at Auburn University in 1999 and did a veterinary-anesthesia externship at Cornell University.

Still, Oakley also wanted to teach in one of her chosen fields someday. She was working for the Greater Birmingham Humane Society when SHRP approached her about a faculty position in January 2005. It was good timing: The Humane Society had finally gotten a much-needed new building, with a medical program and clinic. “I felt I had fulfilled what I needed to fulfill there,” says Oakley, who was ready to give back to the school and profession she loved. “As I was getting older, I realized that [nurse anesthetists] are going to be putting me to sleep one day, and I want to make sure I pass that knowledge on. It’s a...”
Critical Care Students Join Worldwide Call for COPD Awareness

Chronic obstructive lung disease, also known as COPD, has become one of the world’s most commonly suffered respiratory conditions by adults; according to some surveys, it may affect as many as 12.5 percent of senior citizens in the United States. The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) enlisted the help of health-care providers around the world to screen individuals for COPD and call attention to the severity of the disorder.

On November 16, SHRP students in the Respiratory Therapy Program partnered with the UAB Lung Health Center to rise to that challenge. They provided free spirometry screening for patients and helped set up educational displays at four locations on UAB’s campus: UAB Hospital, The Kirklin Clinic, the VA Hospital, and the Richard M. Scrushy Building. The displays included a PowerPoint presentation with streaming video clips as well as information on COPD and smoking cessation. This year’s World COPD Day is scheduled for November 15.

Respiratory therapy students also provided free spirometry screenings in the Hill University Center for three days during National Respiratory Care Week, October 23-29, 2005.
RADIATION THERAPY STUDENTS COME UP BIG FOR “RACE FOR THE CURE”

When radiation therapy professor Pam Cartright began assembling RT students to participate in the 2005 “Race for the Cure” to benefit breast-cancer research and education, she wasn’t disappointed—two dozen juniors and seniors stepped up to participate in the October 1 race. The group raised a total of more than $1,300 for breast-cancer research. “We didn’t keep up with who placed,” Cartright says, “we just went for the awesome experience of being part of so much positive energy.”

RADIATION SAFETY COURSE GATHERS NATIONALWIDE MOMENTUM

In 2001, three SHRP professors produced an online course in radiation safety to satisfy the requirements for retention of UAB’s radioactive-materials license. Since then, the online course has been successful in educating not only UAB students but also students at universities all over the country.

Michael Thompson, a professor in the Nuclear Medicine Technology (NMT) Program, says the course was initially developed out of necessity: “Without an adequate safety course, there would be no radioactive-materials license for UAB and millions of research dollars would cease to flow into our university,” he says. Thompson, fellow NMT professor Norman Bolus, and radiography professor Steven Dowd presented the course to the Alabama Department of Public Health, which approved it.

The three professors now have three years of data to analyze the results and effectiveness of the course, and they determined that the course’s online format has been just as effective as the more traditional classroom method of instruction; their journal article on the class, co-written with UAB assistant radiation safety officer Brad Brinkley, was published in the February 2006 issue of Applied Health Physics. However, that’s just one of the ways in which the class has been a success. A CD-ROM version of the course produced by Thompson has been purchased by universities such as Vanderbilt, Auburn, Purdue, and Notre Dame, as well as the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. Sales of the CD-ROM, available at [www.uab.edu/dts/cds/index.htm], have helped pay for new audiovisual equipment for the NMT lab, as well as for students to attend national meetings.

The course continues to pay dividends for UAB in a variety of ways, Thompson says, as the UAB Radiation Safety Office has used the CD-ROMs to assist with the in-house instruction of their own employees. “This, in turn, results in an excellent working relationship between our two programs,” he says.
Looking SHaRP

- Laila Abou-Agag received the International Scholar Academic Excellence Award in Doctoral Studies.
- David B. Allison, Ph.D., Timothy Nagy, Ph.D. (co-mentors), and Mark Cope, Ph.D. (trainee), received the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA), which runs from December 2004 to December 2006.
- Jamy Ard, Ph.D., received a $30,000 Charles Barkley Health Disparities Research Award at the inaugural UAB Minority Health and Research Center Gala on September 30. Ard has made headlines for his research into more effective and culturally sensitive methods for diagnosing and treating obesity in minorities. He also won a 2005 Nutrition Leadership Institute Training Award from the Dannon Institute and a Future Leader Award from the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI).
- Nikki C. Bush, Betty E. Darnell, Michael I. Goran, Barbara A. Gower, Ph.D., and Robert A. Oster, Ph.D., M.D., wrote a paper titled “Adiponectin is lower among African Americans and is independently related to insulin sensitivity in children and adolescents” that was published in the September 2005 issue (volume 54) of the journal Diabetes.
- Isao Eto, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Physiology and Metabolism, received the 15th annual UAB International Award.
- Jose Fernandez, Ph.D., was invited to deliver the keynote address at the Center for Investigations in Genetics and Biotechnology (CIGB) 2nd International Workshop on Genetics Research in Varadero, Cuba. He also received recognition for Best Scientific Paper in Nutrition Sciences from the Unbound Science Foundation.
- Barbara A. Gower, Ph.D., received a $250,000 NIH grant for a study to determine if greater infiltration of skeletal muscle by fat explains greater risk for diabetes among African Americans, and to determine if diet modification can reduce this risk. SHRP co-investigators for the study include Bradley Newcomer, Ph.D., Jose Fernandez, Ph.D., and Julian Munoz, M.D. Gower was also named a standing member of an NIH study section in Clinical and Integrative Diabetes and Obesity (CIDO).

2005-2006 POSTDOCTORAL CAREER ENHANCEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS

- Mark Cope, Ph.D.
- Yu-Hua Hsieh, Ph.D.
- Douglas Moellering, Ph.D.
- Xuxia Wu, Ph.D.

- Douglas Heimburger, M.D., professor in the Division of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, received recognition for Best Course and Best Course Director at UAB’s Annual Argus Society Awards.
- Yu-Hua Hsieh, Ph.D., placed third in the Postdoctoral Poster Competition at the Annual Comprehensive Cancer Center Retreat.
- Mohammed Khaled, Ph.D., professor of public health nutrition, has been approved for candidacy on the Fulbright Senior Specialist Roster.
- Christina Lara-Castro, Ph.D., received a 2005 Nutrition Leadership Institute Training Award from the Dannon Institute.
- Timothy Nagy, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Physiology and Metabolism, was appointed editor-in-chief for the International Journal of Body Composition Research, starting in December 2006. He has already had a busy year serving on NIH reviews of obesity/nutrition research centers and co-chairing the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center’s “Obesity and Cancer” retreat.
- LaShanta Price presented research in the inaugural Minority Research Day Competition.
- Travis Ptacek won second place in UAB’s Graduate Research Day Competition.
WEINSIER LEGACY HONORED IN NUTRITION TEXTBOOK

Former department chair Roland Weinsier, M.D., died in 2003, but the legacy left by his tireless work in nutrition research continues to be felt at UAB and beyond. His latest honor is a memorial written by Maurice Shils, M.D., Sc.D., of Cornell University for the 10th edition of *Modern Nutrition in Health & Disease*, considered the nation’s leading text in comprehensive clinical nutrition.

Shils had originally asked Weinsier to serve as associate editor for the new edition, and Weinsier enlisted six faculty members in the Department of Nutrition Sciences to write chapters; however, he died of cancer before the book was completed.

The SHRP faculty who contributed to the textbook are Joe Baggott, Ph.D., Gary Hunter, Ph.D., Sarah Morgan, M.D., and Christine Ritchie, M.D.; Margarita Treuth, Ph.D., a former postdoctoral student at UAB, also contributed to the work. The book is published by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins [www.lww.com].

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

PT DEPARTMENT GRADUATES FIRST DPT CLASS

December 16, 2005, marked a milestone for the Department of Physical Therapy as they celebrated the first group to be awarded the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from UAB with a hooding ceremony. Alumna Nancy White was the guest speaker at the ceremony and received the department’s Alumni Leadership Award for 2005.

PT ALUMNI RECEIVE NATIONWIDE RECOGNITION

Two physical therapy alumni were honored at the Combined Sections Meeting of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) this past February in San Diego. At the Section on Geriatrics awards ceremony, 1991 graduate Ellen Strunk received the Clinical Excellence in Geriatrics Award, while Jason Hardage, a 1998 alumus, received the Fellowship for Geriatric Research award. As part of his award, Hardage, currently a DScPT student at SHRP, will receive $1,000 from APTA to support his dissertation project.

Members of the 2005 graduating class are:
(Front row, left-right) Amanda Lee, Julie Robinson Kiel, Laura Mayhall, Amy Hall Crouse, Blaire Dagostin McCurry
(Back row) Antonio Pruitt, Emily Donahue, Stephen Guthrie, Saskia Hayes, Jennifer Lutrell Scott
hospital’s duty is to treat the sick and save lives, but what happens when the hospital itself needs saving?

If it’s lucky, it will be rescued by someone like Otis Story, who has traveled across the U.S. using his health-administration expertise to rescue struggling health-care systems from bankruptcy. His first stop was Savannah, Georgia, where he served as vice president and CEO of Memorial Health University Medical Center; from there he went to Jacksonville, Florida, to help Shands Jacksonville Medical Center get back on its feet; and he’s spent the last 14 months working with St. John’s Queens Hospital in New York City.

“It’s a significant challenge,” Story says of his current task. “Unfortunately, when you go into an organization like this, you have to restructure it, and part of the restructuring might be closure of programs and services. . . . You start looking at all of its assets and programs and asking, ‘Is this a particular business that we need to continue to be involved in?’ And then you start shedding those that are not profitable, or if it’s critical to your mission, you figure out a way to sustain it.”

He adds that in the business of hospital revitalization, there’s no such thing as a quick fix. “It usually takes anywhere from 18 to 36 months,” Story says. “You want to be able to get an organization back to investment grade where it can have access to capital, where it can start to grow its way to success as opposed to trying to contain or reduce expenses. . . . You cannot just continue to resize an organization down and expect it to remain a viable entity in a future state—you’ll find yourself once again on the brink.”

Story has plenty of experience to work from. After graduating from SHRP in 1977, he spent eight years at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, then returned to Birmingham to join Jim Moon’s administrative team at UAB in 1985. “I had the pleasure in the 1980s of working in two institutions that were rated consistently in the top 10 in the best hospitals in America,” he says. “That was the equivalent to playing on two world-champion teams or winning an Emmy Award year in and year out.”

As a member of Huron Consulting Group, Story divides his time between working in New York and spending time at home with his wife, Ava, and three children in Hoover. Though he spent more than a decade in New York City as a teenager, he considers Alabama to be his home.

Christina G. Stephens
B.S., CT (ASCP), HT (ASCP)

Christina G. Stephens has had a successful career as both a cytologist, a charity organizer, and a golfer (she has a 10 handicap). But all that might never have happened if not for something she didn’t even find out about until she was 21 years old.

In 1970, completely by accident, Stephens found a packet containing her adoption papers. It turned out the American doctor and Czech wife whom she’d called parents all her life weren’t her biological parents after all—they had adopted her from an East German family when she was an infant. That discovery started a 16-year search for her biological parents, which in turn inspired Stephens to write a book, Christina’s Gift, about her family history and her journey to uncover it all.

“It’s been interesting, that’s for sure,” she says of the writing and publishing process. “I’m very blessed that I’ve been able to get this published. I just got two copies the other day, and I’m waiting for the others as we speak.”

The publication of the book has added new activity into a life
Beth Whitehead’s life has traveled along a number of different paths and led to many different interests, but they’ve all tied back into one thing: the well-being of the community. It was on her mind when she got her degrees in public health and physical therapy from UAB, and on her mind when she started a physical-therapy practice in rural Clarke County, Alabama. And she has maintained her focus on the betterment of her community and her state as a co-chair of Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform (ACCR).

First and foremost, she says, constitutional reform is a good-government issue, one that needs to be resolved to allow “home rule” and put local issues in the hands of local people. But there are public-health issues at stake in the reform issue, too. “There’s also a need for tax reform—not necessarily a tax increase, but a fairer and more predictable system of income. So many services are dependent on sales tax, which fluctuates. I would not want to be responsible for budgeting for important services with an unpredictable cash flow.

“We need to figure out how to get more money into the general fund—I’m concerned about Medicaid and the dependency that rural Alabama has on it. If we lose funding at the federal and state levels, I do not know how some of the rural hospitals will be able to make it. As private physical therapists, Medicaid doesn’t pay us, so it’s not a matter of whether we’re going to get paid or not—it’s about whether hospitals in this area are going to be able to function.”

The private practice Whitehead and her business partners started in 1981 sent therapists to nearly every health-care facility in the area, and as times changed the practice evolved to focus more intensely on industrial health and employee wellness, particularly for the workers at the numerous paper mills in south Alabama. When the Scott Paper mill in Mobile closed, the practice evolved again, this time into an organization that would give physical therapists opportunities to develop as specialists within private outpatient clinics. All of the therapists in Whitehead’s practice are certified as orthopedic specialists.

That experience laid bare the challenges of being a health-care provider in an underserved rural area. That led her to more closely examine the issue of rural poverty and its relationship to health, and eventually to her position with ACCR.

What she hasn’t done is take her eye off of SHRP—she serves on the school’s Dean’s Advisory Board—or the community of Jackson, Alabama, where she returned in 1978 after spending time in Birmingham and Orlando. She just put the finishing touches on a renovation of the “ancestral home” she’s lived in for 27 years—which has been big news to her small-town neighbors.

“They’ve been real supportive, because come March it’ll be two years that I’ve been in the renovation process,” Whitehead says. “When you start seeing people reinvest in these old towns, it gets people excited.”
Health Information Management, Physical Therapy, and Health Informatics Alumni Sail Away to San Diego

The School of Health Related Professions held receptions in San Diego, California, at the American Health Information Management Association (October 17, 2005), American Physical Therapy Association (February 3), and Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (February 13) conferences. SHRP Dean Harold Jones, Ph.D., and several members of the faculty and staff from each program were on hand for the events. Alumni, students and friends were welcomed and quickly transformed into “shipmates” while enjoying their receptions at the Marriott Hotel and Marina in San Diego.
MSHA Program Hits the Big Four-Oh

On September 9, 2005, 200 persons gathered for the MSHA 40th Birthday Bash at Ted’s Garage. The event allowed longtime friends and faculty to recall many great moments about the MSHA Program. Music was provided by Sonny & Jonathan. Lydia Reed, CEO of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA), shared her thoughts with the group. Bill Moore (Class 4) helped provide background from the early days supplemented by Dr. Howard Houser’s “brief” history lesson. Three lucky partygoers won complimentary registration fees to the 26th Annual National Symposium for Healthcare Executives: Mickey Trimm, Jeanette Glenn, and Dana Gillies.

If you are an MSHA alumnus and did not receive your commemorative 40th anniversary tile, please contact Angela Grace, (205) 934-5665 or [afgrace@uab.edu].

Jon Vice Helps SHRP Achieve National Prominence

Alumnus Jon E. Vice is helping ensure that SHRP achieves national prominence by playing a key role in establishing the Fund for Health Professions Leadership and Excellence. Vice, who currently serves as president and CEO of Children’s Hospital and Health System of Milwaukee and its subsidiaries, has arranged for the organization to contribute $100,000 for the fund, which will be used to provide investment capital for innovative projects that promote excellence and visibility for the school.

Project proposals, which will be funded at the dean’s discretion, must demonstrate a plan for long-term sustainability to be considered for available seed money from the fund. Dean Harold P. Jones, Ph.D., has challenged the leadership of each program within SHRP to consider how they can develop a plan to achieve national leadership in their fields. With this fund, SHRP can aggressively support those initiatives that have the most chance of immediate success.

“In securing this very special and important gift that will help promote leadership initiatives, Jon himself has once again personally modeled leadership for all of us at the School of Health Related Professions and our graduates,” Jones says. “Jon’s ongoing contributions of time, resources, and wisdom are a significant factor in our school’s current success and its promising future.”
Contributions

The School of Health Related Professions is grateful for the support provided by alumni and friends during the past year. Private support has a tremendous impact on the School and its programs, enabling us to provide scholarship support to attract and retain talented students, purchase new technology for the classroom, enhance research capabilities, and provide programs for both student and faculty development, among other important needs.

We would like to publicly recognize and thank the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their gracious financial support during calendar year 2005. For information on how to contribute, please contact Cathleen Erwin, SHRP development director, at (205) 934-4159 or by e-mail at cerwin@uab.edu.

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way to really give back to your community and your profession as well. I know people say that all the time, but that’s one reason why I did it.”

Beth Barstow, M.S., OTR/L
Assistant Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy

After getting her bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy from the University of Minnesota, Beth Barstow decided to focus on low-vision rehabilitation, partly because her grandmother suffered from macular degeneration—an increasingly common problem as the population of the United States has gotten older. Barstow’s decision to join the UAB Center for Low Vision Rehabilitation (CLVR) four years ago came at an auspicious time, right as low-vision rehab began to take on a role of great prominence in the occupational-therapy field.

“Low-vision rehabilitation is a field that’s new and upcoming for occupational therapists, and being in this sort of program that is able to reach students in Alabama and nationwide really serves the greater good in terms of the overall population of low-vision clients,” she says.

After a few years of work at the CLVR, Barstow got her master’s degree in OT at SHRP and began teaching in the low-vision certificate program. Her interest in teaching has also prompted her to pursue a Ph.D. in health education and health promotion.

“I feel very blessed to be part of the OT department,” she says. “We’re the only program in the country that has a low-vision certificate program for occupational therapists. And I’m in a department with individuals who have a lot of experience and who have been teaching for many, many years. They’ve worked hard to make sure that I’m comfortable and that I’m growing as a professional in this field.”

Stephen O’Connor, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.P.A.
Professor and Director of the Executive and Residential Master of Science in Health Administration (MSHA) Programs, Department of Health Services Administration

From the time Stephen O’Connor received his Ph.D. in health services administration from the School of Health Related Professions in 1988, he hoped he could come back to UAB to work someday. But he knew he had to gain experience elsewhere first. O’Connor taught at Saint Louis University and then moved in 1990 to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he was a faculty member and coordinator of the Master of Science in Health Care Management Program.

O’Connor and his family were happy and weren’t planning to leave. “I always said I’ll stay, unless an opportunity ever came up at UAB,” O’Connor says. That opportunity presented itself in 2000, when O’Connor was asked to come back to become director of the MSHA program. The quality of the faculty, their work ethic, their scientific efforts, the quality of the students, and the connections to the university’s vast medical center drew the New Jersey native back “home” to SHRP.

“Just being located at UAB provides a wealth of opportunities for faculty members and students,” O’Connor says. “They are able to do so many things that other programs just aren’t able to do. Birmingham itself is an outstanding laboratory to study health-care administration—it’s just a natural place to be.”

Though he’s in familiar territory at SHRP, the pressures of being a faculty member and program director are much different.

“The major difference is that as a student, if you don’t perform well, you primarily let yourself down,” O’Connor explains. “As a program director you quickly learn that if you don’t perform well, all of the students and alums will be let down. It is a strong motivator to do the best job that you can.”
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 SHRP Annual Fund.

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