

# Alliance

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES  
VOL. 20, NO. 1  
2011

The science behind  
baby talk

Treating those returning  
from war

Leadership for all



## A message from the dean

Welcome to a new edition of *Alliance*. We trust that your year has been a successful one so far.

In spite of our continuing budget reduction concerns, the College of Allied Health Sciences has continued to grow in enrollment, course offerings, research, development funding, service and engagement, student leadership, degree programs, and clinical services.

One of the drivers for our growth has been our strategic plans, and the 2010-2013 Strategic Action Plan continues to serve as our blueprint for the future. Dr. Beth Velde, professor of occupational therapy and assistant dean for special projects, has taken the lead in working with faculty and administrators to craft a dynamic strategic action plan that is in line with plans of the University of North Carolina system and East Carolina University, so that there is continuity across the state, university, college and department levels to ensure that we are working toward the same goals and objectives. There are five ECU strategic directions, and our college has developed goals, objectives, measures and outcomes for four of these university directions.

The four ECU strategic directions addressed in our strategic action plan include: education for a new century; the leadership university; health care and medical innovation; and economic prosperity in the east. As our alumni and friends, it is important that you know what plans your college has developed and implemented. The articles in this issue are just a few of the many examples of how hard our outstanding faculty, staff, administration and students have worked to creatively meet the needs of the university, region and state and to ensure that ECU is a national model for public service and regional transformation. In fact, many of our projects have national and international application. What we do for the eastern part of North Carolina often has relevance to the nation and world.

The articles in this issue address our strategic directions and serve as examples of the progress CAHS is making to meet the strategic priorities of ECU and the UNC system. I hope you enjoy reading about the projects and initiatives that our college has strategically implemented and that you also take time to visit our regularly updated website at [www.ecu.edu/ah](http://www.ecu.edu/ah) to learn more about our legacy and priorities for teaching, research, service, engagement, and clinical practice.

In this issue, we also are trying something new. We are offering our readers an invitation to join the college's giving society, "Alliance for Excellence." Please look for the envelope in the magazine to make a gift. We have always been fortunate and extremely grateful that our alumni and friends support the work we do to ensure that our students are ready and possess the critical thinking skills to face the challenges that await them.

In spite of serious ongoing budget concerns, CAHS is moving forward. Would you expect any less?

All the best,

Stephen W. Thomas, Professor and Dean



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# The Science Behind Baby Talk

By Crystal Baity

The progression from cooing and squealing to babbling and gibberish is more than cute baby talk.

East Carolina University assistant professor Heather Ramsdell is studying how baby sounds develop in the first year of life and the link between those sounds, first words and early language development.

“The ultimate goal is to get a better picture of typical vocal development so one day we can indentify atypical vocalization, which is linked to late speech development, cognitive delays and social development,” Ramsdell said.

There is a lot more to be learned about how those sounds develop. “Babies perceive much more than they can produce,” Ramsdell said. “I get to go to work every day and listen to babies babble.”

Since joining ECU last summer, Ramsdell has built the Infant Vocal Development Laboratory in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Her light-filled corner lab is a nursery with primary-colored blocks, stuffed toys, books, puzzles, a high chair, play saucer, pack-n-play, rocking chair and more.

Ramsdell attaches microphones to babies and moms or caregivers, and

then they play, eat or nap—whatever they normally do—to record everything she hears. Acoustic tiles line the walls to capture crisp audio and eight cameras, held by purple monkeys strategically placed around the room, see baby’s faces clearly. The infant-worn microphone is safely encased in a custom-made vest by Catherine Visage of Seams Unique in Greenville so cables can’t be reached.

“The combination of the visual and audio together allow us to get the best judgment of the baby sounds, and the interaction between the caregiver and infant,” Ramsdell said.

The video and audio is fed into an adjacent control room with two coding stations and two computer monitors for

viewing. The software provides flexibility for viewing different recorded camera angles and audio signals, from a close-up of a baby’s face to a wider angle view of the interaction between infant and parent. One microphone can be turned on while another is off, or Ramsdell can listen to both.

“Everything in the nursery comes into the control room to keep the recording environment as natural as possible,” she said.

Then begins the time-intensive task of analyzing the range of sounds from squeals and growls to laughs and cries. “We also look at the facial affect. Was baby happy or sad? Was the gaze directed? Was he or she looking at mom? Did the baby produce sound due to a request from mom?” Ramsdell said. “There are a million different variables we could analyze.”

While a parent might only hear two syllables in “mama” or “dada,” Ramsdell might transcribe it as three different syllables. “There are huge discrepancies between what caregivers’ judge and what we see or hear when



At left, Dr. Heather Ramsdell plays with 6-month-old Drew Langley of Ayden in the infant vocal development laboratory at ECU. The lab is filled with toys, books and other items just like a nursery at home.





listening to the infant vocalizations over and over again in the research lab,” she said.

Typical developmental benchmarks show children start producing sounds that are well-formed and say their first words by 12 months old. By 18 months, they have a vocabulary of about 50 words.

Ramsdell was drawn to Greenville because of the reputation of ECU where she teaches phonetics and phonology, and the almost 4,000 babies born annually in Pitt County. She hopes to reach some of those babies to expand her research.

“As speech language pathologists, we need to know the intricacies of how speech develops and is produced,” Ramsdell said. “If there is any problem in communication in a person’s life, their quality of life is vastly affected.”

Her lab, unique in North Carolina, is a testament to advances in infant vocal development research since the 1970s. She previously worked as coordinator of the vocal and speech development project at the University of Memphis, where she earned her doctoral degree. She also was a speech-language pathologist in the Memphis City School District.

She received a bachelor’s degree in speech-language pathology and audiology from Iona College and a master’s degree in communication disorders from Boston University. At Memphis, her research mentor was Dr. Kimbrough Oller, a groundbreaking expert in the field.

Ramsdell’s arrival ends a multi-year search for someone with expertise



in infant speech production and development, said Dr. Gregg Givens, professor and chairman of the communication sciences and disorders.

“It is hoped that Dr. Ramsdell’s research will lead to better and earlier treatment of speech disorders in very young children as well as perhaps the discovery of early signs or indicators that a communication problem may be developing to allow us to implement intervention at an earlier age than what is now occurring,” Givens said.

A recent viral YouTube video of twin brothers babbling in a kitchen offers a glimpse at the research Ramsdell will be doing at ECU. The video, at youtube.ecu, shows the brothers communicating with unrecognizable words but obvious interaction: taking turns talking, looking at and imitating each other.

“It’s obvious that, despite the fact that these baby boys are not communicating with words, they fully understand how a communication exchange works,” Ramsdell said.

Mark Allen, the college’s electronics specialist, and 11 undergraduate students have helped Ramsdell set up the lab and prepare for its first participants. Dr. Andrew Stuart will evaluate hearing with the infants who are part of the research. ♡

*Drew Langley of Ayden reaches for a toy from Dr. Heather Ramsdell in her ECU laboratory. Ramsdell hopes to recruit infants about the same age as Langley to study typical vocal development in the first year of life. While not a participant, Langley demonstrated the lab’s features.*



# Pirates and Hurricanes

PHYSICAL THERAPY STUDENTS PART OF THE HOCKEY TRAINING TEAM

By Crystal Baity

When the Carolina Hurricanes suit up at home on game day, two East Carolina University physical therapy doctoral students are part of the training team.

Students Josh Hefner and Justin Pretzel along with associate professor Dr. Blaise Williams and clinical assistant professor Kevin Youngs were asked to help conduct pre-season screenings last summer for a research study on hockey player injuries. The invitation came after Jaime Holt, an ECU alumnus and physical therapist with the official team orthopedist of the Hurricanes, spoke to Dr. Walt Jenkins' ECU sports physical therapy class. Williams also participated in a conference hosted by Peter Friesen, head athletic trainer and strength and conditioning coach for the Hurricanes.

The research project led to the students serving as home game day assistants for the 2010-2011 season, where they primarily work with Friesen and assistant athletic trainer Doug Bennett.

Hefner and Pretzel arrive at the RBC Center three hours before game time, where they ready equipment, organize bench and emergency supplies, meet with the opposing team's athletic trainer, and assist with the treatment and training needs of athletes throughout the game, Friesen said.

Those needs may range from administering ice bags and hot packs to cleaning up blood or taking someone for X-rays. Hockey is fast and physical. Some hits compare to a minor car crash, Friesen said. Keeping players healthy is critical since they have three to four games per week and travel 75,000 miles a year, crossing 13 time zones.

"It brings a whole new dimension to sports medicine. Eating patterns, sleep patterns, playing surfaces, old skates/new skates," Friesen said. The students

*In photo at left, physical therapy doctoral students Josh Hefner, left, and Justin Pretzel, stand on center ice before game time. Top right, Hefner prepares ice bags for athletes.*



are also exposed to other cultures because hockey is a multi-national sport.

While not at the rink, the students are in clinical rotations in the Triangle each weekday, which makes for some very long hours. They usually stay about 90 minutes after the final buzzer, easily clocking a 6-7 hour day on top of the regular work day. Initially, the Hurricanes planned on one assistant, but because of Hefner and Pretzel's clinical responsibilities they split the job by alternating game days, which has worked perfectly.

It is the first time either has worked with professional athletes. Both are athletic and have an interest in sports and sports medicine, having played high school sports. Pretzel also played two years of college football. He is a longtime hockey fan, lured by the fast pace of the game.

"Pete is pretty well known," said Pretzel, 26. "It's been fun to pick his brain and watch some of the things he does with players. I definitely have

enjoyed working with the athletes. It challenges me.”

The experience has enhanced classroom and lab training Hefner and Pretzel receive at ECU. Exposure to the newest equipment, techniques and strategies is something Hefner and Pretzel can add to their repertoire as physical therapists.

“Honestly, the hockey players are like machines,” said Hefner, 25. “They work really hard. Hockey is one of the most physically demanding sports. They are playing every other night. These guys train *after* the game. They go lift weights; they get on bikes. They want to be that much better than other players.”

Hefner is in clinical training for 10 weeks at Wake Med in the rehabilitation unit, where he is helping patients who have had strokes, joint replacements or spinal cord injuries prepare to return home or go to assisted living. Hefner and his wife, Nikki, who is a cardiac surgery nurse at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, have a 1-year-old son, Noah.

Pretzel is working with patients in an outpatient physical therapy clinic in Cary under the guidance of a practicing physical therapist. “In a clinical setting, you see patients after they’re hurt. You’re trying to get them back to where they were before the injury,” he said.

Hefner and Pretzel graduate in May and look forward to a fulfilling career with an eye toward sports physical therapy one day. The Hurricanes experience has sealed their interest.

“It’s a tremendous learning experience for any student,” Friesen said. “It is a tremendous commitment on their part. You’ve got to find someone who is willing. If they’re not interested in sports medicine, it’s probably not a good assignment.”

Friesen said he has learned from having the students in the locker room as well. “I’m very thankful we’ve hooked up with ECU physical therapy,” Friesen said. “It’s an enriched environment and provides a very great service to us.” ☺

# Injury check

By Crystal Baity

Hockey’s fast pace and physical play can sideline some athletes.

But researchers at East Carolina University are studying risk factors and prevention of groin injuries to keep Carolina Hurricanes hockey players on the ice.

Before the season began, ECU associate professor Dr. Blaise Williams assembled a team including clinical assistant professor Kevin Youngs, students Jill Davis, Josh Hefner, Christina Pate, Justin Pretzel, Keith Sales, David Stallings and Kelsey Waggoner who helped with pre-season physical testing of the athletes’ strength, flexibility and cardiovascular endurance. They also used a handheld dynamometer to measure force and strength in the players’ outer and inner thighs.

“A big problem with hockey players is groin injuries,” Williams said. “Injuries to the hip adductors and hamstrings can be debilitating.”

The muscles are important because of the side-to-side movement of skating. Researchers want to know if the likelihood of injury increases in athletes with an imbalance in hip muscle strength. “We don’t want them to get hurt making a strong push against a skate,” Williams said.

Athletes are being tracked for injury during the season. Data from the preseason will be added and analyzed, then given to Carolina Hurricanes head trainer Peter Friesen for recommendation. “Then we’ll follow them in the off season to talk about intervention,” Williams said.

“You want to start and finish with as many athletes as you can,” Youngs said.

Physical therapists could decide to train the hockey players at risk for

groin injury differently or give them additional preventative exercises based on the findings.

“We define injury in a professional athlete differently than (we would in) you or I,” Williams said. “If it significantly limits the time they can play, if the muscle is strained to the point where they can’t participate normally (that’s injury).”

The partnership between ECU physical therapy and the Carolina Hurricanes is a first. “To my knowledge, it’s the first time ECU has partnered with a professional team,” Williams said. “It’s not unique in that colleges (across the country) are involved with research in keeping players healthy.”

ECU physical therapy department chairman Dr. Walt Jenkins began his sport injury research years ago in trying to reduce knee injuries with the women’s basketball team. “It’s sort of a model we work off of,” Williams said.

Most athletic injuries, if not a result of a traumatic event, are due to overuse. Others are more sport-specific. “We’ve had to learn a lot about hockey injury and hockey movement,” Williams said.

The partnership with the Hurricanes has been a good fit and one ECU physical therapy wants to continue by providing physical therapy students as game day assistants to the Hurricanes. ECU benefits by generating clinically-oriented research and data, and providing research opportunities for faculty and students, Williams said. “From the educational perspective, it’s phenomenal for our students to be working as physical therapists in a professional sports environment,” he said. ☺



## I am an ECU allied health sciences student

Applied for undergraduate admission: 246

Admitted to undergraduate programs: 158

Average GPA of those admitted into undergraduate programs: 3.23

Applied for graduate admission: 1305

Admitted for graduate programs: 161

Average GPA of those admitted to the graduate programs: 3.48

Total number of students enrolled in allied health sciences degree and certificate programs in fall 2010: 803

Female students: 677

Male students: 126

White students: 621

Non-white students: 182

Full-time students: 667

Part-time students: 136

In-state students: 703

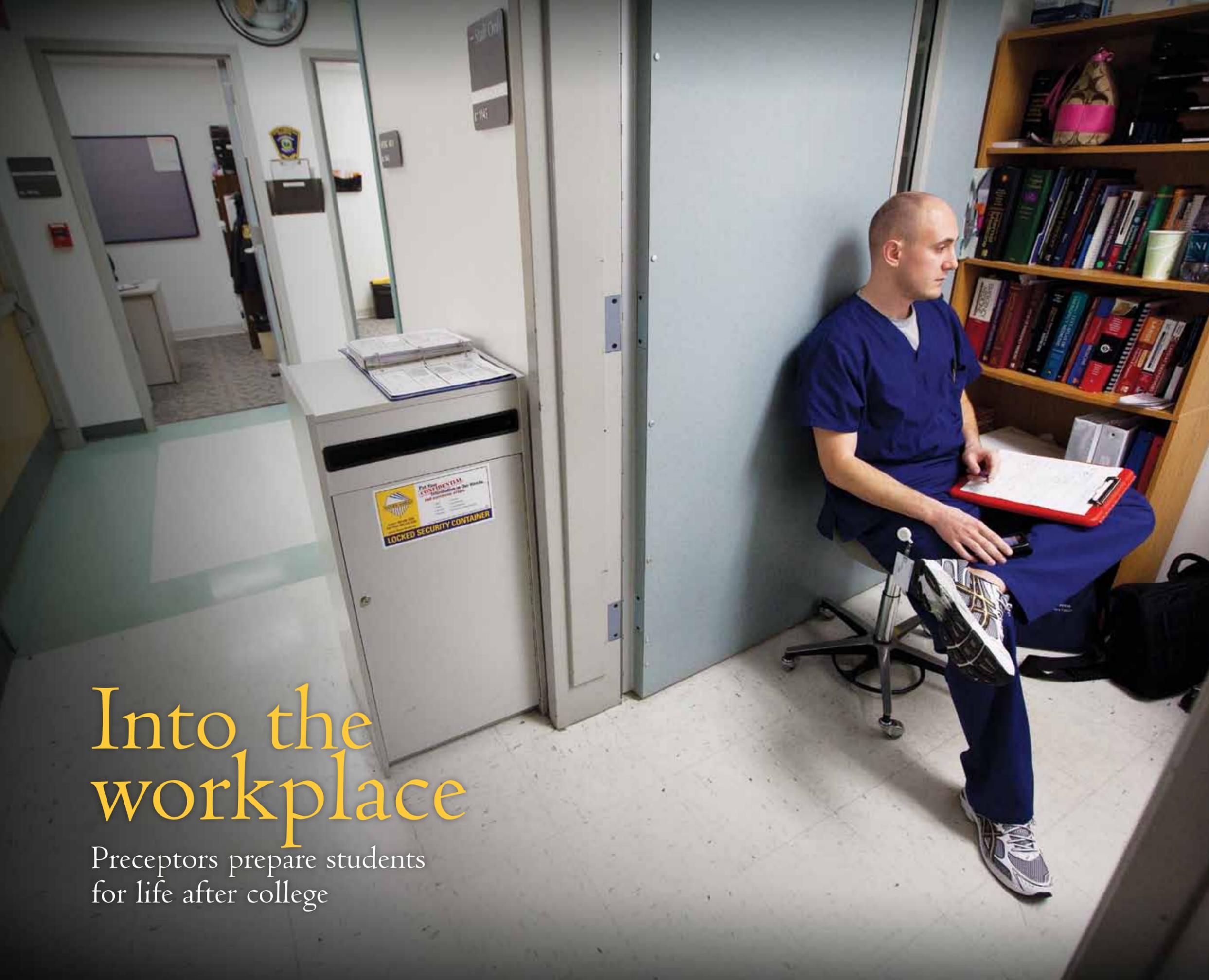
Out-of-state students: 100

Other important statistics:

The following are departmental enrollments for the 2010-2011 calendar year. Clinical Laboratory Science: 27; Communication Sciences and Disorders: 196; Health Services and Information Management: 191; Occupational Therapy: 62; Physical Therapy: 84; Physician Assistant Studies: 94; Rehabilitation Studies: 149; Graduate Certificate programs: 79

# Into the workplace

Preceptors prepare students for life after college



*By Crystal Baity*

Graduate student T.J. Potts is training on-the-job as a physician assistant this year.

One of his eight rotations is at Bertie Memorial Hospital in Windsor under the experienced eye of emergency room physician assistant Louis Velazquez.

Before they graduate, students in all departments in the College of Allied Health Sciences are placed in hospitals, doctor's offices, or other field sites, where they work with a preceptor, or clinical teacher, who plays a vital role in their education.

Velazquez has been a preceptor since the physician assistant studies program began at East Carolina University in 1996. It is the only state-supported program in the UNC system, and graduates have consistently achieved a 100 percent pass rate on their state licensing exams.

Students consistently rank the rotation with Velazquez as one of their best, said Julie Daniel-Yount, clinical education coordinator for the ECU Department of Physician Assistant Studies.

In addition to emergency medicine, students must work six-week rotations each in family medicine, pediatrics, women's health, general surgery, internal medicine, behavioral medicine and geriatrics. Sites are in Raleigh, Greenville and Wilmington, and in rural locations outside those cities. Settings include in and outpatient facilities where students get operating room experience and work with patients across the lifespan.

"They may learn skills in the classroom and lab, but it is different dealing with patients every day in the hospital," Velazquez said. "They develop a skill set. They develop a process for how to take care of patients. I try to bring to students that your profession doesn't end when you walk out the door. What you do reflects on who you are. It's that way in any profession."



In a small town, running into a patient at a store or restaurant is not unusual. “When you see someone and they say ‘you treated me well’ or ‘I feel much better since I saw you,’ that’s the beauty of working in a rural area,” Velazquez said.

He loves working with students, and is a guest lecturer at ECU. Some preceptors say having students in the workplace adds a special dimension to patient care. Others teach because they want to give back to their profession, Daniel-Yount said.

“We have offices call and offer to precept when they are seeking a PA to hire in the future,” she said. “Each rotation is sort of like a six-week job interview for the student and clinic.”

Velazquez, another physician assistant and nurse practitioner are the sole providers in the hospital after 5 p.m. He works a 24-hour shift as do students. “They’re here like I’m here,” said Velazquez, who as a licensed physician assistant practices under a supervising physician, Dr. Phil Harris, emergency

department director at Bertie.

Ninety percent of the patients coming to the emergency department are treated and sent back home, but about 10 percent require admission to the six-bed hospital or transfer to another hospital. Frequent complaints range from high blood pressure and aching backs to urinary tract infections or the flu, which surprises some students.

“They expect a high-energy thing that they see on TV. Maybe it’s like that at Pitt (County Memorial Hospital in Greenville), but it’s not like that here,” Velazquez said. “Everybody depends on everybody to pull their part, to start an IV, clean a bed, change sheets.”

Potts’ first day – Valentine’s Day – was the busiest at the hospital in many years. He gave CPR to someone with heart arrhythmia and saw 44 patients. “For here, that’s a lot,” he said.

The work in Windsor is similar to what Potts would like to do when he graduates. “I want to work in rural health care,” Potts said. “There is a need for rural practice. And I’m from a rural area.”

Potts earned a construction management degree from ECU, and worked in behavioral health with special needs patients before deciding to return to school. He took more than a year of pre-requisite courses before he applied. “I feel very fortunate to be in the program,” said Potts, 30, who grew up in Advance.

The college has more than 1,400 contracts with agencies that provide preceptors across North Carolina and out-of-state, said Frankie Lynn McClure, contracts clerk for allied health sciences.

One of the largest training sites is Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville.

Joshua Pruiett, an ECU clinical laboratory science student from Chattanooga, Tenn., is working part of his final semester with Gwen Taylor, a senior medical technologist in the hematology lab at PCMH.

Taylor has been a preceptor for eight years. She normally has two or three students per 28-day rotation in the lab,

*Photo at left, in the Bertie Memorial Hospital emergency department, ECU physician assistant student T.J. Potts props by a door with Julie Daniel-Yount, ECU clinical education coordinator, as physician assistant Louis Velazquez and lab technologist Stephanie Swain evaluate Bryan Foster, who was having stomach pain. Photo at right, Gwen Taylor, left, a senior medical technologist, works with ECU clinical laboratory science student Joshua Pruiett in the hematology lab at PCMH, one of the largest training sites for ECU students.*

which conducts tests on blood and other body fluids and analyzes results in helping doctors diagnose or rule out disease such as sickle cell anemia and leukemia.

“I’m behind the scenes but still play a part in the patient’s healing process,” Taylor said.

She organizes the student schedule, evaluates their work, meets with their academic advisor and “develops a plan to make sure they get what they need to get ready to go into the workplace,” Taylor said. “In a classroom, they get theory. Here, we apply the need to the theory part.”

The lab is one of four that students rotate through at PCMH. The others are the blood bank, chemistry and microbiology.

“In the labs, we’re hands on,” Taylor said. “You take what you have learned and apply it.”

Pruett said working in the hospital lab is more enjoyable than sitting in a classroom. “It enhances it, and ties it all together and allows you to put theory to work. Everything is practical.”



With an undergraduate degree in biology, Pruiett said getting a degree in clinical laboratory science is a desirable step toward his career goal. “There is a lot of variety in the field,” he said. “You don’t get pigeonholed in one area.”

PCMH set a new record for total lab test activity in February, according to George Williams, administrator of clinical lab/pathology at PCMH. The level 1 trauma center has 861 beds and is one of the largest in the state.

“The amount of throughput through this hospital, it services a large area. You certainly get a taste of that,” Pruiett said. The lab serves the hospital and two satellite locations. Turnaround times for tests range from 20 minutes to eight hours.

Not every student will work in a large hospital. But the skills students learn working with preceptors, like troubleshooting and time management, transfer to smaller facilities as well. Students are treated like employees.

“As a preceptor, I need to give them behavior to model,” said Taylor, who has worked at PCMH for 21 years. She graduated from ECU with a bachelor’s degree in medical technology in 1990.

At the end of their rotations, students should be able to step into an entry-level lab position and be prepared to take and pass the national certification exam, Pruiett said.

While coordinators for some programs said they have not had problems placing students in internships, others scramble to find training sites for students.

More physical therapy students are requesting and selecting placements in state since they are in debt for undergraduate degrees and don’t have the funds to travel to hospitals and clinics out of state, said Dr. Patricia Hodson, clinical associate professor and director of clinical education for physical therapy. More credentialed clinical instructors in physical therapy are needed as well. She places 90



students in 120 sites each year.

“With an increase in the number of DPT programs in North Carolina and an increase in the number of students seeking clinical affiliations in North Carolina, it has become increasingly difficult to assign students,” Hodson said. “Another issue is lack of available low cost or free housing.”

When Velazquez worked in Ahoskie before moving to Bertie, he collaborated with the Eastern Area Health Education Center to acquire a home where students can live while they intern in northeastern North Carolina to address the housing issue. It is still a popular choice today.

Dr. Jane Painter, professor and occupational therapy clinical coordinator, said it has been challenging finding pediatric settings for students. Some students who are from out-of-state choose to go back home to do their field work, Painter said.

Rehabilitation studies students seeking a bachelor’s degree must complete 450 internship hours, while master’s degree students are required to complete 600 internship hours, said Dr. Martha Chapin, associate professor and director of the undergraduate rehabilitation services program. They have 361 sites in North Carolina, some that date back to 1968. Their largest internship sites are at PCMH, PORT Human Services, Walter B. Jones Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center, the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Changing Seasons Treatment Services, Chapin said. ☺



# Returning from war

Federal funds support ECU research, treatment for active military and veterans

By Crystal Baity

Benjamin McHugh is adjusting to his new normal while searching for a cure for his dizziness.

The 23-year-old corporal suffered a blast injury last June while on patrol in Afghanistan after his four-man team hit an improvised explosive device or IED. A mild traumatic brain injury has left him with short-term memory loss, dizziness, constant headaches, and balance problems.

"I didn't notice most of it at first," he said. After returning to Camp Lejeune from his only combat deployment, friends noticed his lack of agility, his forgetfulness, his inability to walk straight ahead in a mall or restaurant. "They said, 'what's wrong with you?'"

Now McHugh is in physical therapy three times a week, and sees a neurologist, speech therapist and other rehabilitation specialists. His doctors at Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune referred

him to East Carolina University's speech and hearing clinic, where he is being evaluated by Dr. Sherri Jones, an expert in inner ear disorders and associate professor of communication sciences and disorders.

Jones and doctoral student Kristal Mills are conducting a clinical research project to pinpoint the damaged part of the complex vestibular and balance system to provide the best treatment possible.

"My hope is just to find out what's wrong," McHugh said. "If you can't figure out the problem, you can't fix it."

Through Operation Re-entry North Carolina, ECU aims to study and treat the problems of combat Marines such as McHugh and thousands of other military service personnel. The \$2.4 million federally-earmarked project involves different departments on campus and a five-year agreement between the U.S. Army and ECU.

Dr. David Cistola, project director, said it addresses the three "R's:" reintegration, re-entry and resilience of military personnel.

*In the photo at left, ECU doctoral student Kristal Mills checks Benjamin McHugh's ears before starting a vestibular and balance assessment. At right, McHugh sits in a rotary chair in ECU's speech and hearing clinic as Mills prepares for his test. Below, an infrared camera records McHugh's eye movements in response to computer-generated stimulation of his vestibular system.*

Some of the clinical treatment and research into traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder was already being developed in various departments when Cistola joined ECU in 2008 as associate dean of research in the College of Allied Health Sciences.

One of his duties was to build collaborative projects. He found a focus with eastern North Carolina's heavy concentration of military bases and population of active duty and retired soldiers. His task was to bring it all together and keep the momentum going.

Already in place was the Training for Optimal Performance Program started by Dr. Carmen Russoniello in the psychophysiology lab and biofeedback clinic in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies.

A computer program called "Virtual Iraq" can recreate a soldier's wartime experiences, from patrolling on a road to riding in a Humvee. Russoniello's

biofeedback training helps service members recognize and control their reactions in the simulated scenario, which they can use when they feel stressed or anxious in everyday life.

In the College of Human Ecology, child development and family relations experts have been holding workshops for families of reservists coping with deployment for the past four years. ECU interior design and merchandising students helped in the design of the wounded warrior barracks project at Camp Lejeune.

## STUDYING THE SIGNATURE INJURY

Traumatic brain injury from blasts is the signature injury of today's war, Cistola said, and causes concussion-like symptoms that often overlap with post traumatic stress disorder. Service members, many with lengthy and multiple deployments, are surviving physical injuries that they might not have in previous wars due to advances in protective gear and training.

In Jones' lab, McHugh is put through a two-to-three hour comprehensive battery to evaluate his inner ear.

Part of the assessment involves strapping on an infrared video camera to record McHugh's eye movements



in response to computer-generated stimulation of his vestibular system while he sits in a rotary chair. Other tests require him to move his head or body in different positions, or wear electrodes on the skin overlying his neck muscles or at his ears. Some of the tests, done in silent, darkened control rooms, are so monotonous that he falls asleep.

Jones' team has evaluated more than 100 Marines with blast-induced dizziness or other balance problems referred from Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, and every week brings new referrals. ECU now has one of the largest databases on vestibular function following blast injury in the country, Jones said.

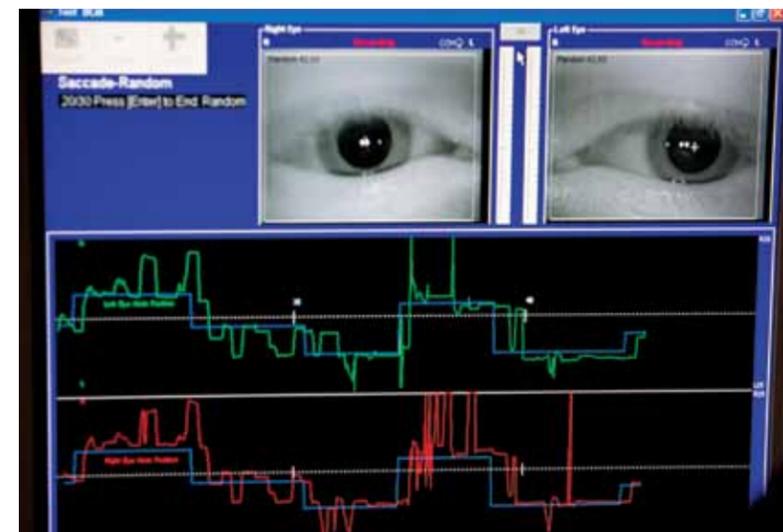
Already there are some unexpected preliminary findings.

"When a person is exposed to a blast, the theory was the pressure wave damages the air and fluid-filled organs, which the inner ear fits in that category," Jones said.

But so far data shows that only a small percentage of individuals exposed to blast actually have inner ear damage. "If it's not the inner ear, then what is it?" Jones said.

Defense funding will allow Jones to start a new study in collaboration with military physicians and Dr. Blaise Williams and Dr. Leslie Allison in ECU's physical therapy department to see how the brain integrates all its sensory information for balance.

"Our hypothesis is the brain is weighting those sensory inputs differently





*Dr. David Cistola, project director for Operation Re-entry North Carolina, works in his lab. He is developing diagnostic markers for blast exposure.*

after blast exposure,” Jones said. “The brain isn’t looking at the information properly. If it focuses on vision when it should be using vestibular, a person can become off balance.”

Many wounded service members go through a standard vestibular rehabilitation program but don’t see progress beyond a certain level, Jones said. For a Marine, that might be 50 percent to 75 percent of normal. “These individuals are very physically fit and active. They’re not used to not feeling well or being sedentary,” Jones said.

McHugh is among them although, to the average eye, he looks in tip-top condition. “I can’t run. I get way too dizzy and light headed,” he said. “I used to love to run. I’ve gotten way out of shape.”

There is a lot more to learn about what happens when someone is exposed to blast. “It’s a combination of expertise that’s necessary to solve these problems,” she said.

A new tool coming to Greenville that will be available to researchers throughout the UNC system will be a blast simulator laboratory. One of six in the world, researchers will be able to study the impact of blast on blood, tissue and other body parts.

Findings eventually may lead to a quick and reliable test for mild traumatic brain injury closer to the battlefield, Cistola said. The point of diagnosis matters in determining treatment, documentation and discharge. “And it determines what happens when they walk into a VA hospital three years from now,” Cistola said.

#### **FUNDING AND PENDING PROJECTS**

ECU’s Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies Dr. Deirdre

Magean coined the term “Operation Re-entry” and she and Cistola gained the support of U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield and U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, who championed it in Congress. While \$2.4 million in Department of Defense funds was allocated in the 2010 budget, none has been released to ECU. Another \$2.2 million is expected, but not guaranteed, this year. Operation Re-entry will begin with about 10 projects, but has the potential to expand to 30 projects a year throughout the UNC system. A project manager will be hired.

“There is so much support for caring for returning veterans,” Cistola said. “We won’t stop trying if it happens, and we’ll do it anyway if it doesn’t.”

Some “shovel-ready” projects can’t begin until federal funding arrives.

In occupational therapy, department chair Dr. Leonard Trujillo, a veteran himself, will use the Interactive Metronome, a computerized assessment and treatment tool that prompts users to match repetitive rhythmic patterns while tapping their feet or clapping their hands. The therapy will help active duty service members with mild traumatic brain injury improve hand and eye coordination, fine and gross motor skills, and mental organization. Trujillo’s past work with stroke patients and the Interactive Metronome have shown improvement.

Occupational therapy graduate students also will use TRX training, a portable exercise system adopted by the military, to help service members improve strength and coordination. The sessions can be done anywhere.

“When you’re active and feel you’re engaged, the outlook on life is much more positive,” Trujillo said. “This will help them return to a sense of urgency and place.”

Dr. Paul Toriello and two doctoral students in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies will pilot a computerized screening test and brief intervention for substance abuse, mental illness and mild traumatic brain injury

with Pitt County veterans.

Research has shown that 46 percent of veterans have a substance use disorder, 11 percent have mental illness and 60 percent report symptoms of mild traumatic brain injury.

“Of particular concern is how these three conditions interact to impair veterans’ lives,” Toriello said.

Studies show that more than 34 percent of veterans with a primary substance use disorder have a co-occurring mental illness. Half with mild traumatic brain disorder also have substance use issues. In fact, alcohol use by someone with brain injury can exacerbate symptoms of aggression and memory loss, Toriello said.

According to Pitt County Veterans Service, more than 10,500 veterans live in Pitt County. Extrapolating from the data from earlier studies suggests “a majority of Pitt County veterans may be attempting to cope with these three conditions, any one of which can cause serious problems and, when experienced in combination, can be significantly debilitating,” Toriello said.

#### **LOOKING FORWARD**

McHugh will be leaving the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Division after five years of service in June. He plans to go to college and hopefully into the reserves. For now, he carries a day planner filled with doctor appointments and other important dates to remember since his short-term memory is affected. A car enthusiast and mechanic, McHugh, at the good-natured ribbing of friends, will double and triple check his work when asked if he remembered a repair step.

For researchers, Operation Re-entry is a way to give back to service men and women who have sacrificed for freedom. It puts in place greater support services and programs for returning injured soldiers today and decades to come. “It provides an extra level of motivation,” Cistola said. ☺



# Leadership for all

## Giving students the tools they need to work inter-professionally



*By Crystal Baity*

Trey Elam's leadership experience started early, in church, where he still volunteers as a Baptist Men's Association World Changer.

The 24-year-old occupational therapy graduate student is student liaison to the dean's office and he chairs the Student Leaders Council in the College of Allied Health Sciences. He heads a group of 14 student representatives from each of the degree-granting departments in the college.

His undergraduate degree is in recreational therapy. One of his favorite leadership roles was as a Babe Ruth baseball coach for 13-15 year olds in Fairmont, his hometown.

As a longtime volunteer for World Changers, he supervised crews of teenagers who repaired roofs and windows or painted houses for the needy. Three years of overseeing young workers with no construction experience in places such as Chattanooga, Norfolk and across North Carolina reinforced the importance of teamwork.

*At left, Trey Elam, wants to join the Navy as an occupational therapist after graduation. At right, Elam volunteers on a service project at bingo night at Red Oak Assisted Living Center in Greenville.*

"If you're a leader in anything, you've got to learn how to distribute tasks," Elam said. "I learned to be a delegator."

Honing those leadership skills hasn't been happenstance.

A plan to promote student leadership in the College of Allied Health Sciences has come straight from the top, from Dean Stephen Thomas to council advisor Dr. Beth Velde to Elam's research mentor Dr. Leonard Trujillo.

Training and preparing leaders is one of five strategic directions adopted by ECU. Developing student leaders is an integral part of student education, Dr. Thomas said.

"Allied health professionals must be change agents as health care changes to adapt with societal needs," Velde said. "Preparing our students to be leaders is the first step in the process."

Student leadership is a key component in the college's strategic plan. Students get broad leadership opportunities. Courses stress and reinforce leadership skills. The college also recognizes students who demonstrate ability as leaders.

The college received a \$20,000 BB&T grant in December to expand its preparation of student leaders and to work closely with the College of Nursing, its neighbor in the Health Sciences Building. In the working world, physical therapists, speech language pathologists or rehabilitation counselors work side by side with nurses and doctors as part of a health care team.

"With the many changes occurring in health care delivery, we will need a cadre of future leaders to help find new ways to make health care economically viable and effective. It takes strong leadership to bring about successful improvements in health care," Thomas said. "A critical role of leadership will be the creation of an inter-professional health care culture where the many health disciplines can work together to advance better health for everyone."





*At left, Sarah Peterson coordinates the service committee of the Student Occupational Therapy Association. At right, occupational therapy graduate students lead older drivers through a 12-point checklist and recommend car adjustments or adaptations during a CarFit community service project in Greenville.*

As part of the grant, officials will work to strengthen mentoring and faculty-student relationships. A leadership conference on reinforcing inter-professional skills and new courses will be started for students in allied health sciences, dental medicine, nursing and medicine. Through the creation

of a health sciences leaders council modeled after allied health's student leaders council, students in the health sciences division will have the chance to meet regularly to develop team working skills and promote understanding of professional differences and similarities. "Hopefully, if students learn to

collaborate across disciplines while in school, they will be better prepared to enter the health care system able to work effectively together," said Dr. Elaine Scott, director of the East Carolina Center for Nursing Leadership.

Occupational therapy graduate student Sarah Peterson already participates in team work through clinical field work and volunteering at ECU's Adapted Sports Day. There, recreational therapists, physical therapists and occupational therapists and others come together to support athletes with disabilities. "They are different therapies, but together they make the big picture," Peterson said, adding that sometimes patients don't know the difference between therapists. "We even have pre-conceived notions ourselves."

Robyn Sauls of Farmville, a graduate student in speech language pathology, said providing mentoring and collaboration opportunities for students while in school is important. "The current students in undergraduate and graduate school are the future of the workforce," she said. "It is essential that leaders help facilitate the growth of students academically and emotionally. We can always learn from others' experiences."

Sauls has served as representative for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders on the student leaders council. She said a council-sponsored leadership workshop last fall gave students an excellent opportunity to discuss concerns, give suggestions and create relationships with other advisors and students in the college.

"The Student Occupational Therapy

Association advisor and I had a great conversation and she helped me create a handbook for my own organization," Sauls said.

## LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE GO HAND IN HAND

In the College of Allied Health Sciences, there are nine campus organizations related to majors that students can join to gain leadership experience and community service.

Peterson coordinates the service committee for the Student Occupational Therapy Association, a job that has pushed her out of her comfort zone. She contacts various organizations for possible service projects and schedules and coordinates what the nine-person committee decides.

"I tend to be shy, reserved," said Peterson, a Greenville native. "This is different for me. I've always been more of a follower. But this is one of those things that I really wanted to do. I have become more involved."

Last year, SOTA teamed up with Give to the Troops to prepare care packages and send cards to 40 to 50 service members overseas. Students donated their time and willpower to Shepherd's Helpers to build wheelchair ramps for needy people in the community. At Hope Lodge, the committee led a Valentine's craft project for family members. They cooked a meal at the Ronald McDonald House, made shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, and helped at-risk girls with homework in Operation Sunshine's afterschool program.

Her favorite experience, one she did on her own and not part of a student group, has been working with the exceptional children's baseball league at Elm Street Park, where she was paired with a child for about six weeks last summer. Children and adults of all abilities get to participate.

"I want to make a difference," Peterson said. "I want to help others,



and by helping them, it helps me. It has helped me grow so much."

Sauls, who has an undergraduate degree in exercise and sports science, is president of the National Student Speech Language and Hearing Association at ECU, which has 118 members.

"It has been a completely different experience because of the demands of graduate school," Sauls said. "Through my current position, I feel I have learned more about working in a professional environment with a variety of people at different levels. I feel like I have developed more accountability as a leader through NSSLHA and have increased my ability to delegate tasks efficiently."

Last semester, NSSLHA participated in a fall festival for children in ECU's Speech Language and Hearing Clinic and worked with the Pitt County Department of Social Services to adopt three children to provide clothes and toys at Christmas. This semester, students held a school supply drive for the Kennedy Home of Kinston, and sponsored a Relay for Life team in memory of communication sciences and

disorders faculty member Meta Downes, who died last spring from breast cancer.

## DECISION MAKING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

After attending a leadership conference in 2009, Peterson realized she never thought of herself as a leader. "But everyone is a leader in their own way, whether they realize it or not," she said. "I've had to become more confident in myself."

She also recognizes there are different styles of leadership.

"I may be more quiet and reserved. Some people will relate to me and my way. We all have our different styles, and they're all effective," Peterson said. "It's really important to listen to what other people want."

Being liaison for student leaders council, focusing on class work and field work and graduate research, and other volunteer responsibilities seems overwhelming at times.

"Finding a way to get all these things accomplished is a good professional experience," Elam said. "That's one way I'm really growing." ☺



## First interactive, remote hearing test will expand access to care

By Karen Shugart

An East Carolina University professor is among the creators of the first real-time, remote diagnostic hearing assessment that allows interaction between clinician and patient – a low-cost development that could bring much-needed treatment to rural and low-income patients around the world.

“There are people throughout the world who have no access to professional hearing health care,” said Dr. Gregg Givens, chairman of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and a practicing clinical audiologist. “This gives clinicians the ability to remotely diagnose and treat hearing loss.”

ECU and Otovation, a leading provider of audiometer products for hearing professionals and care providers worldwide, are working together to make the system available, with a projected release date this year.

“Dr. Givens and his colleagues were visionary in seeing this many years ago as a potential improvement in assisting and delivering care for patients,” said Dave Davis, founder and president of Otovation. “We at Otovation believe very strongly in the quality of what they have developed, and we look forward to continuing to work with ECU in developing and bringing this important service to market.”

*At left, Dr. Gregg Givens' vision for a remote hearing test has led to the development of a much-needed tool for telemedicine. At right, Givens demonstrates software that will increase access to hearing tests in rural areas.*

Hearing loss often goes untreated. The National Institutes on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, a federal agency, estimates that only one in five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wear one.

For rural and low-income populations, access to hearing health care can be scarce. In eastern North Carolina, for instance, some counties have no audiologist. “Hearing health care in some of these communities just doesn't exist,” Givens said.

Innovations in telemedicine offer ways to increase access to services while improving quality of care and reducing costs. With this new hearing system, clinicians can remotely test patients around the world through local or

area-wide networks as well as the Web. Assessments can even be performed using smart phones and tablet PCs.

The hearing test system will be suitable for use in varied settings, including nursing homes, schools, hospitals, correctional facilities and military settings.

Givens and his colleagues began working on the project in the early 1990s as a way to get hearing care to people in rural and under-served areas. In the early years of development, they were stymied by hurdles in software and hardware development. The first Internet-based test on campus was conducted in the late 1990s, Givens said. The first of two patents was issued in 2005, and a third patent was issued in December.

“It's exciting to see something you envisioned finally coming to reality,” Givens said.

To learn more, contact Givens at [givensg@ecu.edu](mailto:givensg@ecu.edu) or 252-744-6080. For more information on Otovation, contact Davis at [dave@otovation.com](mailto:dave@otovation.com) or 610-768-9300. [A](#)



# Healing strength

Alumna Stacie Caswell used her occupational therapy training to help other soldiers

By Karen Shugart

At Mission Hospital in Asheville, retired U.S. Army Maj. Stacie Caswell gently coaxes inpatient rehabilitation patients into doing what once were simple tasks: walking to the bathroom, brushing teeth, sitting up.

Don't be fooled by the soft-spoken manner, however. Caswell is no softie. This ECU alumna is an occupational therapist who knows how to get results – and get answers. An Army-trained linguist and interrogator, she has a resume that's full of stories – some touching, some tragic – that bespeak of a career that has its roots in Caswell's desire to help others, whether she's in Iraq or western North Carolina.

"For me, if I can make a difference in somebody's life, day-by-day, that's satisfaction," Caswell said.

That desire has served her well. In the 1990s, she trained as an interrogator. In 2001, she debriefed survivors of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon. She's worked with soldiers to help them cope with the rigors of war. And she's instituted a program that trains dogs to be companions for soldiers who might feel more comfortable opening up to a Labrador retriever than another human being.

"Dogs can take in that emotion," Caswell said. "They're not going to judge ... they're just going to keep licking that soldier in the face."

Caswell joined the Army fresh out of high school, looking for a way to pay for college. After Fort Jackson, she

studied Czech for a year at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif. She then trained as an interrogator because she wanted a challenge.

Some people, Caswell admitted, have difficulty picturing her as a hard-nosed inquisitor. But information can be obtained in many ways, Caswell said, and she used her easygoing manner to work in her favor.

"You don't have to be mean to get somebody to talk," she said.

Today, that training comes in handy in what might, at initial glance, be the unlikeliest of places: the assisted living center where she recently worked with senior citizens and, now, at Mission Hospital. The goals may be different, but the drive for results is similar.

"In interrogation school, they taught that everybody's different and how to use a different approach with your source," Caswell said. "You have to figure out what approach will work."

In 1993, Caswell enrolled in ECU's occupational therapy program. Her professionalism stood out, said Dr. Anne Dickerson, professor of occupational therapy.

Dickerson remembers that Caswell did a research project and presented a poster at an American Occupational Therapy Association conference – a rarity then for an undergraduate student.

"When she graduated, to have the determination to do a research project and follow through on it was very unusual," Dickerson recalled.

Caswell continued to serve as an Army Reservist, and soon after graduation rejoined active duty when she was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Medical Specialist Corps.

"I figured if I could help soldiers, then that's what I needed to be doing," Caswell said.

*At left, Stacie Caswell is an occupational therapist at Mission Hospitals in Asheville. On a tour of duty in Iraq, Caswell repairs a flexor tendon for an injured Iraqi man.*

Her ability to draw people out helped after Sept. 11, when terrorists crashed American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. Then assigned to Walter Reed Medical Center, Caswell was asked to debrief survivors. These debriefings, in which people are brought together for an opportunity to talk about a traumatic event, helped survivors identify ways to cope. She and her team worked with men and women who were among those closest to where the attack occurred.

"They barely walked away," she said. "They talked about how they crawled through the smoke. And how they got home having lost their wallet, didn't have any money ... How their spouses thought they might have died."

Today, the memory gives her pause.

"Those were some of the most difficult debriefings I've ever done," Caswell said. "You never expect to witness or have to debrief a traumatic event of that magnitude on American land. Emotion was very high, and their detail of the event was so acute that it really stayed with us."

Then came two tours in Iraq, where she led a combat-stress detachment that helped soldiers deal with their problems, both combat- and home-related.

As she visited patrol bases during

her first deployment, she noticed many soldiers had dogs or cats. Owning pets violated policy, but it gave soldiers, particularly those in caretaker roles, a release.

"They want to be a pillar of strength," Caswell said, but with a dog or cat, they could cry. Upon her return to the states, she related this to a colleague who suggested Caswell start a program to use therapy dogs in a combat zone. It was another way to support soldiers, who often miss their pets dearly while deployed, Caswell believed.

Her superiors agreed, and the therapy-dog program has now become standard practice. The program was one of several reasons Caswell was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal – one of several commendations, including two Bronze Stars, that Caswell received before retiring in 2010.

At her retirement celebration, Caswell honored Dickerson for mentoring her at ECU and after graduation. She also honored a couple that had sent gift packages to her in Iraq, Dickerson said.

"She's just somebody that really appreciates where she's come from," Dickerson said. "... This is a story of somebody working her way up to be the best that she can be." 🐾



**CLINICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE**

**Joshua Pruiett**, a senior from Hixson, Tenn., received the W. James and Susan T. Smith Scholarship for 2010. The \$1,000 scholarship is based on financial need, academic performance and the potential to contribute to the profession of clinical laboratory science.

The scholarship recognizes more than 30 years of academic contribution to ECU by Dr. Susan T. Smith, professor emeritus and former chair of the clinical laboratory science department, and her late husband, Dr. W. James Smith, who taught cell biology and biochemistry in the Department of Biology at ECU from 1966 until 1999.

Susan Smith is a clinical laboratory scientist and biochemist who taught clinical chemistry, immunology and serology and professional issues from 1972 until 2001.

Seniors **Jeanette McDaniel** of King George, Va., and **Yolanda Wooten** of Bailey received the first Whitfield Memorial Scholarship.

Each scholarship, valued at \$1,075, was awarded in recognition of academic performance, financial need, community service and an interest in clinical chemistry.

The scholarship is in memory of Mary Beth Whitfield, who received a bachelor's degree in clinical laboratory science from ECU in 1988. She worked at Pitt County Memorial Hospital for 23 years, first in the clinical chemistry department and then in laboratory information systems. After her sudden death in December 2009, PCMH colleagues donated funds to establish the scholarship.

**COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS**

Doctoral student **Kensi Cobb** received a Student Summer Research Fellowship from the American Academy of Audiology. The purpose of the fellowship is to expose the student to a stimulating research environment under the guidance of a mentor. The title of the project Cobb will be involved in is "Effect of Altered Auditory

Feedback on Stuttering Duration and Type in Adults Who Stutter During Conversation." Her mentor is Dr. Andrew Stuart.

Meta M. Downes Scholarship – **Kristen Markel**

Tanya Johnson McDowell & Riley Floyd Scholarship – **Courtney Durham**  
Robert A. Muzzarelli Service Scholarship – **Courtney Jackson**

National Student Speech-Language & Hearing Association Scholarships – **Ashley Whittenauer** and **Jessica Boykin**

**Denise Tetterton**, a speech-language pathology graduate student, received the Barbara Bremer Award. The Bremer Award is given annually to graduate students in recognition of clinical work that has made a recognizable difference in the life of a client.

Barbara Bremer is an alumna with a history of supporting ECU students. She has a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in speech-language pathology from ECU. She works in private practice.

Doctoral student **Chris Gaines**

received the American Academy of Audiology Student Investigator Vestibular Research Grant for 2011.

The grant was reviewed and sponsored by the boards of the American Academy of Audiology and the American Academy of Audiology Foundation and the Research Grant Review Committee. The title of the proposal, "Neural generators of mammalian vestibular responses to linear head motion," is the topic of his dissertation research. The grant is funded in partnership with the American Institute of Balance Education Foundation.

Gaines also received a Student Research Forum award from the AAA. The award will provide travel support to the annual convention in Chicago to present his research project at a special session. His research is under the direction of Dr. Timothy Jones.

Doctoral student **Teresa Lever** won the 2010 Helms Student Award from the ECU Chapter of Sigma Xi.

The Helms Research Awards were established by Dr. R. Marshall Helms in 1987 with a donation to the ECU Foundation. The award honors three members of the Helms family who were involved in research and teaching at ECU. Marshall was a native North Carolinian and member of the physics department at ECU from 1948 until his retirement as professor emeritus in 1972. He remained active in retirement,

**BATE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP**

*Photo at left – students awarded The Bate Foundation Scholarship are from left to right: **James C. Spicka**, health services and information management, **Kathleen Casto**, clinical laboratory science, **Melissa Williamson**, rehabilitation studies, **Melissa DeCarlo**, physical therapy and **Jamie Camp**, physician assistant studies. The \$4,000 scholarship is based on financial need, academic performance and the potential to contribute to the health care profession.*

# In Memoriam



*At left, Nathan Black holds the youngest son of longtime friend, Patrick Witzigman, on his graduation day from ECU.*

ocean, and was a passionate ECU and New Orleans Saints fan.

He was always happy and full of life, ready to make anyone laugh with a joke or comment. He was a kind-hearted person who would do anything for his friends and family without hesitation.

Black is survived by his parents, Murrey and Robin Black of Louisville, Miss., and Dr. James A. and Diane Smith of Statesville; two brothers, Patrick and his wife, Jennifer, of Shalimar, Fla., and Murrey Lee and his wife, Julie, of Myrtle Beach, S.C.; a sister, Lesley Colvert and husband, Robert, of Statesville; grandparents, W.L. and Norma Black of Louisville, Miss., and Posey Freeman of Madison, Miss.; step-brothers, Eddie Shenk and John Young; step-sisters, Annie Langston and April Turner of Mobile, Ala.; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, and special family friends Patrick Jay and Loriann Witzigman and their three sons of Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The Freedom Scholarship in occupational therapy is being created in his memory. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the ECU Medical & Health Sciences Foundation, 525 Moye Blvd., Greenville, N.C., 27834, or fill out and mail the enclosed envelope in this issue, or contact Pat Frede, 252-744-3523 or [fredep@ecu.edu](mailto:fredep@ecu.edu).



**BATE FOUNDATION WINNERS**



*In the photo, Mallory Herbold of Jacksonville, left, and Brittany Whitehurst of Windsor received scholarships for 2011 in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Science. Herbold received the W. James and Susan T. Smith Student Scholarship valued at \$1,000. It is named for former department chair Susan Smith and her late husband. Whitehurst received the Stas and Brenda Humienny Scholarship valued at \$1,000. The Humiennys live in New Bern and are 1979 graduates of the department.*

presenting his last seminar to the physics department in 2001 at the age of 93. He died in 2002.

The Helms Student Research Award focuses largely on the clarity and significance of a single research publication of which the student is an author. The manuscript may be either published, in press or in preparation and may be submitted in any area of science or engineering.

Jessica Pierce, a doctoral student, received a travel award from the Association for Research in Otolaryngology to present her research at the mid-winter meeting in Baltimore. Her research mentor is Dr. Sherri Jones.

#### HEALTH SERVICES AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT/ COMMUNITY HEALTH

Peter Chukwurah received the Healthport Scholarship. The scholarship assists deserving students majoring in health information management.

#### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Carolyn Fountain was awarded the Jessica King Memorial Scholarship, which

provides support for students enrolled in occupational therapy at ECU and who are pursuing careers in gerontology.

Jessica King was a second year graduate student in the occupational therapy program with a keen interest in older adults. A friend to all her classmates and faculty members, it was a loss to everyone when Jessica died suddenly on Aug. 29, 2005. She was 26.

#### PHYSICAL THERAPY

Jennifer Brewer, Jill Davis, Nancy Jo Hodges and Christina Pate received the George Hamilton Physical Therapy Scholarship.

The ECU Physical Therapy Alumni Society established the scholarship in 1995. The award is in honor of George F. Hamilton, former chairman of the department. The purpose of the scholarship is to assist deserving third-year doctoral of physical therapy students.

The North Carolina Physical Therapy Association awarded scholarships to Nancy Jo Hodges and Molly Pleasants.

Hilary Bauer, a third-year doctoral of physical therapy student from

Winston-Salem, was awarded the Blaise M. Youngs Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes academic merit and financial need for physical therapy students.

#### PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

First year physician assistant student Jamie Camp received the Bunting Scholarship. The scholarship is funded by Michael L. Bunting and is a one-time award of \$1,000 based on financial need and scholarship.

#### REHABILITATION STUDIES

Phyllis St. John, a second year graduate student, received the College of Allied Health Sciences Patriot Scholarship.

The Patriot Scholarship is based on academic strength, leadership capability and the potential to contribute to a profession in the field of allied health sciences. Awardees must be a military member of veteran, or the spouse or child of a military member or veteran.

Jamie Pedro, an undergraduate student, received the T.L. McClellan Memorial Scholarship. The \$1,000 scholarship recognizes and provides financial assistance to full-time students pursuing a degree in rehabilitation. The purpose of the award is to promote professional excellence in the practice and advancement of rehabilitation in North Carolina. T.L. McClellan was an active member of the NCRA and this is the 41st anniversary of the awarding of the scholarship. ♡

## Back in the USA



*By Pat Frede*

It is so good to be home! I sure took a lot of things for granted before my 14-month deployment. I thought I understood the importance of education, but having spent 10 months in a country where only 15 percent of the population can both read and write, there is no doubt that education can change a person's world.

As many of you know, I am the director of development and alumni affairs for the College of Allied Health Sciences, but some of you also know that I am a senior chief petty officer in the United States Navy Reserve. I was called to active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2009 and have recently returned from a tour in Afghanistan.

Getting back to work at the university has reminded me of how much there is to do here at home. For our alumni, I am so looking forward to homecoming to reconnect with old friends and meet

*At top, Pat Frede greets a young boy while serving in Afghanistan. At right, Frede is pictured with James Spicka, a Bate Foundation Scholarship winner and health services and information management student who will graduate in 2012.*

new ones. Our theme is "It's So Good To Be Home!" so mark your calendars for the weekend of Oct. 29 and come home to ECU.

Your generosity has helped our college in so many ways, but in this economic environment, there is much more to do. For our students, scholarship dollars remain a significant factor in being able to get a degree. However, now there is additional important work to do. The current state budget will not fund student participation in professional conferences. We all know that often times the education we get outside the classroom is equally important, especially when it is the first time on an aircraft or beyond the borders of our great state of North Carolina. We need to prepare our students to be more than employees. They have to be leaders in a global workforce. Participation in professional development activities and learning leadership competencies will

place our students above the competition in any profession.

I invite you to join the college's giving society, the "Alliance for Excellence." You can designate your gift to scholarship, leadership and service, research, or the priority fund of the area closest to your heart. Please see the envelope in this issue and tell us where you would like to help bridge the gap between adequacy and excellence.

Also visit our website, [www.ecu.edu/ah](http://www.ecu.edu/ah), to tell us what is new with you and to keep up with what's going on with the college. You can check out the photos of your "sandbox sailor's" adventures in foreign security force training and in Afghanistan. Information on homecoming will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

In Afghanistan, the children were so happy just to get notebooks and pencils that came from the kindness of our friends back home. Here in the United States, we have so much to be thankful for, the greatest of which is the choice to pursue a better life. Please give today and make a difference for every tomorrow! ♡



**1973**

**George Williams** (BS medical technology), administrator of clinical lab/pathology at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, celebrates 38 years with the hospital in June. In February, the PCMH lab set a new record for total lab test activity. University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, the parent company for PCMH, now has eight hospitals. PCMH has grown to one of the largest hospitals in the state with 861 beds, with plans for a pediatric emergency department and a new Children's Hospital.

**1974**

**Kay Gooding** (BS health information management, '80 MAEd) received the 2010 Triumph Pioneer Award from the American Health Information Management Association. She directs the health information technology program at Pitt Community College, overseeing a 13-state health information management training consortium. It was one of the first online programs in North Carolina. Last year, she helped PCC secure a \$10.9 million grant from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services to prepare thousands

of new health information technology professionals needed to create electronic health records. She earned a master's of public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**1977**

**Johnnie Sexton** (BS speech language pathology, MS audiology '79) has launched The CARE Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing hope to families who have children and/or adults with hearing challenges through counseling experiences aimed at the processing of the emotional stages of grief. CARE is also a tool for teaching professionals and pre-professionals about the importance of active listening with their clients and patients. For more information, go to [www.thecareproject.me](http://www.thecareproject.me)

**1981**

**Eileen Rodri Carter** (BS physical therapy, MBA '91) of Wilson was elected chief delegate for the North Carolina Physical Therapy Association. She will serve the chapter in the House of Delegates for two years. Carter is owner and president of Comprehensive Rehab of Wilson.

**1987**

**Tanya McDowell** (MS speech language and auditory pathology) received the Clinical Achievement Award for 2010 from the North Carolina Speech Language and Hearing Association. She has presented several workshops on apraxia, and is a child advocate serving children with speech language needs in her private practice, Let's Talk Speech and Language Services in Raleigh.

**James Parietti** (MS physical therapy) has joined Eagle Center Physical Therapy in Anchorage, Alaska, as a physical therapist.

**2006**

**Michele Glicosky Garcia** (MS speech language pathology) works for the Fort Worth, Texas, Independent School District.

**Cynthia Taylor** (MS occupational therapist) is director and owner of Carolina Therapy Connection in Greenville.

**Timothy J. Wood** (MS rehabilitation studies) of Charlotte is executive director of FamiliFirst, a company that developed a model of family therapy called family centered treatment. It is a nationally-recognized evidence-based practice and model of treatment in four states including North Carolina. Visit [www.familycenteredtreatment.com](http://www.familycenteredtreatment.com).

**2007**

**Stephanie Price** (BS occupational therapy) works in the outpatient rehabilitation clinic at Tampa General Hospital in Tampa, Fla. Price and a patient were featured in "Molly's Story" on the hospital's website, [www.tgh.org](http://www.tgh.org).

**2009**

**Casi Mooring** (MS physician assistant studies) has joined Eastern Psychiatric & Behavioral Specialists in Greenville where she provides medical management to patients with behavioral and/or emotional issues. ☺



# Faculty and Staff

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**J. Patrick Carter, MPAS, PA-C**  
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Director of Doctoral Studies

**Cathy Moore**  
Administrative Support Associate

**Judy Harrison**  
Administrative Support Associate



# Allied Health Sciences welcomes 7 new faculty

**Elizabeth Bunting**, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, received a bachelor's degree in zoology from



Elizabeth Bunting

North Carolina State University and a master's degree in physician assistant studies from East Carolina University. She will be concentrating on clinical rotations during the second year of the physician assistant studies curriculum and guest lecturing for other courses.

**J. Patrick Carter**, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, received a



J. Patrick Carter

bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Kansas, a bachelor's degree in physician assistant studies from Wichita State University, and a master's degree

in physician assistant studies with a concentration in emergency medicine from the University of Nebraska. Carter has been a preceptor for ECU



Emilie Cellucci

for more than nine years and has more than 13 years of clinical practice in emergency medicine. **Emilie "Leigh" W. Cellucci**, associate professor in the Department of Health Services and Information Management, received a bachelor's degree in sociology from The College

of Charleston, a master's degree in sociology from the College of William and Mary, a doctorate in sociology from the University of Virginia, and a master's of business administration from Idaho State University. Her research interests focus on the management of health care organizations, including the introduction and use of electronic health records in health care settings.

**Sarah E. Johnson** has joined the faculty in the Department of Physical Therapy. Johnson received a bachelor's degree in exercise physiology, a



Sarah Johnson

master's degree in physical therapy, and a transitional doctorate in physical therapy, all from ECU. She previously worked as a physical therapist at Heritage Hospital in Tarboro, where she was assistant manager of the rehabilitation therapy department and treated patients of all ages in the acute, inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient settings.

**Lori J. Kincannon**, clinical supervisor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, received a



Lori Kincannon

bachelor's degree and a master's degree in speech-language pathology and audiology from Florida State University. She also received a graduate certificate in assistive technology at ECU. She has worked as a speech-language pathologist in various clinical settings

in Florida and in the Onslow, Craven and Pitt county school systems in North Carolina. Her interests are in the areas of autism and augmentative and alternative communication.

**Stephen Leierer**, associate professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies,



Stephen Leierer

received his doctorate from Florida State University, and worked at LSU and the University of Memphis before joining ECU's faculty. Leierer will work primarily in the doctoral program in rehabilitation counseling and administration.

**Heather L. Ramsdell**, assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, received a bachelor's degree in speech-



Heather Ramsdell

language pathology and audiology from Iona College, a master's degree in communication disorders from Boston University, and a doctorate from The University of Memphis. She previously worked as a coordinator of the vocal and speech development project at the University of Memphis and as a speech-language pathologist in the Memphis City School District. Her research and teaching interests span phonetics, phonology and psycholinguistics. She is developing a research laboratory to study infant vocal development with future hopes to better predict later language outcomes and to identify early anomalies in development.

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## Women of Distinction



Three faculty members in the College of Allied Health Sciences, from left to right, **Dr. Elizabeth Layman**, professor of health services and information management, **Dr. Marianna Walker**, associate professor of communication sciences and disorders, and **Dr. Beth Velde**, professor of occupational therapy

and assistant dean for special projects, received ECU Women of Distinction awards for 2011. Awards are based on demonstrated contributions in areas such as academics/education, outreach, research, politics, athletics and volunteering. They were among nine receiving awards on April 13. ♻️

## Founders Day winners

Six allied health sciences faculty members were recognized April 26 in Hendrix Theater during East Carolina University's Founders Day celebration, marking 104 years of teaching, research and service.

**Dr. David Cistola**, professor and associate dean for research, was among 67 faculty and staff and 24 students inducted into the Servire Society, which began in 2008. Members must perform a minimum of 100 hours public service during a year.

The UNC Board of Governors Distinguished Professor for Teaching

Awards recognizes and supports excellent teaching at each of the 16 constituent universities in the UNC system. **Dr. Robert J. Campbell**, professor of health services and information management, was one of six selected at ECU for the award.

Five faculty members who received U.S. patents in the last year were recognized, including four professors from the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders: **Dr. Michael Rastatter**, **Dr. Joseph Kalinowski**, **Dr. Andrew Stuart**, and department chairman **Dr. Gregg Givens**. ♻️



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# Come home to ECU.

The College of Allied Health Sciences and ECU will celebrate homecoming Oct. 29. Make plans to join your classmates and look for updates on activities in the college at [www.ecu.edu/ah](http://www.ecu.edu/ah). Remember to send us your news throughout the year at [www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/ah/alumni.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/ah/alumni.cfm).

**We look forward to hearing your news!**