Keeping Athletes Healthy

Dr. James Robinson is the College’s First Endowed Chair of Sports Medicine

The College celebrates its 40th Anniversary in 2012. See inside for details.
As a nation, we are gradually coming to terms with the reality that our health care system, though arguably the most technologically advanced in the world, is hardly efficient. We spend more per capita than all other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries and are ranked 37th in health outcomes worldwide. Most of the countries ranked ahead of the United States in health outcomes have more primary care physicians per capita than we do. Clearly, the number of primary physicians per capita is more important than dollars per capita spent in producing desired health outcomes. Primary care medicine is the bedrock of the delivery of preventive health.

Communities with more primary care doctors per capita have lower hospitalization rates, and patients with a regular primary care physician have lower health care costs. States with more primary care physicians per capita have lower Medicare costs and a higher quality of care for their Medicare recipients. These states also have lower total mortality rates and higher life expectancy rates.

In spite of these realities, from 1997-2005, the number of medical school graduates entering family medicine residencies dropped by 50 percent. Income for primary care physicians also dropped by 10.2 percent from 1995-2003. Of those in primary care practice, 42 percent reported not having enough time with their patients. However, time spent on the management of complex patients by primary care physicians is reimbursed at one-third the rate of comparable time spent by specialists on simpler procedures.

In this context, the mission of the College – to train highly-qualified family physicians from the Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency – becomes even more critical to Alabama, which has a severe shortage of primary care physicians both in metropolitan and rural communities.

In addition to recruiting the best and the brightest for careers in primary care medicine, the College has to become a leader in seeking innovative solutions to address the ever-increasing debt load of medical school graduates. Debt deters them from choosing lower-paying primary care specialties. We have to work with other stakeholders in correcting the disparities in reimbursement between primary care physicians and specialists.

As the 40th Anniversary of the College approaches, we are turning our attention to increasing scholarship opportunities for medical students in our programs, particularly those geared toward rural practice. The College has initiated the 40th Anniversary Scholarship drive by offering $40,000. The Lister Hill Society, the annual fund for the College, and Capstone Health Services Foundation will match all scholarship gifts up to a minimum of $40,000.

We look forward to the expansion of our residency program of 36 to 48 physicians in the coming year. The additional 12 positions will be earmarked for an expansion of our rural track, which will result in 25 percent of residents in this program being trained in a rural setting. It is known that physicians who are trained in rural settings are more likely to establish rural practices. Our nationally ranked Rural Medical Scholars Program, 65 percent of whose graduates chose rural practice, would benefit from an expansion, and the Tuscaloosa Experience in Rural Medicine Program, 87 percent of whose graduates chose primary care residencies, all need increased scholarship funding to reduce their debt burden and ease their path into primary care careers in underserved communities.

This year, The University of Alabama School of Medicine was ranked 10th nationally for primary care and 15th for rural health principally because of the programs at the regional campuses like ours.

In this past year, the College has upgraded its electronic medical record system, which will greatly enable our continued efforts to provide higher-quality care for the communities we serve. The College has named an Endowed Chair for Sports Medicine. Fellows from this program, who have graduated, are already working in rural communities in Alabama. We have named a director for Global Health Programs to offer international learning experiences for pre-med, medical students and residents who have a strong desire to work in under-resourced communities. And we have enhanced our tele-medicine activities to provide additional resources for rural communities and physicians and additional training for medical students and residents.

As our 40th Anniversary nears, we continue to meet our mission by preparing medical students and family physicians for rural primary care practice throughout Alabama.
ON THE COVER

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Interim Dean: Thaddeus Ulzen, MD
Editor: Leslie Zganjar, MPA
Graphics Design: Pam Winters, University Printing, The University of Alabama
Cover Photo: Jeff Hanson, University Photography, The University of Alabama
Cover Design: Pam Winters, University Printing, The University of Alabama
Contributing Writer: Elizabeth Hartley
Photographers: Jeff Hanson and Zach Riggins, University Photography, The University of Alabama

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ENHANCING TRAINING THROUGH MEDICAL SIMULATION

Patient simulators are increasingly being used to teach medical procedures to health professionals, allowing them to practice procedures on manikins before they work with patients.

The Quest Center is a patient simulation training facility and a collaborative endeavor of DCH Health System and the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research.

Short for Quality Care Utilizing Education Simulation and Training, the Quest Center opened at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa this past spring. The Quest Center contains several patient simulation training rooms complete with medical equipment and monitors. The Institute provides adult, youth and infant simulators.

DCH currently uses the center to provide additional training for its nursing workforce. The Institute has access to the facility to conduct training sessions for emergency medical services personnel in West Alabama as part of its EMS Program.

The goal of the Quest Center is to enhance patient care, safety and outcomes from the pre-hospital setting through admission, treatment and discharge using simulation technology. “Our goal is to hard wire the simulation lab to everything we do,” says Angela Bridges, MSN, manager of Nursing Education and Development for DCH. “It is indispensible.”

The Quest Center provides a realistic environment for training, replicating a hospital setting and giving health professionals the chance to learn, practice and master techniques for patient care. Life-sized robotic patients mimic common ailments and symptoms and are used to teach the taking of vital signs, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of defibrillators. There are video and audio recordings of the session to evaluate the training and its outcomes.

Future plans call for training in emergency situations, such as advanced cardiac life support and pediatric life support, as well as in intubations and chest tube insertions, Bridges says. “It is better to role play first,” adds Sandi Lee, RN, Nursing Education coordinator for DCH. “Some things you don’t see every day and you can do these first with simulation. Simulation gives a realistic flavor.”

Over the next year, training is also likely to include a nursing orientation for labor and delivery using the simulator mom, Noelle, and the simulator baby, Hal, Bridges says. She also envisions the Quest Center providing emergency and disaster response training.

“We are excited to work with the Institute,” Bridges says. “The result of this collaboration will be improved training and patient care for DCH and the community.”
Athletes are typically in peak physical condition, but even those at the top of their game get hurt sometime. And if they play for The University of Alabama or high schools throughout West Alabama, chances are they have been cared for by James Robinson, MD.

Robinson, a family and sports medicine physician, has served as head team physician for the University since 1989 and is the team physician for many area high schools. He has a private practice, West Alabama Family Practice and Sports Medicine in Tuscaloosa. He is also director of the College’s Dr. Bill deShazo Sports Medicine Center and oversees the College’s Sports Medicine Fellowship for Family Physicians.

In September, Robinson was named the College’s first Endowed Chair of Sports Medicine for Family Physicians.

The sports medicine center, fellowship and newly endowed chair are all part of the College’s Dr. Patrick Lee Trammell Sr. Excellence in Sports Medicine Program. “The program is an incredible clinical experience,” Robinson says. “The fellows coming out of this program will be well trained and hopefully better trained than those in most other programs in the country.”

The program is named in honor of Trammell, a University of Alabama quarterback and Heisman Trophy candidate who led the Crimson Tide to a National Championship title in 1961. Trammell graduated from the University of Alabama School of Medicine but as he prepared to start his residency in 1968, he was diagnosed with cancer and died later that year at the age of 28.

As the endowed chair, Robinson will be responsible for administrative oversight of the Dr. Patrick Lee Trammell Sr. Excellence in Sports Medicine Program, which was developed in partnership with The University of Alabama Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. He will also teach and supervise sports medicine fellows, family medicine residents and medical students, provide patient care and community outreach and conduct research and other scholarly activities.
he worked with the New Orleans Saints medical team and was sent to the NFL team’s training camp in Vero Beach, Fla., to help supervise players’ health. He cared for Saints players, including Hall of Fame running back Earl Campbell and former University of Alabama quarterbacks Kenny Stabler and Richard Todd.

After graduating from medical school, Robinson applied to the College’s Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency. “I came here for the diversity of residents who were in this program,” he says. “There were residents from most states in the Southeast, which provided an opportunity to learn a variety of skills taught in different parts of the country.”

The late William deShazo, MD, one of the College’s first faculty members, was also the team physician for the University’s Athletic Department and a personal physician to Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant. deShazo introduced the sports medicine rotation into the College’s curriculum.

During the rotation, Robinson spent time with the University’s athletic trainers, learning what they did on a day-to-day basis. He was particularly interested in how athletic trainers handled the University football team’s two-a-day practices. He enjoyed the work so much that he continued on even after his rotation was completed.

A Calling

By the final year of the three-year family medicine residency, Robinson knew sports medicine was his calling. He learned of a new field in medicine called primary care sports medicine and applied for and received a fellowship from the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, and, at least temporarily, left The University of Alabama.
During Robinson’s fellowship year, deShazo retired, which left a void in the care coverage of University of Alabama athletes. Robinson says he received a telephone call from then Head Athletic Trainer Sang Lyda and was offered the position of sports medicine physician for the Athletic Department.

Several years later, Robinson was approached by former College Dean E. Eugene Marsh, MD, about developing a sports medicine fellowship. Robinson accepted the challenge and the result was the creation of a year-long Sports Medicine Fellowship for Family Physicians offered through the College’s family medicine residency. Under the guidelines of the fellowship program, fellows spend half their time in a clinical setting, of which four half days each week are spent seeing patients at the Dr. Bill deShazo Sports Medicine Center, located at University Medical Center, which the College operates. The fellows also spend time with a variety of faculty members involved in the field of sports medicine, including physical therapists, dieticians, exercise physiologists and orthopedic surgeons. In addition, fellows devote 10 to 15 hours per week to the University’s Athletic Department and provide weekly coverage at University sporting events and area high school sporting events.

Protecting Young Athletes

Robinson is also passionate about his work with high school athletes, and he was instrumental in helping pass legislation in Alabama to protect younger athletes from concussions.

“I got involved due to my work with The University of Alabama and all of the local high school athletes that I have taken care of for the past 23 years,” Robinson says. He says he was adamant about getting involved because he thought young athletes were returning to sports too quickly after sustaining concussions and placing themselves at risk for further injury or permanent damage.
The bill was passed by the Alabama Legislature and signed into law in June. The legislation contains three important provisions: athletes and parents must receive educational materials each year about the signs and symptoms of a concussion; coaches must also be educated about the signs and symptoms of concussions; and athletes who show signs or symptoms of a concussion cannot return to their sport until they see a physician and the physician approves.

**National Recognition**

Robinson believes the Dr. Patrick Lee Trammell Sr. Excellence in Sports Medicine Program and its Sports Medicine Fellowship for Family Physicians and Endowed Chair of Sports Medicine for Family Physicians will bring national recognition to the College and show that it is a leader in sports medicine. Robinson’s goal is for the program “to attract the best fellows and produce the best sports medicine physicians in the country.”

He also wants the program to honor all of those who came before who worked so hard to make sports medicine an important part of the College and the University – people like Trammell and deShazo. “This program will exemplify their hard work ethic and dedication to sports medicine and athletics,” Robinson says.

**Caring for Olympic Athletes**

James Robinson, MD, was able to take his sports medicine knowledge, experience and expertise international when he was invited to be a physician for the U.S. Olympic team at the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia. Robinson was given the position of team physician for the U.S. soccer teams. When the soccer teams had completed their competition, he served as a team physician for the U.S. athletes in the Olympic Village Sports Medicine Clinic. He took care of many Olympic athletes, including former University of Alabama baseball pitcher Tim Young, who was happy to see a familiar face in Australia.
“Have you registered yet?”

We are celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the College April 20 - 21, 2012. Watch our video invitation and register now!

cchs.ua.edu/40years

Dr. Bill Owings - Involved from the beginning
The College is gearing up to celebrate its 40th anniversary next year. While activities are being planned throughout the year, one event that will help mark the milestone is a weekend reunion in Tuscaloosa April 20-21.

The 40th Anniversary weekend reunion will kick off Friday, April 20, with a casual family barbeque under a big tent on the grounds of the College. A variety of activities will be available for children, including inflatable bouncy games and art projects, and there will be games and prizes for adults as well.

Saturday, April 21, will begin with a continental breakfast at the College and a chance to meet the dean and associate deans and hear about current developments at the College, including priorities for the future. Tours of the College will follow.

Afternoon activities will include a casual gathering and swimming time at the University’s Student Recreation Center pool, or a chance to visit and experience the A.S. Williams III Americana Collection, one of the country’s premiere collections of U.S. presidential memorabilia. Housed at the University’s Gorgas Library, the collection includes a significant grouping of volumes representing each president, including contemporary works, later and modern scholarship and, where published, scholarly annotations of their public papers and addresses. The collection holds at least one document signed by every past president and contains a number of books signed by various presidents.

There is also the possibility that the A-Day University of Alabama Spring Football Game will be held the afternoon of April 21 and, if so, the game will be added to the program of events for the weekend.

Evening events planned for April 21 at the Indian Hills Country Club will provide a special reflection on the College’s 40 years. The evening will start with cocktails and a chance to laugh at lampoon videos and play trivia games. Dinner and dancing will follow. Arrangements have been made for children ages 4 and older at the country club, including dinner and healthy snacks, games for all ages and age-appropriate movies. Babysitter services for infants and toddlers for the weekend can be arranged in advance.

For those who want to stay in town a while longer, golf outings are planned at the North River Yacht Club on Sunday, April 22, for an additional fee. Also, the Recreation Center pool opens at 10 a.m.

40th Anniversary Websites

Please visit these websites for more information about the College’s 40th Anniversary and the weekend reunion:

- For information and to register for the reunion – http://cchs.ua.edu/40years.
- Video invitations have been created for the weekend reunion featuring current and retired faculty and staff, residents and other friends of the College talking about what it means and has meant to be part of the College, and encouraging alumni, donors and retired faculty and staff to attend the weekend celebration. The invitations can be found at the following links:
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zpfuuKiCoY
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEGW6rEOk9k
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5dBY8aqe1E
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIq6NKvtM
The annual Rural Health Conference is scheduled for April 20 and will provide Continuing Medical Education opportunities for those wishing to start the reunion weekend a little early. Hosted by the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research, this year’s 13th Annual Rural Health Conference will be held at the Ferguson Center on the University’s campus. Please check the conference website at http://rhc.ua.edu for more information.

Please note that as the reunion weekend nears, details may change and new events may be added to the itinerary. Please continue to check the College’s 40th Anniversary website at http://cchs.ua.edu/40years for updates.

The cost for the weekend reunion is $100 for adults; there is no charge for children. With the possibility of the A-Day Game, those planning to attend are strongly encouraged to reserve hotel rooms as early as possible. The College has reserved a limited number of hotel rooms for the weekend and information about those rooms can be found on the 40th Anniversary website.

If you have any questions about the anniversary celebration, please contact Allison Leitner at (205) 348-5701 or at aleitner@cchs.ua.edu.

In addition to the reunion weekend, the College is celebrating its 40 years with an anniversary branding campaign that includes new employee identification badges, exterior banners, door decals, e-mail signature logos and letterhead logos. The College is also creating a new annual event to recognize outstanding adjunct faculty and leaders in rural health in Alabama. The event will be held each year on the Friday before the University’s Homecoming football game.

The College was established in 1972 in response to the country’s acute need for more primary care physicians. Many areas of Alabama, particularly small towns and rural communities, suffered from a serious lack of health care. Four decades later, the College has made significant strides in making health care more available and accessible in the state.

Approximately 700 medical students have received their third and fourth years of clinical training at the College. Of these graduates, more than half have chosen careers in primary care. The College’s Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency has seen similar success, placing nearly 400 family medicine physicians into practice, with more than half of those in Alabama and the majority of those in towns with fewer than 25,000 residents.

Now entering its fourth decade, the College will continue to address rural health and the state’s unique health care needs by training skilled medical practitioners and researchers for the future.
Friday, April 20

**Rural Health Conference**  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
The College’s Institute for Rural Health Research hosts the 13th Annual Rural Health Conference at the Ferguson Center on The University of Alabama campus. For information and to register, visit the conference website at http://rhc.ua.edu.

**Family Barbeque**  
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Enjoy a relaxed night of food and fun under the tent on the grounds of the College.

**Saturday, April 21**

**Coffee and Conversation with the Dean**  
9 a.m.  
Enjoy a continental breakfast at the College and meet the dean and associate deans. Hear about current developments at the College and priorities for the future.

**Tours of the College**  
10 a.m.

**Afternoon Activities**

**Splash the Afternoon Away**  
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Enjoy a casual gathering and swimming at the University’s Student Recreation Center swimming pool.

**The A.S. Williams III Americana Collection**  
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Experience one of the country’s finest collections of U.S. presidential memorabilia at the Gorgas Library on the University’s campus.

**Evening Activities – Indian Hills Country Club**

**Cocktails**  
6 p.m.  
Laugh at lampoon videos and play trivia games.

**Dinner and Dancing**  
7 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
Enjoy a special evening reflecting on the College’s 40 years.

**Children’s Night Out**  
6 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
Your children ages 4 and older will enjoy an evening of games and age-appropriate movies in the Indian Hills Country Club Party Room. Dinner and healthy snacks will be provided. Babysitter services for the weekend for infants and toddlers can be arranged in advance.

**Sunday, April 22**

Stay in town a while longer and enjoy golf or swimming. For an additional fee, take advantage of the greens at the North River Yacht Club. Let us know your preferred tee-time and we will match you with a group. The Student Recreation Center pool is available for use beginning at 10 a.m.

If you have any questions about the 40th Anniversary Celebration weekend, please contact Allison Leitner at (205) 348-5701 or at aleitner@cchs.ua.edu.
Riley Lumpkin, MD, one of the College’s first faculty members and a former interim dean, was honored with a Martha Myers Role Model Award August 19 at the annual White Coat Ceremony at the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham.

The Medical Alumni Association presents the award to alumni who have dedicated their careers to serving their communities. The accolades are named for the late Martha C. Myers, MD, a 1971 School of Medicine graduate who spent 25 years in Yemen providing care in hospitals and prisons, teaching nurses and helping to direct UNICEF’s immunization program.

The awards are intended to inspire generations of medical students by highlighting the accomplishments of physician alumni whose lives epitomize the ideal of service to their communities.

A native of Tuskegee, Ala., Lumpkin received a bachelor’s degree from The University of Alabama. After college, he served in the Korean War and then began work toward a master’s degree in herpetology. When he decided to attend medical school, he chose the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham and earned a medical degree in 1958.

Following an internship at Mobile General Hospital, Lumpkin spent 17 years in general practice, first in Tuskegee and then in Enterprise, Ala., before joining the College faculty full time. He was named director of the Family Practice Clinic when it first opened, and he later assumed responsibility for the continuing medical education programs as assistant dean for Continuing Medical Education.

Lumpkin was fully engaged in teaching, administration and service to the local community when he took on the role of interim dean after the retirement in 1979 of the College’s founding dean, William R. Willard, MD.

Upon his retirement, Lumpkin had served the College for 26 years.
The College’s Health Sciences Library received one of only seven grants the National Library of Medicine awarded nationwide for disaster health information outreach and collaboration projects.

The new NLM program funds partnerships between libraries and organizations that have disaster-related responsibilities. The partnerships will work together to improve use of disaster medicine and public health information by librarians, health professionals, first responders, emergency planners and others responsible for disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Nelle Williams, MSLS, director of the Health Sciences Library and an assistant professor in the College, is the principal investigator of the West Alabama Disaster Health Information Outreach Project, which was awarded $30,000 in funding in September. The library is partnering with EMPACT West Alabama and the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research on the project. EMPACT West Alabama is a nonprofit organization that provides emergency medical and community training programs in West Alabama.

The West Alabama Disaster Health Information Outreach Project will expand sources of disaster health information and develop collaborative information-sharing practices between providers of disaster health information and the disaster health workforce. As part of these efforts, a needs assessment will be conducted of West Alabama organizations that play a role in all-hazards preparedness, response and recovery to determine their health information needs, and those sources of information and others will be added to the electronic and physical collections of the Health Sciences Library. The project will also develop collaborative practices for sharing disaster health information with West Alabama organizations with disaster responsibilities.

Other partnerships funded by the NLM are: American Academy of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, Ill., and the University of Illinois at Chicago Library of the Health Sciences; Inova Fairfax Hospital Health Sciences Library, Falls Church, Va., and the Northern Virginia Hospital Alliance; Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, Division of Emergency Preparedness, Charleston, W. Va., the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine and Concord University; Marshall County Health Department, Benton, Ky., and the Marshall County Public Library; Monroe County Department of Public Health, Office of Public Health Preparedness, Rochester, N.Y., and the Rochester Public Library and Phillis Wheatley Community Libraries; and the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, Albuquerque, N.M., the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center and the University of New Mexico Center for Disaster Medicine.
Faculty physicians in the College’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and University Medical Center are the first in Tuscaloosa to use robotic surgery to perform hysterectomies and other gynecological procedures. They say the robotic system allows them to operate with more precision and less fatigue, while patients experience improved outcomes, especially in shorter hospital stays, less pain and quicker recovery times.

Marion Reed, MD, an obstetrics and gynecology physician and assistant professor in the department, uses the robotic system for many of the hysterectomies he performs. He says the minimally invasive nature of robotic surgery and the resulting smaller incisions mean that “some of my patients have only had to do this procedure as an out-patient procedure. Others only need to stay in the hospital overnight.” Reed uses the da Vinci robotic system located at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa.

Robotic surgery was first introduced a decade ago by the U.S. military, which wanted surgeons to be able to operate on wounded soldiers on the battlefield without putting themselves at risk. While the military’s efforts were not successful as hoped, the robotic method...
was picked up by the Sunnyvale, Calif.-based Intuitive Surgical Inc., maker of the da Vinci System.

The da Vinci System consists of a large device with four arms that hover over a patient-side cart and are controlled from a nearby console. Three of the arms are for tools that hold a scalpel, scissors and other surgical instruments and operate through small incisions in the patient’s body; the fourth arm is for an endoscopic camera with two lenses that give the surgeon stereoscopic vision from the console.

The surgeon sits at the console and looks through a viewfinder. With joystick-like controls in each hand, the surgeon manipulates the arms on the robotic system while looking at images captured by the camera on the viewfinder. The robotic arms’ joint-wrist design exceeds the natural range of motion of the human hand, and the view of the patient and the surgical area is magnified up to 10 times through the camera. “Use of this system has tremendously improved surgeon’s dexterity,” Reed says.

Since its introduction, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been expanding approval of the use of robotic surgery. Urologists were among the first to use robotic surgery, followed by cardiologists and gynecologists. Today, robotic surgery is used to perform minimally invasive heart, prostate, gynecological and other common operations.

Reed is quick to point out that the robotic system is not a self-driven device, but rather a tool in the hands of the surgeon. He says surgeons must go through special training to use the machines.

While robotic surgery is a natural progression from laparoscopic surgery for hysterectomies, Reed says he uses robotic surgery as an option and not a total replacement of laparoscopic surgery or vaginal hysterectomies.

Laparoscopic surgery is minimally-invasive surgery performed with the help of a telescope-like device that lets the surgeon see inside the abdomen or pelvis. But with laparoscopy, a surgical assistant must hold a camera, and the surgeon operates while standing, using hand-held instruments that have no wrists. The surgeon must also look up and away to a nearby video monitor to see an image of the surgical procedure being captured by the hand-held camera. Reed says with robotic surgery, there is a better view of the patient surgical area as well as more precision and less fatigue.

He acknowledges there is a “mixed reaction” to robotic surgery among surgeons and physicians because surgical procedures using a robotic system can take longer. But he believes that in many cases, the advantages of robotic surgery outweigh the additional time.

“I wish I could have done all my surgeries this way,” he says.
Binge drinking affects colleges and universities across the country. Studies show that nationally, 44 percent of students say they have participated in binge drinking.

Two years ago, University of Alabama advertising and public relations students began work on a campaign to alert their peers to the perils of binge drinking. The objective was to increase awareness of the undesired results, situations and consequences associated with overconsumption of alcohol. At the time, only 7 percent of students surveyed correctly identified the definition of binge drinking.

The campaign, LessThanUThink, won a regional award and then placed second in the American Advertising Federation National Student Advertising Competition. As a result of the national win, the University received a $75,000 grant to pilot the campaign on campus in the fall of 2010. The Student Health Center, which is part of the College, partnered with students on the pilot project.

In June, LessThanUThink won the prestigious Silver Anvil Award of Excellence from the Public Relations Society of America. Silver Anvil Awards are the premier awards for public relations in the United States. LessThanUThink was a finalist among campaigns created by such global public relations firms as Flieshman-Hillard, Endleman and Ketchum.

In addition, a recent survey indicates that the campaign has increased awareness of the definition of binge drinking among University of Alabama students from 7 percent to 29.5 percent, and 47.7 percent of students say they are aware of the definition as a direct result of LessThanUThink.

Awareness First

“It is important for college students to be aware of the amount of alcohol they are consuming and the time they are taking to consume it,” says Delynne Wilcox, PhD, assistant director of Health Planning and Prevention in the Student Health Center’s Department of Health Promotion and Wellness, who assisted students with the pilot project. The body generally processes the alcohol in one drink (a 12-ounce beer, 1.5-ounce shot of liquor, or 5-ounce glass of wine) per hour. The definition of binge drinking is five or more drinks for males and four or more drinks for females in a two-hour period.

Wilcox adds that binge drinking has serious consequences. “The latest statistics indicate that 1,825 college students age 18-24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries each year, including motor vehicle crashes, and 599,000 students experience unintentional
injuries due to alcohol consumption. Binge drinking also negatively impacts academic performance with 25 percent of college students experiencing consequences related to binge drinking that includes missing class, falling behind in course work and doing poorly on exams.”

**Powerful Message**

Teri Henley, an instructor in advertising and public relations and faculty advisor to the two student groups that developed and piloted LessThanUThink, says she knew from the first time she saw the students’ concept that it had the potential to be a great campaign. “This is a great message and it resonates with the target market.”

A team of 15 advertising and public relations students set out in 2009 to address the awareness and attitudes of binge drinking among college students. After further research, it became apparent that no change in consumption could occur until students became aware of what constituted over consumption of alcohol. The campaign name, LessThanUThink, came from research that showed most students thought the number of drinks that constitutes binge drinking – four or five in a two-hour period – would be higher.

The team worked on the campaign for eight months and won the College District Competition for public service advertising campaigns. The win sent the campaign to the 2009 American Advertising Federation National Student Advertising Competition and a second-place win there.

That win prompted The Century Council to select the University’s advertising team to implement and further explore LessThanUThink to prevent binge drinking among college students nationwide. The Century Council is an independent, not-for-profit organization funded by the spirits industry that works to stop drunk driving, underage drinking and binge drinking.

The Century Council awarded the University’s Advertising and Public Relations Department a $75,000 grant to pilot the campaign at The University of Alabama during the fall of 2010. A new team of 15 advertising and public relations students began work on implementation of a pilot program that would test the viability of LessThanUThink at the University. The team worked closely with Wilcox and Margaret Garner, assistant dean and director of Health Education and Outreach for the College, who both provided extensive knowledge about alcohol prevention that helped guide the development and implementation of the campaign.

LessThanUThink launched on September 1, 2010. On-campus initiatives included an alcohol-free tailgate party, a health and wellness fair, a “happy hour” event at the Student Recreation Center to educate students about weight gain associated with binge drinking, and marketing tactics that got students talking about LessThanUThink, including scattering 4,000 neon-colored stress balls with the campaign’s website and logo on the quad and a flash dance at the Ferguson Center where students danced to publicize the hazardous of binge drinking. Bar initiatives included once-a-week visits to local bars by campaign team members and volunteers for trivia nights or to hand out promotional items, such as t-shirts and koozies while placing ashtrays in bars that read: “You think you quit smoking. And you did. Three drinks ago.” Online initiatives included a campaign website and the use of social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Youtube.

The LessThanUThink campaign continued through fall midterm exams and was covered by area television stations.

Since receiving the Silver Anvil Award, LessThanUThink has attracted the attention of universities in Georgia and Kentucky that hope to copy the campaign, Henley says. The LessThanUThink website (http://www.lessthanuthink.org) is also being updated to make it easier for other universities to use the campaign’s ideas. And, the University is seeking another grant in the hope of expanding the program to other campuses in Alabama, Wilcox says.
The transition from medical school to residency can be both an exciting and confusing time for students. Filling out paperwork, unexpected costs, interviews and uncertainty—these are just some of the issues medical students face as they prepare for residency.

Two medical students at the College recently sat down and talked about some of the challenges and surprises they have encountered as they prepare to transition to residency. Tyler Eads and Rachel Martin are fourth-year medical students, both focusing on general surgery as a specialty. They say while there have been some surprises along the way, the College has done an excellent job preparing them for residency.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the cost of applying. “It costs to apply to residency, it costs to interview, it costs to match,” Eads says. “There are a lot of unexpected costs I wasn’t prepared to work into my budget.”

In addition to the extra expenses, both Eads and Martin express some frustration that there are certain times of the year to interview that are better than others, and that those times vary with each residency. “It’s also hard to know about each program enough to feel confident enough to apply there. It’s hard to figure out what each program is about,” Martin adds.

Typically, interviews for residency slots start in October, November or December and when that time of the year comes, medical students know that they will have to juggle their hectic student schedules with time-consuming traveling for residency interviews. “Filling out the applications for residency while having to do your rotations and study for Step 2 (exam) was difficult enough,” Eads says. “It’s a job in itself getting all of your paperwork together, finding recommendation letters and finding your attending (physicians) while still handling your school work.”

Both Martin and Eads say they know applying and interviewing for residencies will be easier for them because the College has excellent faculty and staff who have taken students successfully through this process for years. “Mary Kay Hannah, the College’s Medical Student Affairs liaison, has been a great source of help, as well as Dr. Heather Taylor and Dr. Cathy Gresham,” the students say. “Dr. Taylor and Dr. Gresham helped us with our MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation) letters.”

Gresham, MD, is the College’s director of Medical Student Affairs and a professor in the Department of Internal Medicine. Taylor, MD, is assistant director of Medical Student Affairs and an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics.

Eads and Martin say with the help of Gresham and Taylor, they have excellent personal statements in their letters and strong curriculum vitae. Both students say they are grateful to have resources like the College’s Medical Student Affairs Office to provide feedback and recommendations about how to make their applications more polished.

Martin and Eads say medical students preparing for residency must also deal with the match process. “It’s definitely a learn-as-you-go type thing when dealing with the match system,” Martin says. Adds Eads: “When it comes to match, the best resource a student has is to make friends with the people in the class ahead of them. They’ve already been there, done that and know all about what you’re going to face and are able to offer some of the best advice on how you should handle those situations.”
In the match program, residencies pull information about students and, based on that information, offer interviews to students who are in the top percentile of their classes. Interviews are conducted from October through February and in March medical students list their residencies of choice. Hopefully, students match with one of the residencies on their list. If not, students move into a re-match system in which student information and scores are pulled and students are not allowed to ask anyone in their college or medical school for assistance with the process.

Martin and Eads express their gratitude to College’s faculty and staff for preparing them for the match process. “They know it’s (match) coming and they prepare us to interview well,” Martin says.

She says the College teaches medical students how to interact in various residency-related social situations – how to dress, present themselves and who to look for in the crowd. The Medical Student Affairs Office helps students develop a backup plan, just in case match system results do not come out as hoped, she says.

“The faculty is wonderful,” Martin says. “They are always willing to look at our letters and CVs and tell you how to make everything sound better. In our surgical rotations, the attendings at the College were also very helpful in preparing us.” Tyler seconded her comments. “I learned more about (residency) programs from people like Dr. Joe Wallace, Dr. Andy Harrell and people on the College faculty. They can tell you all kinds of information about different residency programs and the personnel at each one.”

Preparing for residency is not easy, but having good resources at hand definitely helps. Martin and Eads also have advice for future medical students to keep in mind as they go through this journey. “Find a friend in the class ahead of you. I promise they are some of the most helpful resources out there. As you go through your rotations, always be on the lookout for people who will be able to write good recommendation letters for you,” Eads says.

“Also, don’t wait until the last minute to try and do it all. It takes a lot of time to perfect your letters and applications,” Martin adds. “Don’t get stressed out at the class meeting where they explain everything you’re about to go through. I promise that everyone else feels the same way you do.

“Take advantage of the resources you have available to help you through this process,” she says.

Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency

The College’s Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency is among the largest and most successful family medicine residencies in the country. The program has placed more than 400 family medicine physicians into practice, with more than half of those in Alabama and the majority of those in towns with fewer than 25,000 residents. In fact, one of every eight family medicine physicians now practicing in Alabama graduated from the College’s residency.

The residency prepares physicians to provide excellent care in family medicine. The broad-based curriculum is designed to lead to board certification in family medicine and competence in patient care, and to prepare physicians to assume responsible positions in their communities. Accredited and affiliated with the 500-bed DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, the program is an unopposed residency that has the advantage of being community based and university-affiliated. Exposure to physicians in an academic and high-tech teaching environment and in private practice offer residents a rich learning environment that bridges rural and urban medicine. The program is further enhanced by the presence of third- and fourth-year medical students.

The residency is operated by the College’s Department of Family Medicine. For more information, visit the Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency website at http://cchs.ua.edu/fmr/.
behind James Leeper’s modest nature is a life of interesting journeys, including a recent sabbatical to China, and he draws on those experiences to broaden the education and training of students interested in rural health careers.

Leeper, PhD, is a professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine. He was born and raised in Iowa and was the first in his family to attend college. He earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Iowa.

“When I first enrolled in college, I wanted to be a high school Math teacher,” Leeper says. “Once I started my college classes, I realized how good I was at the subjects of Math and science and started thinking about other things I could study that related to the subject.”

So he switched from Math to Astronomy and Physics, two subjects he still enjoys studying today. After receiving a bachelor’s degree and completing one year of graduate studies, it was the Vietnam War era and knowing he would probably be drafted, Leeper decided to enlist in the U.S. Air Force.

Military Statistics

While in the Air Force he met an officer who did statistical work for the military. For Leeper, that meeting and a glimpse into the world of statistics sparked an interest. Leeper stayed in the Air Force for four years and then returned to the University of Iowa to begin a master’s degree, this time in statistics. He was quickly encouraged to move his studies to the university’s medical school, which had begun using statistics for applications in medical research. Leeper applied for and received an assistantship with the medical school.

“I fell in love with statistics,” Leeper says. So much so that he stayed on after his master’s degree and completed a doctoral degree.
After graduating with a PhD in biostatistics, Leeper continued to follow his heart, which led him to Alabama. He followed his then fiancé and now wife, Catherine, who had recently moved to Atlanta after graduating from the University of Iowa. “A job in Alabama was the closest job I could find to Atlanta,” he says. “It was also an academic position, which I desired.”

Leeper joined the College in 1977 as a faculty member in what is now the Department of Community and Rural Medicine. “Rural Health is just something that kind of fell into my lap, but I think it fits,” he says. “Iowa is a rural state and I often visited my uncle’s farm, where my father was born and raised (the 160-acre family farm since the mid-1800s). I was aware of rural issues and what people in those areas dealt with on a daily basis.”

Leeper continues to travel and brings back to the College knowledge and experiences that he uses to help students who are interested in becoming health professionals in rural areas. Last year, Leeper took a sabbatical to China. “My wife was my biggest motivation to take the trip,” he says. Catherine Leeper was raised in China and Taiwan, and a tour of mainland China the couple took five years earlier fueled an interest in a sabbatical there. For the sabbatical, they were in Fuzhou, China, at Fujian Medical University.

“China also has a big rural population and I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to see how they handled their rural health issues halfway around the world,” Leeper says.

China Rotation

When they arrived in China, Leeper was surprised to encounter a steep language barrier. His wife, fluent in Chinese, did most of the communicating. He also learned that students enter medical school right out of high school, the medical school program lasts anywhere from five to seven years and there is not much emphasis on primary care. “When someone gets sick over there they just go to the emergency room. The country is much more hospital-based,” Leeper says.

In regard to daily living, Leeper discovered that most people, including medical students, live in high-rise apartments. They wash their clothes by hand “and hang them on their balconies to dry. I think medical students in the United States would be shocked.” And with building codes different from those in the United States, and the high cost of energy, most apartments in China have no heat in the winter and no air conditioning in the summer. “In the winter, people literally live in their jackets,” Leeper says. “But they do very well with what they’ve got.”
Leeper says he also had to get used to the diet in China. “The Chinese food in China is nothing like the Chinese food we eat here. Many of my meals consisted of a bowl of rice or noodles with vegetables on top. Not many people eat meat over there because it’s so expensive to buy.” He says he was able to buy meals at an all-you-can-eat buffet steakhouse for less than $2.

"CHINA ALSO HAS A BIG RURAL POPULATION AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HOW THEY HANDLED THEIR RURAL HEALTH ISSUES."

– JAMES LEEPER

He says the Chinese people are extremely friendly and they look out for one another, especially in traffic. “It was like there were no traffic rules, but yet they all know how to handle that. You would see cars driving on the sidewalk, motor scooters everywhere and a complete disregard for traffic rules as we know them. It works for them, though. I never saw road rage or violence.”

In addition to the knowledge and experiences from China that Leeper brought back to the College are relationships he made at Fujian Medical University. “The contacts I made there are willing to take on our medical students and residents who are interested in doing an international rotation,” he says.

Leeper hopes the relationships might also mean that medical students and residents from Fujian Medical University can come to Tuscaloosa and study at the College.
The College has long recognized the need to expose medical students and residents to global medicine. With the help of the Lister Hill Society, the College is working to provide one international travel opportunity for a medical student and resident during his or her time at the College.

So far this year, the Lister Hill Society has committed $25,000 to fund international travel opportunities for the medical students and residents to experience health care in China, India, Ghana and other countries around the world. The Lister Hill Society is the annual fund for the College.

While efforts to include all medical students and residents is a new commitment, the College has been sending faculty, residents and medical students on international health trips for years. The College’s Larry Mayes Endowed Scholarship Fund was established in 1987 and provides scholarship funds for a fourth-year medical student to have a community medicine experience in an underserved setting in the United States or abroad. The scholarship fund was created by family and friends of Larry Mayes, a medical student at the College who became ill during an international medical experience in Africa.

Vijaya Sundar, MD, chair of the College’s Department of Internal Medicine and director of Global Health Programs, oversees the international medical experiences. She hopes residents and medical students can use the opportunity to focus on the idea of globalized medicine and learn from other cultures.

“Everything is globalized. A medical problem in Greece will trickle to the United States. Diseases are globalized and physicians need to be aware of global medicine versus compartmentalized medicine,” Sundar says.

Gifts to the Lister Hill Society are bringing a world of difference to the College’s medical students and residents. For more information about the Lister Hill Society or the Larry Mayes Endowed Scholarship, please contact Allison Leitner at (205) 348-5701 or aleitner@cchs.ua.edu.
In honor of the 40th Anniversary of the College in 2012, the Lister Hill Society, the College’s annual fund, will provide matching contributions for all scholarship gifts with the goal of reaching $40,000. “We are so pleased to offer this opportunity for our friends to invest in the College and have their gifts make such a tremendous difference,” says Interim College Dean Thaddeus Ulzen, MD. “I think most people will agree that the staggering cost of medical school makes it difficult for students to consider primary care. If the College can offer students more scholarship opportunities, we hope to have an even greater impact on producing primary care physicians to serve in our state.”

Scholarships can be provided to medical students in a variety of ways. For example, a gift of $1,000 to the College’s General Scholarship Fund will be matched by an additional $1,000 and will result in $2,000 being awarded.

A residency class may choose to pool its funds and invest $10,000 in scholarships for medical students involved in rural educational programs, such as the Rural Medical Scholars Program and the Tuscaloosa Experience in Rural Medicine or TERM program. The class contributes a total of $10,000, the Lister Hill Society matches with an additional $10,000, and a new $20,000 scholarship is endowed in perpetuity in the name of the residency class.

Finally, gifts can be made to an endowment that already exists. A gift of $4,000 is matched with $4,000 of Lister Hill funds and $8,000 is placed in the Theta Xi Endowed Scholarship, which supports students enrolled in rural health care programs offered by the College.

This exciting opportunity applies to all new scholarship gifts and pledges through December 31, 2012, or until the $40,000 challenge is reached. Scholarships can be funded with gifts and pledges paid over a five-year period with cash, stock, or other appreciated assets. Please take advantage of having your investment doubled and contact Allison Leitner at (205) 348-5701 or aleitner@cchs.ua.edu to increase scholarship support of the College’s medical students.

SEND US YOUR ALUMNI NEWS ...

Have news to share with your fellow graduates? If you have news about jobs, promotions, retirements, honors and achievements, marriages, births and deaths, send the information to OnRounds by mail, fax or e-mail. Entries must include graduation year. (We reserve the right to shorten and edit entries to conform to space constraints and style guidelines.)

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Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0326

Fax items to (205) 348-9417

E-mail items to lzganjar@cchs.ua.edu
The College is participating in a clinical trial that seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of a drug to reduce pain associated with postherpetic neuralgia – pain after shingles. Each year, about one million Americans develop shingles, a painful viral infection caused by a reactivation of the same virus that causes chickenpox. It is estimated that up to one in five people with shingles will experience prolonged pain after shingles. The pain can persist long after the shingles rash has healed and can disrupt sleep, mood, work and other daily activities.

The clinical trial is being conducted at University Medical Center and is studying the effectiveness of GRALISE, a tablet now available by prescription as a once-daily treatment for postherpetic neuralgia. Grier Stewart, MD, an assistant professor in the College’s Department of Internal Medicine, is the principal investigator of the study. The College operates University Medical Center.

The study is being sponsored by Depomed Inc., a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Menlo Park, Calif.

The College’s Institute for Rural Health Research co-sponsored a satellite teleconference in October that focused on emergency medical care and sickle cell patients.

The teleconference was titled “Taking Care of the Sickle Cell Patient in Emergencies: From Diagnosis to Emergency Medical Transport to Emergency Hospital Service.” Its purpose was to educate health care providers and increase their competencies in recognizing and treating emergency care issues in sickle cell patients.

Pamela Foster, MD, MPH, deputy director of the Institute and an assistant professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine, helped coordinate the teleconference. She is also a board member of the West Alabama Sickle Cell Association. Glenn Davis, EMT-P, who heads the Institute’s emergency medical services efforts, gave several presentations.

Issues covered in the teleconference included common physical manifestations of sickle cell anemia in children and adults, differences in managing the disease in children and adults, management of sickle cell illness, policy issues for first responders and management issues for emergency medical staffs and hospitals.

Other sponsors of the teleconference included the West Alabama Sickle Cell Association and the Alabama Department of Public Health’s Office of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma. The teleconference was broadcast from the Department of Public Health’s headquarters in Montgomery.
Margaret Garner, MS, RD, LD, the College’s assistant dean for Health Education and Outreach, was named the 2011 recipient of the American Dietetic Association’s highest honor, the Marjorie Hulsizer Copher Award.

The award was presented to Garner in September at the opening session of the ADA’s Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo in San Diego, Calif. An ADA member since 1971, Garner is a leading authority on nutrition education for physicians, residents and medical students, and on the training and mentoring of registered dietitians.

The Marjorie Hulsizer Copher Award is named for an early 20th Century pioneer in dietetics who was recognized by the British and French governments for her service in World War I, and who was chief dietitian at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. After her death, a gift from her husband to the ADA established the award in her honor.

In addition to serving as an assistant dean for the College, Garner is director of Health Promotion and Wellness at the Student Health Center, director of Nutrition and Education Services in the Department of Family Medicine, where she is also an associate professor, and is an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Human Nutrition and Hospitality Management’s Coordinated Dietetics Program. The Student Health Center and the Department of Family Medicine are part of the College.

“This is a tremendous award and well deserved,” says Chelley Alexander, MD, chair of the Department of Family Medicine. “Letters came in from all around the country in support of her nomination.”

According to Garner’s colleagues: “Throughout Margaret’s amazing and multifaceted career of 40 years, she has unselfishly given back to her profession and to the American Dietetic Association through extensive, active participation at the national, state and district levels. She has been innovative and creative, accomplishing many firsts, particularly in the areas of advocacy and public policy, wellness programs, reimbursement for RD services and medical nutrition therapy, promotion of post-RD educational opportunities and RD involvement in medical education.”

Garner helped establish and was the first chair of the Alabama Food and Nutrition Exposition, a unique partnership of the Alabama Dietetic Association, Alabama Dietary Managers Association and Alabama School Nutrition Association.

Within the American Dietetic Association, Garner has served in many leadership roles, including ADA’s Board of Directors and Commission on Dietetic Registration. She was a member and chair of ADA’s Legislative and Public Policy Committee and Political Action Committee, and served on ADA’s Coding and Coverage Committee, Strategic Planning Task Force and Council on Education. She is past-president of the Tuscaloosa District Dietetic Association and the Alabama Dietetic Association.

Garner received her bachelor’s degree from Georgia Southern University, a master’s degree from The University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and completed a fellowship in Nutrition and Developmental Disorders at The University of Tennessee Medical Unit in Memphis. Her counseling and education interests are in medical nutrition therapy for chronic diseases, eating disorders, wellness and prevention.
ACCOLADES

Two assistant directors in the Student Health Center’s Department of Health Promotion and Wellness recently earned doctoral degrees. The Student Health Center is part of the College. Delynne Wilcox, PhD, MPH, CHES, is the department’s assistant director of Health Planning and Prevention and earned her doctorate in Higher Education Administration. Wilcox has 18 years experience in public health, including 11 years in college health. Her areas of specialization for the department include alcohol and other drug prevention, tobacco and safety. She is an adjunct professor in the University’s College of Education and New College and is a certified intrinsic coach. Wilcox received a bachelor’s degree in Health Studies from The University of Alabama and a Master’s of Public Health degree from East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania. She is also a Certified Health Education Specialist. Michelle Harcrow, PhD, is assistant director of Health Education and Promotion for the department and earned her doctorate in Health Education and Promotion from a joint program at The University of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She serves as advisor to the student organizations Project Health and Student Health Peer Educators and is the Alabama State Coordinator for The BACCHUS Network. Her areas of specialization for the department include financial health and mental health. Harcrow is adjunct faculty in The University of Alabama’s College of Human Environmental Sciences. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Mississippi State University in Psychology and Health Education and Promotion.

John B. Waits, MD as assistant professor in the College’s Department of Family Medicine, received the Degree of Fellow from the American Academy of Family Physicians. The Fellow designation recognizes AAFP members who have distinguished themselves among their colleagues and communities by their service to family medicine, their advancement of health care to the American people and their professional development through medical education and research.

AWARDS

John C. Higginbotham, PhD, MPH, the College’s associate dean for Research and Health Policy, received a 2011 Charles Barkley Excellence in Mentoring Award from the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Minority Health Research Center (MHRC). The award recognizes faculty who have provided outstanding mentoring and have contributed substantially to the career development and retention of students and scholars participating in MHRC research and training programs. Higginbotham is also chair of the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine and director of its Institute for Rural Health Research.

The Mayo Clinic Alumni Association selected John Wheat, MD, MPH, a professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine and founder and director of the College’s Rural Health Leaders Pipeline programs, as recipient of its Professional Achievement Award. Wheat was recognized for his efforts in recruiting and educating primary care physicians through the pipeline programs and addressing the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama. The pipeline programs are geared to recruit and encourage students in rural Alabama, from middle school through medical school, to pursue medical careers in rural and underserved communities. Sixty percent of medical students finishing the pipeline have entered rural practice in Alabama. Wheat received the award in September at The Doctors Mayo Society Dinner/President’s Gala.

PRESENTATIONS

Pamela Foster, MD, MPH, deputy director of the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research and an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Rural Medicine, gave a presentation as part of the Southern AIDS Coalition satellite conference and live webcast in September. Foster’s presentation focused on the use of faith-based initiatives to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the rural South.
John C. Higginbotham, PhD, MPH, the College’s associate dean for Research and Health Policy, was a guest speaker at the Building a Culture of Health Conference held in September at The University of Alabama. Higginbotham, who is also director of the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research and chair of its Department of Community and Rural Medicine, presented a talk titled “The Landscape of Health in Alabama.” The conference brought together business, health care and community leaders to discuss the impact that poor health is having on employers and communities. Presentations were made by national, state and local experts in health and wellness initiatives and highlighted best practices in workplace and community settings.

James Leeper, PhD, a professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine, will provide a presentation at a concurrent session of the National Rural Health Association’s 17th Annual Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference in Daytona Beach, Fla., December 7-8. Leeper’s session is titled “The Challenges of Growing Our Own: Preparing Rural Minority Students for Health Careers.” Pamela Foster, MD, MPH, deputy director of the College’s Institute for Rural Health Research and an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Rural Medicine, and Lea Yerby, PhD, an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Rural Medicine and Institute for Rural Health Research, will participate in the session.

Lea Yerby, PhD, an assistant professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine and Institute for Rural Health Research, will present a paper at the 38th Annual Society of Teachers in Family Medicine Conference on Medical Student Education in January 2012. Yerby’s paper is titled “To Participate or Not to Participate? Student Perceptions of a Rural Community-based Medical Education Experience” and is based on her work with the College’s TERM program (Tuscaloosa Experience in Rural Medicine).

TERM provides third- and fourth-year medical students with increased exposure to the practice of medicine in rural Alabama. Students begin their clinical training in Tuscaloosa and complete training at one of two rural sites – Carrollton Primary Care in Pickens County and Primary Care Center of Monroeville in Monroe County. Julia Boothe, MD, a physician at Carrollton Primary Care, and Pat Murphy, director of the TERM program, will participate in the presentation.

PUBLICATIONS


Melanie Tucker, PhD, CCRC, an assistant professor in the College’s Department of Community and Rural Medicine and Institute for Rural Health Research and director of the College’s Division of Clinical Investigations, authored “EMR Use Among Alabama Family Medicine Physicians: A Rural and Urban Analysis,” to be published in the Southern Medical Journal.
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