THE CRUCIBLE
“A Place…. In which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development”
College of Allied Health Professions, University of South Alabama
http://www.usouthal.edu/alliedhealth

Issue 8
Spring 2008

Special points of interest:
• BMD graduates honor students
• CLS student selected for Hall of Fame
• OT students assist with Very Special Olympics
• PA graduate reveals Mitchell Cancer Institute
• PT faculty to retire
• RAD talks of the “CARE” bill
• SPA welcomes new Audiologist

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The College of Allied Health Professions (CAHP) was featured in a recent campus publication for the outstanding performance of our graduates on their national qualifying examinations. As the article pointed out, the faculty have done an outstanding job in the preparation of our students as evidenced by the fact that for the past five years, CAHP graduates have averaged more than 95% pass rate on their national qualifying/certification exams and, in 2007, five of the seven clinical departments achieved a 100% first time pass rate. I have often referred to the great performance of our students and our faculty in previous Crucible editions but this is truly an outstanding record and speaks to the overall quality of education at USA.

Our annual combined faculty awards, Hall of Fame, and Alpha Eta banquet was a great celebration of our faculty, students, and featured another outstanding graduate from our college, Lt. Col. Brian Casleton (see the Clinical Laboratory Sciences Department section). This event, held at the Country Club of Mobile, gives us a chance to recognize outstanding performance by our faculty and students and to give special recognition for the outstanding work of one of our graduates. Please contact any of our department chairs if you have individuals you would like to nominate for our Hall of Fame recognition.

Faculty and staff are busily preparing for our Spring graduation ceremonies and look forward to the annual celebration of the successful completion of another year. The progress on our new building is right on schedule and we are busily engaging in the most satisfying task of selecting color schemes, furniture, and lab equipment. There are many opportunities for alumni and friends of the College to make a significant contribution to our future students by donations to the new building project. For more information please contact me or Dr. Joe Busta, USA VP for Development.

As always, best wishes for a joyful and healthy Spring and please keep in touch.

Rick Talbott, Ph.D.
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A Message from the Associate Dean

Faculty awards: On February 13, members of the USA chapter of “Mortar Board”, the National Senior Honor Society, honored several faculty members in the college with the “Top-Prof” award. Seven of the thirty-four recipients are faculty in the College of Allied Health Professions, including:

Dr. Azin Agah (Biomedical Sciences)  Dr. Michael Spector (Biomedical Sciences)
Dr. Zari Aliabadi (Biomedical Sciences)  Dr. Cindy Stanfield (Biomedical Sciences)
Dr. Jean Irion (Physical Therapy)  Dr. Julio Turrens (Biomedical Sciences)
Dr. John Jefferson (Physical Therapy)

Considering that our faculty members constitute less than 8% of all the faculty on campus, the fact that over 20% of the awardees belong to our college makes us feel very proud of their accomplishments.

College awards: Dr. Marjorie Scofield, department of Occupational Therapy, received the Service Award from the College of Allied Health Professions. Dr. Brad Davis, chair of Biomedical Sciences, was recognized with the Teaching Award. Congratulations to both for their contributions.

Advising office: We want to welcome Ms. Andrea Branch who became our newest academic advisor in December. Ms. Branch was previously working as an academic advisor in the Graduate School at Auburn.

Dean’s office: We also welcome Ms. Angie Harvison who joined the Dean’s office as an Administrative Assistant in February. Ms. Harvison worked as a secretary for the women’s basketball team in the Athletics Department.

Contributions to the Crucible: We want to remind you that the “Crucible” accepts news and other information that you may like to share with other graduates and students in the college.

Julio F. Turrens, Ph.D.
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I am proud to announce that Dr. Zari Aliabadi has been appointed to the position of Professor and Chair in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies effective June 1st. She will maintain a joint appointment and continue to be the instructor in pathophysiology as well as direct her research laboratory. Still, we will miss her greatly for the many other contributions she makes throughout the program. Please do not forget to log on to http://www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/survey.html and complete the information survey form for both the College and the BMD Department. It is very important to us to know where our alumni are and what they are doing. The summer looks to be another busy one with numerous students working in the research laboratories on a wide variety of projects. I look forward to reporting to you in the next issue of the Crucible. Best wishes to you all.

William B. Davis
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Graduating Honor Thesis students
Ashleigh Butts, Donny Kakati, Pavan Kapadia, Rama Kastury, De’Arco McCreary, Carl Odom, Sobia Ozair, Samit Patrawala

Science Olympiad
The University of South Alabama once again sponsored the Regional Science Olympiad. This year, a committee organized the event. The committee of three included two Allied Health faculty, Dr. Cindy Stanfield, Biomedical Sciences, and Professor Vicki Barrett, Clinical Lab Sciences. Dr. Mike Spector was the score keeper and judged an event. Several students in Biomedical Sciences and Clinical Laboratory Sciences also participated by judging events or running numerous errands throughout the day. Dr. Cindy Stanfield and The College of Allied Health Professions made generous donations to support the Science Olympiad.

Cardiorespiratory Care
Message from William Wojciechowski, Chairman, Cardiorespiratory Care
Greetings! The end of another spring semester is rapidly approaching. The class of ’08 marks the 27th graduating class in the history of this program. This graduating class will be our largest to date with 23 students expected to receive their baccalaureate degrees. The faculty would like to extend congratulations to this fine group of students, and wish them success as they prepare to launch their careers.

Bill Pruitt has been asked to join the Editorial Advisory Board for the monthly publication, RT for Decision Makers in Respiratory Care. Mr. Pruitt also has been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the publication RN2008: The Journal of Clinical Excellence.

Tim Op’t Holt has been nominated as President-Elect of the national Association of Asthma Educators (AAE). After being elected by the AAE membership to serve on the board, Tim has received this nomination. Tim will also serve as Chair for the AAE national meeting to be held in San Francisco this July. The AAE is a national association of over 500 interdisciplinary practitioners who provide resources for asthma education.

In February, Bill Wojciechowski spoke at the 1st Saudi International Respiratory Care Conference in Dhalran, Saudi Arabia. The meeting took place at the King Fahd Military Military Complex, and was hosted by Prince Sultan Military College of Health Sciences. Bill spoke to the attendees, comprised of respiratory therapist, doctors, and nurses, on the topic of Asthma Management.

I hope that all of you have received the letter I sent outlining the capital equipment fund drive we are presently conducting. If not, let me know, and I will drop a letter in the mail to you. Nonetheless, I hope that you can participate in this effort as we attempt to enhance our laboratory facilities. As you may be aware, we will be relocating our program in the summer of 2009 to the new Health Sciences building presently under construction on the main campus. Again, I hope that you can find it in your heart to help us out in any possible way. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

As always, please contact us periodically. We enjoy hearing from you, and take pride in what you are doing. Best wishes to all.

William Wojciechowski
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Clinical Laboratory Sciences

Message from Vicki Barrett, Interim Chair

The new 3 plus 1 format for our Program (3 years of general courses and 1 year for the Professional Component) was implemented this semester. Our current seniors will finish under the old 2 plus 2 format. The Professional Component for subsequent classes will be the senior year (last 12 months) of the Program. Take a look at our website and curriculum changes at www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/clss. We hope the changes will encourage more students who have a degree, or are close to completing a degree in basic sciences, to apply for the Professional Component. The national shortage of Clinical Laboratory Scientists is growing each year. It is estimated that by the year 2012, 100,000 vacant positions will exist in this country. As you can imagine, our graduates are in great demand!

The Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences is extremely proud that another of our graduates was selected for the College of Allied Health Professions Hall of Fame. The 2008 Awardee is Lt. Col. Brian Casleton, a 1987 graduate of our Program. Since that time, he has received two Master's degrees and a specialist certification in blood banking (SBB). He joined United States Air Force in 1988 where he has received numerous honors and awards. Brian successfully executed the armed services blood program for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and coordinated blood supply and distribution activities. Brian was instrumental in executing contingency medical support for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. He was deployed to Qatar and superbly managed the blood distribution system for over fifty support activities across two continents. He set a benchmark by providing 100,000 blood products for 37,000 life-saving transfusions for mostly local civilians. His sensitivity led him to assist in humanitarian assistance by expertly coordinating aeromedical evacuation and stateside sponsorship for critically injured Iraqi children brought to the US for care. Brian currently commands the Air Force’s largest clinical laboratory at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, TX. He is certainly deserving of this award and brings honor to the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences and the University of South Alabama.

Vicki Barrett
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Faculty News

Professor Vicki Barrett was on the Science Olympiad Organizing Committee with Dr. Cindy Stanfield (Biomedical Sciences) and Ms. Patty Davis (Chemistry). This Regional Science Olympiad was held on March 1, and hosted approximately 600 participants from 5 high schools and 11 middle schools in the region. Prof. Barrett also presented a seminar on hematopoietic progenitor cells (HPC) and other blood products for the Special Topics on Stem Cells series in the College of Medicine on March 11. Vicki continues her collaboration with Dr. Wesley Denny on mitochondrial DNA of hummingbird species.

Dr. Rick Carliss: A modular, ionic liquid (IL)-based strategy has been developed for the formulation of a wide range of new pharmaceutical materials. Optimization of the cation/anion characteristics of ILs may produce property set enhancements to include controlled solubility, bioavailability, stability, elimination of polymorphism or possibly, new delivery options. Previously we have reported that a novel IL-lidocaine docusate formulation exhibited enhanced analgesia and lowered neurotoxicity compared to its parent lidocaine molecule, suggesting a unique IL-based mechanism. This was the first demonstration of a superior profile associated with a well-characterized, commonly-used drug using IL formulation technology. We have recently synthesized a number of different IL formulations to build a library of proprietary compounds, including other anaesthetics. In order to provide a complete proof of concept, we are in process of assessing the biological activity of these new compounds to determine whether other efficacy and toxicity profiles can be enhanced as observed in the case of IL-lidocaine docusate.

Dr. Wesley Denny: Our study of population genetics in hummingbirds that live along the Gulf Coast continues. One of the aims of this study is to utilize DNA sequences to confirm purported hummingbird species hybrids observed in the wild. To this end, we have successfully PCR-amplified the mitochondrial DNA control region from four additional hummingbird species: rufous (Selasphorus rufus); broad-tailed (Selasphorus platycercus); Anna’s (Calypte anna); and calliope (Stellula calliope). An analysis of the DNA sequence from these species has revealed a feature unique to hummingbirds, a series of GTTTG repeats. The number of repeats we have found in these species ranges from six to seventy, and the number of repeats is distinctive for each species. This feature of the mitochondrial DNA control region will facilitate the identification of hybrids. This research was supported in part by a grant from the Hummer Bird Study Group that was recently awarded to Prof. Vicki Barrett and the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences.

Dr. Terry Ravine: Dr. Ravine is continuing research with free-living amebae Dictyostelium discoideum and Naegleria gruberi for aggregation and/or attachment studies. He is also excited about developing and teaching a new Diagnostic Microbiology I course (CLS 360) next spring. "It's a opportunity to better prepare our students for the rigors of shortened yet still high-complexity clinical microbiology practicum".

Marie White: Marie was a judge of the Food Science Event at the Science Olympiad with Dr. David Forbes. She also prepared all reagents and delivered them for the event. The CLS Department received a wonderful letter of appreciation from Dr. Forbes in the Chemistry Department for Marie's service. Ms. White has also assumed the role of Clinical Laboratory Sciences Student Organization (CLSSO) advisor. She organized and advised the Juniors' during the LifeSouth blood drive project in February.
Clinical Laboratory Sciences continued . . . .

Student News

The Junior Class of the Clinical Laboratory Sciences Student Organization (CLSSO) hosted a LifeSouth blood drive at the Sprinhhill Avenue Campus on February 25. There were 34 prospective donors processed that resulted in 28 blood donations. They were excited about this opportunity to serve the community.

Shanna Tanner and Kimberly Cox were judges for the Remote Sensing Event at the Science Olympiad. They volunteered their own time to design and judge the event. We are very proud of their commitment to this community service event.

Joseph Peoples continues his Senior Honors Thesis work with Dr. Terry Ravine (see picture on the previous page).

Occupational Therapy

Message from the Chair,
Dr. Rebecca I. Estes

This spring the Department of Occupational Therapy had over 50 applications for the Class of 2010! We are reviewing late applications and expect a record class size! The list of activities below show how involved in department, university, and community activities and services the students and faculty are!

Dr. Rebecca I. Estes
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Service: Professional Involvement

Ms. Donna Wooster continues to serve as the Alabama State Representative for the American Occupational Therapy Association Representative Assembly. She will be traveling to Long Beach, California next month to represent our state at the national conference. Ms. Wooster is also a board member of the Alabama Occupational Therapy Association.

Dr. Marjorie Scaffa recently served on an ad-hoc panel for the American Occupational Therapy Association, reviewing the possibility of creating a specialty certification in health promotion and prevention for occupational therapy practitioners. The committee concluded that such a certification was warranted and wrote a proposal advocating for its development. The Commission on Continuing Competence and Professional Development approved the recommendation and development of the specialty certification will commence in the near future.

On-going Community Service: Focus First

Occupational therapy students (pictures - in green t-shirts), under the direction of Dr. Tracy O’Connor assisted at the Very Special Olympics event in Baldwin County Friday March 28, 2008. OT students and VSO participants had a great experience and wonderful weather for the event.

The University of South Alabama, Department of Occupational Therapy continues to provide vision screening to underprivileged children in our communities. The Spring 2008 schedule has the USA OT Students branching out to conduct the screenings in Mobile, Baldwin, and Washington Counties. They now have also conducted screenings on some babies as well. Estimates for this semester alone indicate another 600 children will be screened for possible vision problems and those who do not do well will be referred for further evaluation to the Sight Savers. The Occupational Therapy Students continue to provide excellent leadership and give generously of their time to help our preschoolers.

Occupational therapy students, under the direction of Dr. Marjorie Scaffa, are conducting accessibility surveys of a variety of public buildings in Mobile as part of a course on community-based practice. The surveys are based on standards from the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The results will be shared with city officials and facility managers with suggestions for modifications if needed. The information will also be shared with the Independent Living Center and published in their brochure highlighting accessible facilities in the city.

Ms. Donna Wooster continues to work closely with Dr. Swingle in the USA-Developmental Pediatric Clinic. The clinic is currently offering diagnostic and developmental testing for children with suspected Autism Spectrum Disorders. The number of referrals continues to grow as the community becomes aware of the vast array of diagnostic services available. Occupational therapy is a very important component to evaluate the sensory, fine motor and self care needs of this population.
Pre-OT Club Update

Occupational Therapy continued . . . .

The Pre-Occupational Therapy Club received the 2007-2008 Merit Award given by the USA Office of Campus Involvement on Thursday April 17, 2008. This award was given to the Pre-Occupational Therapy Club for their hard work and dedication throughout the 07-08 school year.

Pre-OT Club Update

Very Special Olympics

Occupational therapy students (pictures - in t-shirts), under the direction of Dr. Tracy O'Connor assisted at the Very Special Olympics event in Baldwin County Friday March 28, 2008. OT students and VSO participants had a great experience and wonderful weather for the event.
Pi Theta Epsilon of USA Update

The Pi Theta Epsilon (PTE) chapter of the Occupational Therapy department has had a continued commitment to community service involvement over the past year. Members participated in the Trick or Treat philanthropic event held in the Greater Mobile community. Members were each assigned several children with special needs to assist in the “trick-or-treat” activities held during the event. Members and children both seemed to enjoy this time together.

Another important community service PTE took on was benefiting the “Wings of Life” Can Food Drive. This Can Food Drive was held at the Springhill University of South Alabama (USA) campus. It was a successful event and the “Wings of Life” foundation greatly appreciated our efforts.

PTE continues to be involved in mentoring the pre-professional occupational therapy students of USA. Monthly meetings are held on the University’s main campus to promote occupational therapy (OT) and inform pre-occupational therapy students about current occupational therapy affairs. Each member of the Pi Theta Epsilon chapter presented on a topic or important aspect of OT during these monthly meetings. Pi Theta Epsilon conducted an induction ceremony honoring and welcoming the 2008-2009 PTE inductees into the honor society March 26, 2008.

PTE 2008 Inductees: Karoline Thornton, Tara Roberts, Jessica Roach, Lauren Marshal, Jimmy Litsey, Kate Hawkins, Savannah Hannan, Jenna Deffenbaugh, Joyce Galloway, Rebecca Frederick, Allison Everett.

South Alabama Student Occupational Therapy Association (SASOTA) Update:

SASOTA members have attended several OT conferences in the past year including the Alabama Occupational Therapy Association (ALOTA) Spring Conference in Fairhope, AL in February, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) National Conference in St. Louis, MO in April, and the ALOTA Fall Conference in Orange Beach, FL in September. At the ALOTA Fall Conference, SASOTA members participated in a student forum to generate ideas about how to increase student involvement in OT practice at state and national levels.

Last spring, SASOTA hosted a potluck in the OT Department for the physical therapy students in an effort to increase interdisciplinary interaction. The meal was a great success and was reciprocated by the physical therapy students in the fall. We hosted a three day event on USA’s main campus to promote National Backpack Awareness Day from September 17-19. SASOTA members weighed backpacks and handed out flyers to USA students to promote the prevention of chronic back pain. In addition, we distributed flyers at several local elementary schools. In December, SASOTA sponsored a three-part giving event that involved the local community. Some adapted switch toys were donated to a three-year-old girl who had recently suffered a severe spinal cord injury. Members also created care packages for older adults and distributed them at Gordon Oaks Retirement Community. They visited with the residents, played games and sang Christmas carols. Finally, we donated board games and equipment to the Baptist Children’s Home. Members spent an afternoon playing the new games with the children and enjoying refreshments. Dr. Kathy Lemcool continues to serve as the faculty liaison for this group.

Faculty Recognition

Please congratulate the faculty on the recognition for their continuing and dedicated work!

**Kathy Lemcool** received her Doctor of Philosophy in Instructional Design and Development from the University of South Alabama on December 11, 2007. Dr. Lemcool has been enrolled in coursework for several years to earn her degree as a part-time student and then completed her dissertation titled “The effects of coaching on self-regulated learning strategy use and academic achievement in an entry-level nursing course” over the past year and a half.

**Dr. Rebecca Estes** and **Dr. Marjorie Scaffa** will be presenting research results in a poster at the American Occupational Therapy Association Conference in April in Long Beach, CA. The poster is entitled “Creativity and Resiliency: Does Age Matter?” and presents profiles of older and younger adults as well as examining the differences between older and younger adults in various aspects of creativity and resiliency.

**Dr. Rebecca Estes** and **Dr. Marjorie Scaffa** as well as co-author Claudette Fette published an article titled “Effecting Successful Community Re-Entry: Systems of Care Community Based Mental Health Services,” in *Residential Treatment for Children and Youth*.

**Dr. Tracy O’Connor** and **Ms. Donna Wooster** had several poster presentations:

- **Student Portfolio Development: Are they worth the effort?** Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference, Feb. 29, 2008, USA Graduate Forum Presentation, University of South Alabama, March 17-19, 2008
- **Professional Portfolios: A new learning tool.** Louisiana Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference, April 18-19, 2008
- **Alabama Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference, April 26, 2008**

**Dr. Tracy O’Connor** presented a poster titled: **Resource Manual for Fieldwork Supervisors** at the Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association State Conference, February, 2008.

**Dr. Marjorie Scaffa** received the Dean's award for outstanding service. For several years she has contributed significant time and energy not only to service for the university community but to the profession of Occupational Therapy and the public as well. Congratulations Dr. Scaffa!! Good work.
Physician Assistant Studies . . . .

Message from the Interim Chair, Mrs. Cheryl Vrettos

I am very pleased to announce, effective June 1, 2008, Zari Aliabadi, PA-C, will be taking over as our new Department Chair of the PA Program. Dr. Aliabadi is a graduate of the first PA class of USA, holds a Ph.D. in Microbiology from West Virginia University and a Pharm. D. degree from the University of Tehran. We are very excited to have Dr. Aliabadi join our faculty and look forward to a smooth transition in June!

Congratulations! One of our faculty members, Dan Vetrosky, was recently recognized as Distinguished Fellows of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. Kudos!!!

We are growing... I am sure that many of you have received my recent email regarding the Assistant Professor position available within our department. We are adding another Clinical Medicine faculty member to assist in teaching didactic courses. For more details, and information on how to apply, please visit our website: http://www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/pa.

In other department news, our 13th class will begin on May 9th, 2008. Of the 36 students accepted: 21 are Alabama residents, 8 are from our extended service area, and 7 are considered out-of-state. There are 27 females and 9 males. The average GPA is 3.57 and the average GRE score is 1055.

Our guest writer is Mona Hagmaier, PA-C, class of 2006. She has been employed by the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute since her graduation. I would like to personally thank her for taking time to write this editorial.

Cheryl Vrettos cvrettos@usouthal.edu

USA PA-C at Mitchell Cancer Institute

A few weeks prior to graduating, I interviewed for a position in the surgical oncology program at the USA-Mitchell Cancer Institute. I was impressed by the institute’s reputation for commitment to its patients and its distinguished world-class level of physicians. I also knew it would be exciting to be involved with an Institute that was in development and something very new for the community. The Mitchell Cancer Institute offers the latest in all treatment modalities for cancer patients, ranging from the surgical management, medical oncology, and radiation oncology. The surgeon who interviewed me, Dr. Adam I. Riker, is a board certified, fellowship-trained surgical oncologist specializing in the management of breast cancer, skin cancers, and soft tissue sarcomas. Dr. Riker has a particular expertise in the surgical management of melanoma. He also has an active laboratory devoted to the translational research of melanoma metastasis and has developed a melanoma vaccine for advanced melanoma which will be available to patients in the next few months.

I began in my new position after passing the National Certifying Examination administered by the NCCPA. My job description entailed working closely with my supervising physician, participating in patient assessments, educating patients and families about treatment options, and assisting Dr. Riker in the operating room. I was immediately impacted by the MCI’s interdisciplinary, patient-centered approach to cancer care. The MCI provides an exemplary level of compassionate care, with the cancer patient and their families as the focus of what the MCI is committed to provide. The MCI holds weekly interdisciplinary meetings which are attended by medical oncologists, surgical oncologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists, and pharmacists. Additionally, the entire clinical support staff is present to discuss each new cancer patient.

My typical week begins with a clinic schedule which averages 15-17 patients with either breast cancer or melanoma. I see patients following their surgery as well, in addition to new patients with cancer. My supervising physician and myself discuss each case and outline an optimal course of treatment. I assist Dr. Riker every week in the operating room. Cases are variable and range from lumpectomies for breast cancer, mastectomies, and excisions of cutaneous melanoma, with or without a sentinel lymph mapping procedure. We also perform more complex surgeries, such as complete nodal dissections of the axilla and groin, to name a few. For the patients we take to surgery who necessitate an admission, I also manage all stages of their hospital stay from admission to discharge.

My diverse background in areas other than oncology has proven to be very beneficial for this position, as it provides a skills set that is optimal for a position in surgical oncology. Along the business side, I have helped to customize our billing forms and patient questionnaires, as well as developing several patient education brochures and handouts outlining skin cancers and various other skin diseases and their treatments. We will be implementing a new electronic medical record (EMR) soon, and I plan on creating templates and further customizing the system without adding hours of work for my supervising physician. In addition, the primary care training I received at USA has provided a strong foundation for me in the daily management of patient issues, such as diabetes, pulmonary, and cardiac diseases.

As part of the interdisciplinary team at the MCI, I have been amazed as to how often patients call me after we have cared for them, asking for advice, clarification, and counseling regarding their treatment plans. They feel a comfort level with me, and are able to ask questions they either forgot to ask the physician or choose not to ask the physician for fear of taking up too much of their time. Along with these patients who specifically ask for me, I take many of the calls that our nurse is not comfortable handling. These calls are typically from patients who have questions regarding a test result or from patients who have just undergone surgical procedures for which I assisted. At the MCI, we also offer a number of clinical trials for those patients who may have failed a standard therapy or possibly have developed recurrent or advanced disease. Our research nurses discuss the trials with the patients and answer their questions about consent forms, but I am able to perform the necessary physical exam requirements for each particular protocol.

In my humble opinion, one of the greatest benefits that a physician assistant provides the physician or surgeon (who often are already overburdened), is to assist with the plethora of other non-clinical responsibilities, allowing the doctor to spend more time with each new cancer patient. As you can imagine, being a cancer patient can be overwhelming and the physicians and myself pride ourselves on spending the necessary time with each patient, going over each and every aspect of their care. During this time, I am able to see other patients in the clinic, greatly increasing the efficiency of the clinic. Likewise, if my supervising physician is attending a meeting, conducting research, or writing papers, I am able to see patients in the clinic, give orders, and triage phone calls. This type of professional relationship between a doctor and PA is central for a fostering further development and education, often a balance of independence and counsel. Our practice as a team also extends to the community. We have lectured recently at Spanish Fort, a local high school, regarding melanoma and the dangers of tanning salons, and we have developed elective rotations for 2nd year PA students and 4th year medical students to better expose them to all of the disciplines in oncology.

In addition to sharing a clinic with my supervising physician, I have opened my own clinic one day per week. It is a Cancer Screening Clinic designed to help prevent cancer or even detect cancer in its early stages. We utilize an extended questionnaire that measures screening behaviors such as asking whether or not a woman, 40 or older, has received her first screening mammogram. Under-utilization of mammography and colonoscopy is an important...
Nashville in February. It was a great opportunity to gain professional knowledge and network. The students were greatly impressed by the conference with over 7,000 in attendance.

Regarding my future at the MCI and as a PA, I would like to continue to expand my qualifications, specifically, to improve my skills with placements of central venous catheters (ports) for long-term chemotherapy. I would like to see changes in State regulations to increase the PA’s scope of practice, as well as continued coverage for PA services by private group insurance plans. PA’s will continue to become more cost-effective and provide an invaluable service for physicians in Alabama.

The need for PA’s in the field of Oncology is evident today, with many positions currently available in a wide range of practices. Our patient load continues to increase as the aging Baby Boomer generation becomes more frequently diagnosed with cancer. We at the Mitchell Cancer Institute welcome PA students, who might be interested in a career in oncology, to rotate with us and learn how special it is to work with cancer patients and their families.

Mona Hagmaier, PA-C

Physical Therapy

Message from the Chair, Dr. Dennis Fell

Among all the other activities of the department, the faculty are teaching six web-based courses for the Web-based DPT program for licensed physical therapists. The first tDPT graduates completed the program and were awarded their DPT degree in Dec 2007. Both graduates are alumni of the USAPT program and both attended the commencement ceremony and received their diploma before the huge crowd. Congratulations to Jennifer Hicks, PT, DPT, and Jerrod Walker, PT, DPT, both of the BSPT Class of 1999, who completed the tDPT program in just two years.

I'm also very proud to announce that all DPT Class of 2007 alumni have now taken the National Physical Therapy Exam and the official report shows that 100% of them passed on their first attempt. That compares very favorably to the national first-time pass rate of 89.17% for the same graduating class.

Over 50 of our DPT students joined six faculty members in attending APTA CSM in Nashville in February. It was a great opportunity to gain professional knowledge and network. The students were greatly impressed by the conference with over 7,000 in attendance.

Dr. Charles Gray Retiring August 2008

Dr. Charles Gray has announced his retirement in August 2008. As individuals we are very happy for this time in Charles’ life as he approaches his retirement and the associated newfound freedom, flexibility of scheduling, and slower pace of life. As a department, we are VERY sad that this departmental icon won’t be around. Dr. Gray was recruited by Walt Gault and Dr. Patry Covey and began teaching in the USA PT program with the very first PT Class in 1976. He will have taught Human Anatomy for nearly 33 years. It is amazing to think that he will have taught anatomy to 893 PTs including the DPT Class of 2010. The current department chair is one of his students. Dr. Gray's gentle approach, yet very high expectations in a very demanding curricular content have earned him the respect, admiration and love of countless PTs now practicing across the country. His impeccable character is an example to all. He is looking forward to more time at his Almond, North Carolina vacation house in the mountains and lots of time with his three grandchildren.

The department has established a Dr. Charles Gray Physical Therapy scholarship fund and asks each alumnus to help us recognize and honor Dr. Gray's years of service to the department and his devotion to each of us individually. Your donation, payable to USA PT Dept, should be mailed to Dr. Dennis Fell, USA PT Dept, 1504 Springhill Ave, Rm 1214, Mobile, AL 36604. All donations from faculty, University alumni and students will be submitted for matching funds, so a $100 donation would increase the fund by $200. All donations to the scholarship are tax-deductible.

Dr. Jean Irion
gave two presentations at APTA Combined Sections Meeting in Nashville: "Women's Health Specialization Update: The Road to Specialist Certification in 2009" & "Evidence-based Practice in Aquatic Therapy". 


Is our Web-based DPT Program for Licensed Physical Therapists for YOU??

Our Doctor of Physical Therapy Program for licensed physical therapists (tDPT) program has grown really quickly. We now have nearly 80 PTs enrolled in this fully web-based program and the first two graduated in Dec. 2007 (see above). You can advance your PT degree to the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) under the guidance of experienced and encouraging faculty at South. Effective this semester, admission is now open only to MPT graduates of the University of South Alabama. The fully web-based program consists of a minimum 20 semester credits of online courses, completed at your own pace while you work. More specific information including the application can be found at the website: http://www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/pt/onlinept.html If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Jean Irion, the Web-Based DPT Program Coordinator at: jirion@jaguar1.usouthal.edu or (251) 434-3577.

Faculty News

Dr. Jean Irion

PT Admissions

The admissions process was vibrant this year with 230 applicants for the 36 positions. Among the 90 individuals invited for interview, the average GPA was 3.63, average Math/Science GPA 3.59 and average V+Q GRE score 1079.
Physical Therapy continued

Faculty Awards/Honors

Dr. Jean Irion was awarded the Elizabeth Noble Award from the APTA Section on Women's Health (SOWH). The Elizabeth Noble award is the section's highest honor. She accepted the award and gave a speech at the SOWH business meeting at APTA Combined Sections Meeting in Nashville, TN. Jean has been a very active member and leader of the section, including serving on the specialty council, and now as Chair, for the new Women's Health Specialty Certification Council.

Dr Jean Irion and Prof John Jefferson were both selected by the Azalea Chapter of Mortar Board as "Top Prof" for 2008 from the entire University faculty. Previous recipients from the Department have included Dr. Dale, Dr. Fell, Dr. Gray, and Dr. Wall.

Coral Gubler MPT, MS, ATC, PhD, our newest faculty member, successfully defended her PhD dissertation in December, related to cardiovascular responses to exercise, at University of Montana. Congratulations Coral!

USA PT Alumni Society Meetings

The adjacent photo shows USAPT alumni who attended the Alumni Gatherings in Tuscaloosa, AL this past Fall and in Cullman, AL in March. If you would like to help sponsor an alumni gathering in your area, please contact us. Some graduates from 1998 have expressed interest in getting together at the AL APTA Spring Conference in Orange Beach 5/2 - 5/4. Alumni with 10, 20 and 30 year graduation anniversaries (co1978, 1988, 1998) can contact the office (251)434-3575 for more information about meeting on the beach or going out for supper.

If you would like to be part of an Alumni Advisory Group to facilitate alumni activities and advise the department, and also plan several regional alumni reunions, contact Dr Gray at cgray@jaguar1.usouthal.edu to become a part of the fun. Also, you might have the address or phone for an alumnus with whom we have lost contact. Call (251) 434-3575 or email ptdept@jaguar1.usouthal.edu. We encourage each of you to join the USA Alumni Association http://www.southalabama.edu/alumni and specify your request to become a member of the PT Alumni Society (no extra fee). This will help to support our alumni events.

2007 November Alumni Event in Tuscaloosa, AL: Dr. Dennis Fell, Ladonna Pate, Doug Cole, Dwan Shoemake, Mason Reid, Emily Smith, Andy McGill, Sandy Eldridge Standard, Brandon Cox, Tim Holbrook, Brian Strawbridge, Katherine Davidson, Mistie Dunahoo Burkes, Kristie Dunahoo Hughey, Dr Charles Gray, Jane Ellen Jones Holbrook (Marna Guerra Hallman also attended)

2008 March Alumni Event in Cullman AL: Front: J.W. Hightower, Regina Brown Yamaguchi, Stephanie Beveridge Pruitt, Scott Pruitt; Back: Dr. Charles Gray, Jerrod Walker (DPT), Jennifer Hicks (DPT), Tom Coleman, Amanda Yerbe Allen, Josh Lenox, Kristi Reaves, Amy Hall, Patrick Roberts, Dr Dennis Fell

Alumni Updates

Here is the latest information Dr. Fell has gathered on alumni. We want to include you in the next issue!

Sandra Pendergrass Arnold (1978) – the first USA PT Class! recently returned to part-time work as a PT after 27 years of not practicing PT while she home-schooled her four children. The two oldest, Sara (27), and Ruth (25) have both graduated college and are married. Noah (19) is a sophomore in college, and Peter (18) will graduate high school within the next year. She enjoys life in Geneva, AL (for 25 years now) with her husband David.

Jack Bentley (2000) works for Gentiva Home Health in Mobile, AL. Five of their eight children are still at home, the oldest three are married and moved away. Jack and Jane are proud grandparents of Sarah Patience with two additional grandchildren on the way!

Laura Estes (2002) works in an orthopedic outpatient clinic in Southern Illinois. When Tonielli Jade "Elli" Estes was born 1/6/06 she gave up managing an outpatient aquatic center and sometimes does wounds and neuro occasionally at a local hospital. Regarding Elli, who will be 2 years old in January, she says, "Most of my free time goes to my daughter. With the career choice I have made, I am able to do that. I thank all of the staff at the PT department at USA for affording me the opportunity to do what I love."

Buddy McCormick (1995) is currently the ALAPTA Representative-at-Large and liaison to the PR Committee and web manager. He is also a nominee for the Alabama licensure board. He recently completed the requirements as a Certified Functional Capacity Evaluator and Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist through the Back School of Atlanta and also completed the long term manual therapy series with Andy Gustafson which is required prior to formal entrance into the Institute of Rehabilitation and Training Orthopedic Manual Therapy Fellowship.

Michelle Nesin, PT, OCS (1989) currently runs a practice with her sister and mother with locations in Huntsville, AL and Madison, AL, employing 17 PT's/PTA's. She has completed two fellowships, one in PNF in Vallejo, CA and another in Orthopedic Manual Therapy with the Institute of Physical Arts, (IPA) in Steamboat Springs, CO. She is an instructor for IPA since 1992. Michelle was married in May 2004 and gave birth to her son, Christopher John Hunt, September 13, 2007 at 8 lb 12 oz. The family resides on a farm in southern Tennessee with two dogs and a number of horses.

Francis Ng (1992) Congratulations to Francis and Terri upon the birth of their son Jonathan "Levi" in Hong Kong, 11/1/07. More details at http://thefamilyng.blogspot.com/

Diane Pitts (1986) works part-time at Providence Hospital and is a part-time adjunct instructor in the PT program. Her oldest of three sons is now a freshman at USA studying engineering.
Radiologic Sciences

Message from the Chair, Dr. Charles Newell

The spring semester is winding down, and we are again in the early process of student selection for the 2008-2009 academic year. Due to the number of applicants, the Departmental Admissions Committee will conduct interview sessions on Saturdays, with the first session scheduled in late March, and the final session scheduled for early June. To maximize our efforts, we will again establish interview teams composed of faculty and volunteers, such as program graduates. If you are interested in serving as an interviewer, please contact Ms. Kathy Kymbal at 434-3456. The Admissions Committee serves an important function, and we will certainly appreciate any assistance you may lend. The number of qualified applicants continues to be strong, and information concerning the program is available on our web site at www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/radiologicsciences. You are cordially invited to visit our web site.

The University recently announced the start-up of the 2008 Annual Scholarship Fund campaign. With this in mind, alumni are encouraged to consider donating to the Department of Radiologic Science Scholarship Fund. The Department of Radiologic Sciences Scholarship fund continues to receive donations from departmental faculty and alumni. Currently this fund has accumulated $22,000. As a result, we were able to award scholarships in the amount of $500.00 each to two second-year students. The projected amount to be awarded in 2009 is $1000. Please remember that it has taken twenty-plus years to accumulate $22,000 in this fund, and thus your continued support is needed if we are to see an increase in the amount awarded each year.

The Alabama Society of Radiation Oncology (ASRO) and the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO) has once again donated $2,500 to the department, which will be made available to students enrolled in our Radiation Therapy program. At present, the scholarship will award up to $500 annually, and hopefully more with future donations from alumni and others.

Charles Newell
cnewell@jaguar1.usouthal.edu

Graduate Corner

In recent years, we have seen a number of graduates enter the commercial side of radiology. Anna Kubala is one of these graduates. Anna completed our Certificate program in 1991. Three years later, she completed her bachelor’s degree through USA’s PSPA program. She was employed as a staff technologist for five years at the Mobile Infirmary and one year at Knollwood Park Hospital. In 1998, she decided to enter the commercial arena, and was employed by Computer Programs and Systems, Inc. (CPSI). CPSI is a local company, which provides software solutions for over 600 hospitals throughout the United States. CPSI also provides financial and clinical services, including PACS and physician software packages.

Anna’s initial responsibility at CPSI was to train and support clinical departments using the company’s software. As part of her duties, Anna would travel to a hospital and work onsite for a period of 2-3 weeks. Her interactions in hospitals included many different departments such as Radiology, Clinical Laboratory, Respiratory, Rehab Services, Nursing, and Dietary. She later became a manager, and her duties evolved into coordinating installation projects, overseeing support, and participating in the development of new software. Anna is now a Senior Manager of Corporate Development at CPSI. Her duties focus on helping clients maximize their software utilization. However, she functions primarily as a liaison person between the various clinical and financial departments at CPSI and works with hospitals serviced by CPSI in hosting site visits for potential customers, as a means of demonstrating CPSI’s wares in action.

Anna has thoroughly enjoyed her experiences thus far, and she believes her experience as a radiographer helped her prepare for her career at CPSI. Moreover, she has had the opportunity to travel and meet people from across our nation. Anna’s travels are such that her husband, Mark, often teases her by saying, “We can’t go anywhere without running into somebody who knows someone that worked at CPSI.” Well, that’s okay with Anna because she truly loves her work. We are certainly proud of Anna’s accomplishments, and we wish her the best in the years to come. Go Anna!

Department News

This summer, the Radiation Therapy program will host a visiting senior student from Wales College of Medicine Radiotherapy and Oncology program of Cardiff, United Kingdom. The visiting student will participate in classes and clinical observations alongside USA students in order to appreciate any differences existing between Radiation Therapy treatments in the United States as opposed to the United Kingdom. The two-week placement will allow observation of state-of-the-art technology and treatment methods offered by our clinical affiliates, and will allow our students to learn about the role of radiation therapists in the UK. We expect the experience to be of benefit to all involved.

Alpha Eta is a national allied health organization, which recognizes the academic accomplishments of students completing allied health programs. This year five students graduating from our B.S. program were inducted into Alpha Eta. Congratulations go to Erin McClellan, Christina Larson, Katherine Gaviria, Tamara Brannon, and Justin McDowell who are this year’s new members in Alpha Eta. They were officially inducted during the College of Allied Health Professions’ annual Faculty Recognition Ceremony on March 20, 2008.

As you may know, the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Senate may consider the “CARE” bill during the current legislative session (HR 583 – House, and S1042 – Senate). The bill is titled as the “Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Medical Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy.” If passed, this bill will establish minimum Federal education standards for Radiographers and Radiation Therapists. Radiographers and Radiation Therapists are urged to support this Bill by contacting their area Congressional Representative and Alabama’s Senators: Senator Jeff Session - sessions.senate.gov/ email/contact.cfm, and Senator Richard Shelby - senator@shelby.senate.gov. To learn more about the CARE Bill, go the ASRT’s web site at ASRT.org.

In June 2007, the radiography program site was visited by our accreditation agency, the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT). In February, 2008, JRCERT informed the department that full re-accreditation was granted to the radiography program for a period of eight years. A self-study was completed for the Radiation Therapy program and was recently submitted to JRCERT. We are waiting for a site visitation date to be established.

Construction of the new College of Allied Health Professions building on the main campus adjacent to the Medical School is progressing well. We anticipate relocating to the new building in May 2009. Our offices, classrooms, and x-ray labs will be located on the third floor.

The Crucible

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Radiologic Sciences continued . . . . .

Faculty News

Ms. Debra Durick is currently serving as vice-president of the Alabama Society of Radiologic Technologist.

Dr. Newell is the chairperson of the ALSRT Legislative Committee.

All radiography faculty gave presentations during the Department’s Thirtieth Annual Registry Review Seminar in March, 2008.

As alumni, please remember, you are cordially invited to visit our web site at www.southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/radiologicsciences. As always, we encourage you to consider assisting other students in our program through donations to our scholarship program. Arrangements to make donations to the Department of Radiologic Sciences Scholarship Fund can be made by contacting Ms. Ginny Turner, Associate Director of Development, at (251) 460-7032, or the Department of Radiologic Sciences, 251/434-3456. Regardless of the amount, your support will be sincerely appreciated.

Alumni are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in the Crucible. Please let us hear from you. Direct your submissions to: Dr. Charles Newell, Department of Radiologic Sciences, 1504 Springhill Ave., Suite 2515, Mobile, AL 36604-3273. Again, let us hear from you!

Speech Pathology and Audiology

Message from the Chair, Dr. Robert Moore

After five months of serving as Interim Chair of the Department, I was appointed Chair of the Department on February 15, 2008. I look forward to working with the faculty and staff in moving the Department forward in the future. As alumni and friends of the Department, you play an important role in helping us with this endeavor. We always welcome your comments and suggestions.

Robert Moore
rmoore@usouthal.edu

New Faculty

In October 1, 2008, Mrs. Carrie Love joined the Department as a Clinical Audiology Supervisor. Carrie holds both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree from the University of South Alabama. She is also currently pursuing her Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department. Carrie has had invaluable experience in the areas of hearing aid dispensing and electrophysiologic measurements. She has been a great addition to the faculty.

Faculty/Student News

In November 2007, several faculty members and students attended the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association Convention in Boston, MA. Faculty and students presented the following papers:

Elizabeth Adams & Robert Moore: Effect of Noise on Speech Rate Judgment and Speech Understanding.

Michael Carpenter & Mandy Williams: Comparison of Temperament Measures & Self-Perceived Tinnitus Severity.


Julie Estis & Brenda Beverly: Children with SLI Exhibit Delays & Differences Resolving Ambiguous Reference.

Julie Estis, Julie Parisi, Robert Moore, & Doug Brungart: Speech Intelligibility in Military Communication Headsets: Effect of Microphone Type.

Amy Horne & Michael Carpenter: N400 in Females with High & Low Acceptable Noise Levels.

Alisha Lambeth (Jones), Susan Gordon-Hickey, & Robert Moore: Relationship of Acceptable Noise Level to Noise Sensitivity.

Robert Moore & Susan Gordon-Hickey: ANL: A Tool for Predicting Hearing Aid Success.

Ishara Ramkisson: Baby Boomers: Audiometric & Rehabilitative Considerations.

In addition, on February 26, 2008, Dr. Brenda Beverly organized a presentation by a representative of the Hanen Speech Therapy Program. Attendees included 21 of our students, 4 faculty members, and 18 practitioners from the Mobile community. Also in February, Dr. Elizabeth Adams gave a talk to the Bay Area Speech and Hearing Association on “Speech Perception and Production in Patients with Cochlear Implants.” On March 20, 2008 our audiology student organization, the National Association of Future Doctors in Audiology (NAFDA), sponsored our third White Coat Ceremony for our third-year Doctor of Audiology students. The following students received their white coats: Heather Bartley, Amy Horne, Alisha Jones, Wesley Ann Pope, and Emily Sears. At the Speech and Hearing Association of Alabama’s annual convention in Auburn, AL from February 28 through March 1, 2008, the association recognized the “Outstanding Student” from each of the five speech pathology/audiology programs in the state. Each student was selected by faculty at their institution and submitted for the honor. The honoree from our Department was Laura Peaden, a M.S. student in speech-language pathology from Foley, AL. Laura maintained a 4.0 GPA during her graduate work and has excelled both clinically and academically.