Breaking ground on a new home

Taking diabetes in stride, Hollywood style

An NIH balancing act

Lions, tigers, the Amazon-alumnus joins search for an HIV vaccine
A message from the dean

It is an honor to have been chosen as the new dean of the ECU School of Allied Health Sciences. There are many exciting challenges ahead for the school, and I look forward to the opportunity of being a part of its continued growth. My job is made much easier because of the outstanding faculty, department chairs, staff, students and supportive alumni who have given so much to achieve our common goal of excellence.

This past year has witnessed many accomplishments beginning with our 35th Anniversary celebration. Marketing has received increased attention, with a greater emphasis on diversity. The first group of 43 junior and senior high school students from rural eastern North Carolina spent six weeks on campus learning about allied health careers and campus life, while building skills in math and science. This unique Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) was funded through a three-year federal grant for nearly $1,000,000 and focuses on increasing diversity among students pursuing health careers.

To take advantage of the growing use of the Internet by potential applicants, we advertise our school on www.AllAlliedHealthSchools.com and are in the process of improving the page. Take a look at it and let us know what you think. That also goes for the school's web page at www.ecu.edu/ah.

Last spring, we purchased advertisements in the ECU student paper, featuring a different department each month. We are continuing that practice this year. What better way to make students across campus aware of allied health careers.

Research activities in the school have increased and strengthened with projects such as wound care, vestibular research, gait studies and expanded research in stuttering, to name a few. Many of these projects have received funding, and new grant proposals are being written and submitted at an increased rate.

The school continues to break new ground in the development and delivery of innovative degree programs. The undergraduate program in Health Services Management accepted its first class of distance education students this year, and Health Information Management is now offered through a distance education format, significantly increasing its enrollment. The new master's degree program in Physician Assistant Studies accepted its first class of on-campus and distance education students this past May. The Department of Physical Therapy received preliminary approval from the University of North Carolina Office of the President for its proposal to plan for a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree program. The Department of Rehabilitation Studies also received preliminary approval for its proposal to establish a Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Counseling and Administration, scheduled to begin in 2005.

One of the most anticipated projects is our new allied health, nursing and health science library building scheduled for occupancy in the spring of 2006. ECU's Founders Day celebration in March 2004 will focus on health, and a major part of the activities will be centered around the groundbreaking for the new building. This state-of-the-art facility will give us new and expanded opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching, research and service that we have yet to fully realize.

Thank you for your past support, and we hope that you will continue to be a vital part of our vision of growth and excellence in the exciting years ahead. I would like to personally invite you to visit your school whenever you have a chance.

Stephen W. Thomas, Ed.D.
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Breaking new ground

The School of Allied Health Sciences will relocate in 2006 to a new, state-of-the-art building on the medical campus. Allied Health Sciences, the School of Nursing and the Laupus Health Sciences Library will be housed under one roof within three distinct facilities. On property adjacent to the Brody School of Medicine, university officials will break ground this spring for the new 292,551-square-foot complex.
By Jane Martin

These days, Dr. Stephen Thomas is frequently seen describing detailed architectural plans and blueprints in between teaching classes and steering the School of Allied Health Sciences as its new dean.

This spring the dreams of university leaders will become tangible as shovels turn over the first clumps of dirt at the site of the new Allied Health Sciences building, to be constructed off of Emergency Drive on the medical campus.

When the facility opens in spring 2006, the classrooms will feature a wireless computer network for students while faculty members enjoy expanded teaching, research and office space. No longer will the school’s faculty be spread out among multiple sites or stuffed into cramped and aging modular units. Moving from the Belk Building—jokingly referred to as the Kmart campus—into its future home, SAHS will more than double its square footage to approximately 127,000 square feet.

“We’re all looking forward to construction beginning on the new facility,” Thomas said. “We really feel that if our school is going to move forward and realize its potential, then we must have more space.”

Presently within the school, doctoral candidates are conducting research in trailers adjacent to the Belk Building, and the Physician Assistant Studies program has set up shop at the former Voice of America site in western Pitt County. This location equates to a 14-mile round trip to the medical campus for anatomy and other classes. Labs in the Physical Therapy department are being taught in split units because spaces are too small to accommodate an entire class.

In addition, a persistent mold problem is plaguing Annex 2, a trailer located beside the Belk Building. This unit is 23 years old and has had constant leaks. Even a new air handling system has not resolved the mold growth that’s become a pesky issue for faculty as it ruins equipment, files and furniture, Thomas said.

Funding for the new $60 million complex that includes new buildings for Allied Health Sciences, Nursing and the Laupus Health Sciences Library on the medical campus is being provided by the state’s Higher Education Bond that was passed in November 2000. Overall, the bond referendum netted $190.6 million for construction and repair projects at East Carolina University.

Construction costs for the Health Sciences campus expansion are estimated at $45 million with the additional funding covering infrastructure, utilities and other construction expenses.

Thomas said the school has enough funding to cover the construction of the building, but only half of what it will cost to provide furniture and equipment.

“Our operational budget hasn’t grown for the past three years,” he said. “Still, in working with Dr. Phyllis Horns (Dean of Nursing), we felt it was more important to devote the bulk of the funding to bricks and mortar and not compromise on the size of our new facilities. We’re hoping to receive additional resources and
donations to help cover the cost of equipment and furniture."

Thomas wants to avoid a space crunch by keeping the planned square footage intact since funding for construction is hard to come by given the state’s budget crisis which trickled down to budget constraints for ECU and the state’s other 15 university campuses.

Mark Myer, project manager for the Health Sciences facilities, said the East Carolina University Board of Trustees has approved plans for the project. By February 2004, the project will go out on bid with construction beginning in late March or early April. Groundbreaking for the new facility will take place during ECU’s Founders Day celebration in March 2004. Estimates place completion in spring 2006 with the School of Allied Health Sciences moving into its new home over the summer.

Allied Health Sciences, Nursing and the Laupus Health Sciences Library will each have their own distinctive entrance, but will be interconnected on subsequent floors, Myer said. The buildings will also share a courtyard.

For Allied Health, the facility will provide expanded laboratory and research space along with new classrooms and offices. Thomas foresees additional program growth once the school is in its new facility.

Allied Health Sciences’ enrollment has grown from 325 in 1994 to more than 500 this year, and projections show a further increase to 900 students by 2006.

In recent years, the school has expanded its degree offerings, adding a doctoral program in Communication Sciences and Disorders in 1996 and submitting a proposal to plan a Ph.D. program in Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Studies to UNC General Administration.

The Departments of Occupational Therapy and Physician Assistant Studies each transitioned their programs to master’s degree level in 2002. The school also added a new online degree program, Health Services Management, which began this fall.

With the Health Sciences Division on the same campus, Thomas anticipates an increase in interdisciplinary programs and classes. “The faculty, staff and students within the three schools in the Health Sciences Division don’t know each other as well as we should,” Thomas said. “Once the division is located on the same campus, I think we’ll have a more cohesive, collaborative division.”

Through larger classrooms, auditoriums and laboratories, students from different programs can more easily be trained together as teams, learning patient care in a cross-discipline environment. This instructional model more accurately reflects the work environment and will aid students as they enter the workforce, Thomas added.

“Putting us together on a common campus with the ability to share some facilities will also greatly enhance the interaction between faculty and staff of the various programs, thereby promoting interprofessional education, research and training,” Thomas said. “We’re making steady progress on the plans for the new facility, which will also enhance our ability to seek out and develop clinical training opportunities with Pitt County Memorial Hospital, the Brody School of Medicine and the School of Nursing.”

As part of the Health Sciences complex, the ECU School of Nursing will move from the Rivers Building into a new 84,000-square-foot building. The building will provide expanded classroom and clinical teaching space.

“The new School of Nursing facility will have state-of-the-art clinical simulation labs,” said Dr. Phyllis Horns, dean of Nursing. “These labs will simulate the authentic setting of providing care in clinical areas such as the emergency department, newborn intensive care unit, medical-surgical
Endowing a Dream

Equipping Allied Health’s new facility will take support from alumni, friends

By Marion Blackburn

Graduates and friends of the school can help it build a strong future for the students of tomorrow, and Dr. Stephen Thomas, dean of Allied Health Sciences, hopes they’ll come forward.

“We’re trying to sell a dream of a wonderful, high-tech education, so we can provide the best practitioners that we can to the community,” he said. “The dream is to improve health care delivery through research projects, practice and instruction.”

After the school relocates from the Belk Building to the new facility adjacent to the Brody School of Medicine, it will gain more than 60,000 square feet, nearly doubling the school’s size. But a larger building means more labs, classrooms and study areas.

Thomas said classrooms need white boards, furniture and lab supplies like hoods, microscopes and glassware. They also need LCD projectors, which can cost thousands. And these will be on-going needs since items must be replaced as they wear out.

For those who wish to have a greater association with the school, naming opportunities provide a way to endow a room or lab.

“This can give people a sense of ownership and belonging, because their name will appear on their gift,” Thomas said. “These are things that will help us provide the best education possible. We’re not selling brick and mortar. What we’re selling is a quality education.”

The fund-raising goal for the new school is $1 to $3 million. That will support five key areas: classroom and laboratory technologies, educational research labs, scholarships, endowments and the school’s Annual Fund.

Working hand-in-hand with the school in this fund-raising effort is the Medical Foundation of ECU. Troy L. Munn, director of development for Allied Health Sciences, said the goal includes ample opportunities for alumni to step forward by endowing scholarships, professorial stipends and research needs.

This support is more critical than ever because state funding has continued to shrink for years, Munn said.

“This is a monumental time for the school,” Munn said. “We’ve never had to go out and get private sources of funding like we’re doing now. We cannot fall back on the state.”

With more advanced degrees, the school must provide generous research and clinical experiences for students, who will be called on to perform at the highest level of professional accountability.

“Medicine is a high-tech area,” Thomas said. “Advances are occurring all the time. We have to prepare students for environments that are in technical flux. To do this, we need the kind of equipment that’s going to make us current and state-of-the-art.”

Add to that a swelling enrollment—especially in online programs and advanced degrees—and the need becomes more pressing.

“We’ve exceeded the growth that was anticipated by the university,” he said. “We want to make sure we’re there to meet our growth needs, in teaching, research, clinical and service opportunities.”

For more information about supporting the new school of Allied Health Sciences, the Annual Fund or any other endowments, call the Medical Foundation of ECU at (252) 744-2238 or 1-800-816-2238.
From Hollywood to Greenville

Physical Therapy researcher uses motion-capture technology to study gait patterns of patients with diabetes, hoping to unlock ways to stem the on-set of neuropathy

By Jane Martin
In Hollywood it’s one of the hottest technologies popping up in blockbuster movies such as “The Matrix Reloaded,” “The Lord of the Rings” and “Spiderman”—giving realistic movement to computer-generated images. At East Carolina University, researchers and students are tapping into the same motion-capture technology to better understand the devastating side effects of diabetes.

An ECU physical therapy faculty member is using computerized motion analysis to study gait or walking patterns of patients with diabetes. He hopes to detect the differences in how an individual with neuropathy walks and the pressures they place on specific areas of their feet compared to individuals with diabetes who have yet to develop this loss of sensation.

Neuropathy occurs when patients experience the loss of nerve sensation or feeling in their extremities, primarily their feet and toes. Neuropathy may cause skin to break down, develop ulcers and subsequently become infected. Too often, this leads to amputation.

“We’re looking at the biomechanics of their gait to determine if there is any correlation to changes in how they walk and the onset of ulceration,” said ECU assistant professor Dorsey “Blaise” Williams, who holds a doctorate in biomechanics and movement science. “From a physical therapy standpoint, we want to know if there are interventions that can be made to help prevent ulceration.”

To electronically capture the patient’s walking pattern, small, round reflective markers are placed on the heel, foot, ankle and upper part of the thigh on one leg. The patient then walks across the room in front of five cameras and over a plate that measures force, located in the floor of the Movement Science Laboratory within the ECU School of Allied Health Sciences.

The cameras capture motion signals from the markers at multiple angles and transmit the gait pattern to the lab’s computer. Next, the computer creates a 3-D model of the person’s walking pattern. Data also is taken at different reference points along with a pressure analysis from the force plate, which records the force and angle at which the foot strikes the plate in stride.

Williams’ research hopes to pinpoint specific foot pressures and joint mobility and how they affect the walking patterns of individuals with diabetes. By comparing the gait of patients who have developed neuropathy with those who have not reached this stage, Williams and his students hope to detect clues to when patients first begin losing...
sensation in their feet and toes. “On a clinical level we already know how to determine if a patient has developed neuropathy or if they’re at risk. We know if they have protective sensation or if they don’t,” Williams said. “What we’re trying to discover is if there are treatments that can preclude the onset of neuropathy and ulceration.”

To date, Williams has enrolled 20 study participants—all patients in the ECU Diabetes and Obesity Center at the Brody School of Medicine. Of these, nine have neuropathy. Within the next several months, he hopes to have up to 20 patients in each group. A higher number of research participants will strengthen his findings.

Carolyn Knuckey, a licensed practical nurse and one of the study’s participants, works with patients at the ECU Diabetes and Obesity Center. She has suffered with diabetes for several years and has neuropathy. “I’m happy to participate in the study. It’s been rather simple, all I’ve had to do is put on these sensors and walk,” she said, smiling. “I hope this gives them data that will help others who suffer from diabetes and its side effects.”

Initial funding for the study was provided through a Creative Activities Grant by ECU. Williams plans to apply for future funding from the National Institutes of Health to expand the study.

Williams encourages any local physicians who are interested in enrolling patients in the study or individuals with diabetes who would like to participate to contact him at (252) 328-4451.
Dr. Sherri Jones, associate professor in Communication Sciences and Disorders, is studying vestibular disorders in mice through a grant from the National Institutes of Health. She hopes to unlock clues that can help diagnose and treat vestibular disorders in humans.
Balance problems may escape notice, but their effects can be devastating. For the estimated 40 percent of American adults who experience them, inner-ear problems or vestibular disorders can cause confusion, vertigo and falls. In the elderly, these falls can lead to serious injuries such as broken hips.

In children, vestibular disorders can delay development and can be the hidden source of poor coordination.

Research into these illnesses will uncover better ways to treat them, new faculty member Dr. Sherri M. Jones believes. An associate professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Jones came to ECU in July from the University of Missouri.

Jones brings with her a prestigious grant from the National Institutes of Health that is allowing her to explore vestibular deficits in mice, whose balance organs are similar to humans. Her arrival marks the first NIH grant associated with the School of Allied Health Sciences.

The grant, now in its third year, supports her research into the causes of vestibular deficits, including genetics. She is applying for an extension, worth about $1 million, that would fund the study for five more years. The original grant was for approximately $500,000, with about $60,000 transferring to ECU with Jones.

Vestibular disorders—while not life-threatening—have debilitating consequences. Older people may suffer serious injuries, such as broken hips or bones from falls. Moreover, as health providers become aware of the subtle symptoms, they can better diagnose and recommend treatment to help patients avoid the potentially harmful effects.

“A person may be seen by several types of specialists before anyone figures out what the underlying problem is,” Jones said.

Light-headedness, dizziness and in severe cases vertigo arise from vestibular disorders. This creates a sense of imbalance, leading to other problems. For children, it can hinder development and learning. Babies with vestibular disorders may not sit or crawl at an appropriate age. This delay can overlap other critical milestones.

Individuals with severe vestibular deficits feel the effects in day-to-day activities and may start avoiding certain situations. For instance, they may have extreme difficulty if lights are low or dim, or if there is commotion around them.

“Vestibular disorders have grave consequences on an individual’s life,” Jones said.

Traditionally difficult to diagnose, health care professionals are looking for new ways to discover and remedy inner ear disorders as part of audiology practice. “We know a lot more about hearing than we do about vestibular development,” Jones said.

Jones brings a rich background of skills, a passion for her study and a desire to help people. As part of her work at ECU, Jones has also established a Vestibular Assessment Clinic. This service will allow her to support area physicians whose patients are troubled by balance problems, vertigo or related issues.

She expects to work closely with the vestibular program at the Rehabilitation Center located within Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Complex syndromes
A myriad of factors, such as the environment, exposure to toxins and genetics, affect the ability to balance and to sense location.
Jones’ NIH-funded research is looking into what causes specific disorders by examining mutations in a variety of mouse strains. She is focused on organs that resemble those in humans. The gravity receptor organs sense linear movement. There are two in each inner ear in mice and in humans. She is also studying the three organs in the inner ear of mice that sense angular motion of the head. These organs also have human counterparts.

Mouse models allow Jones to learn more about several specific syndromes or problems that arise in humans. Usher’s Syndrome, of genetic origin, causes profound hearing impairment, profound vestibular impairment and visual problems. An individual with Usher’s Syndrome may have deficits in all those systems or some.

Jervell-Lange Nielsen Syndrome leads to hearing impairment, while nonsyndromic hearing impairment is a condition in which a person has a single problem without a clinical constellation of symptoms.

The hope is that her animal research will allow Jones and her colleagues to better understand the concealed, but vital system of sensory organs that allows us to stand, walk, climb, learn and live. Balance is complicated. Three systems—visual, touch (or somatosensory) and vestibular—contribute to balance and posture.

Adapting to an inner ear disorder means learning to rely on other senses.

“It involves the visual system and the somatosensory systems; the sense of touch,” she said. “An individual with a vestibular deficiency can learn to use visual and somatosensory systems to offset the deficit.” An effective rehabilitation program should optimize the individual’s entire range of sensory strengths, she said.

Wealth of experience

Her breadth of insight, experience and dedication make Jones a dynamic addition to the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, said Dr. Gregg Givens, interim chair.

“She brings expertise in an area that’s very important,” Givens said. “It’s very difficult to find someone with the level of experience, research and clinical expertise that Dr. Jones has.

“Balance, and the development of our balance ability, are areas that are presently very under-researched. We are thrilled that she’s on the faculty,” he said.

Jones believes her animal research will open a doorway to better understanding of human inner ear disorders. That’s her hope and her passion. A licensed audiologist with a Ph.D. in audiology and hearing science, she has a long-standing interest in helping children and adults overcome these disorders. She is also interested in learning how they might be prevented.

“The importance of normal hearing to the development of speech and language is well-known,” Jones said. “But the consequences of abnormal development of the balance organs is not so well known. It’s been suggested that poor or abnormal balance function may lead to delayed motor development or abnormal motor control,” such as sitting, walking or standing. “A physician may see an infant with delayed motor development, say they’re not sitting or crawling, and will ask, ‘Is there a problem in the inner ear?’” she said.
Does Jones foresee a time when intervention can prevent inner ear disorders from arising? Maybe.

“A lot of research is being done to look at potential therapeutic strategies and treatments to prevent genetic problems,” she said. “Instead of telling a person they have to live with it, I’m hopeful that the things I’m looking at will help the health care field have a better effort at ameliorating dizziness and vertigo.”

A stabilizing force
A new clinic will help children and adults with dizziness, balance problems

By Marion Blackburn

A new clinic dedicated to evaluating the cause of dizziness and lightheadedness is underway at the School of Allied Health Sciences.

Directed by Dr. Sherri M. Jones, an associate professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, the clinic will assess adults and children who may have inner ear or vestibular disorders.

One of the ways Jones will test inner ear function is by observing eye movement as patients turn or spin in a computerized rotary chair. The eyes serve as a gauge for what happens in the unseen organs of the inner ear, allowing her to discern whether balance problems stem from vestibular deficits or from another cause.

Jones believes ECU is the only site east of Raleigh with this testing capability.

“The rotary chair is a very specialized piece of equipment,” she said. She will also conduct tests known as videonystagmography, a video recording of irregular eye movements.

“Current vestibular testing involves observing and recording eye movement and using those movements to diagnose,” she said. “Eye movements are a non-invasive way to get at problems that may be going on in the inner ear.”

Referrals to the clinic come from physicians, although self-referrals are accepted. She expects to see people of all ages, including babies, who can be tested in the rotary chair using an infant seat.

Patients who are diagnosed with vestibular deficits will be referred to Pitt County Memorial Hospital’s Rehabilitation Center. “It helps rehabilitation to know if the vestibular system is working and can help,” she said.

Jones will also make recommendations to the referring physician that could include magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) or positron emissions technology (PET) scans.

Eventually, she hopes her research and clinical practice will help patients of all ages who experience inner ear problems.

The clinic is housed in the Belk Building. For more information or for referrals, call (252) 328-4404 or visit the Web site www.ecu.edu/csd/clinicaudiology.htm.
By Jane Martin
Making a trip to see your doctor may seem like a simple proposition. But for individuals with mental retardation or developmental disabilities, a 30-mile trip to see a specialist in Greenville can involve a team of health care professionals and take up hours of valuable time.

Through a $114,081 grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, clients served by Kinston’s Caswell Center will now visit specialists and other physicians via telemedicine through ECU’s REACH-TV network. ECU will provide in-kind contributions of equipment and program support totaling $91,750. The Caswell Center and its foundation will cover the remaining costs.

Caswell staff members Sherry Rowe, director of physical therapy; Kate Snodgrass, clinical services director; and Sandra Hardison, coordinator of agency services, will serve as evaluators of the grant. Caswell Center Director Mike Moseley feels the grant will not only improve access to care for patients, it will also allow the center to tap into continuing education and other presentations for its staff and professionals in the region. It also will provide mental health professionals access to the expertise of the Caswell Center’s clinical professionals through the REACH-TV network, based at ECU.

The total cost to establish and operate the telemedicine connection is $302,321. In addition to the grant, ECU will provide in-kind contributions of equipment and program support totaling $91,750. The Caswell Center and its foundation will cover the remaining costs.

“Our participation in this project is a natural outcome of the technology and expertise that’s available at ECU,” said Dr. Jack Brinn, interim director of CHSC and the Telemedicine Center at the medical school. “This collaboration speaks well of our telemedicine services, and we’re very pleased about this opportunity.”

The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust was created in 1947 by the will of Mrs. William Neal Reynolds of Winston-Salem. Three-fourths of the trust’s grants are designated for use for health-related programs and services across North Carolina with one-fourth for the poor and needy of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.
Caswell Center Director Mike Moseley and Kate Snodgrass are pleased to receive the support from the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and East Carolina University for telemedicine services. The grant program will enable Moseley to use his staff more effectively for patient care. Snodgrass will manage the program.
Click and Graduate

Health Services and Information Management switches to all online degrees, hoping to bridge the geography gap, increase enrollment and stem a professional shortage

By Marion Blackburn

Most days, assignments from his six classes, his full-time job as a computer analyst and spending time with his family keep Emmanuel Yennyemb too busy to daydream.

But when he takes a minute to reflect, he knows he’s heading for something good. Yennyemb is among the first students to enroll in the new online Health Information Management degree, a program that allows students to complete all course requirements for the major, usually during the final two years of undergraduate study, through online coursework.

The degree still requires classwork, homework and discussions. Only, these days they take place via bulletin boards, e-mail and Web links.

The program has been under development since 2001, when faculty in the department, now called Health Services and Information Management, realized there was an unmet need for health professionals in information management—graduates who manage records, insurance files and medical data bases.

The need is expected to mushroom in the coming years, but even today there simply aren’t enough qualified people to fill existing positions. Studies in the state and nation released in 2001 showed N.C. had an 8.5 percent vacancy rate. Nationally, that shortage was 18 percent, according to the American Hospital Association.

A strong program was already in place at ECU. Yet enrollment had been steadily declining. The goal? Find and enroll more people.

“Geography was determined to be an issue,” said Dr. Elizabeth Layman, professor and chairman of the department. People simply couldn’t spend several days a week on campus. They worked full time. They lived far away. They had families.

Those in the field recommended finding ways to increase the reach of the program, especially to students who could not physically get here,” she said. “It is an academically rigorous program, but it wasn’t well known. Still, we had many people asking ‘Are you online?’ We were getting phone calls and e-mails.”

So, the new online HIM program was born. It joins another new online program that also started this fall in Health Services Management. This undergraduate program is designed to provide working
professionals the skills needed to function as managers in a variety of health care settings. The degree can also serve as a strong foundation for graduate studies in a variety of allied health fields.

Enrollment doubles
Clearly, the online HIM program has addressed a need. Enrollment for fall 2003 is 25, more than double that from a recent semester. “It’s quite an increase,” Layman said.

Yennyemb, 43, is one of those new students. A computer expert by profession, he has always felt at home in health care.

He once worked as a certified nurse’s assistant, and his wife is a registered nurse. When he began to think about returning to school, it seemed a natural fit for this systems expert to study health information. With the program online, he could study according to his own schedule, leaving room for his three children and wife.

“Family is the first thing here,” he said. But studying takes time too. Hours he must draw from his off-work time. Enrolled in five online and one campus-based course, he sets aside at least two hours a day to review his materials. During breaks at the computer center in Wilson where he works evenings, he completes school work when possible.

“Knowing what I want to do, and seeing where I am right now, gives me motivation,” he said. “Days I don’t feel like reading, I have to because I know where I’m going.”

Electronic learning has been in place for some time at the School of Allied Health Sciences. Medical terminology has been online for two years. Other courses, especially those with rapidly changing content, were hybrids, a mix of face-to-face and online learning. “We’ve been on the cutting edge of using the Internet and
Blackboard since 1999,” Layman said. Together, the HIM and HSM programs have enrolled 47 students this fall.

For students, online courses bring the flexibility of working in the kitchen at 2 a.m., on Saturday afternoons or before work at 5 a.m. The advantages multiply when you consider the program’s objective—to ready students for an office where they’ll create and manage computerized medical records. It seemed a perfect arrangement.

“What better way to explain technology in health care?” Layman said. “Part of the benefit of putting HIM online is that our end goal is an electronic medical record. Plus, they’re more prepared for the real-life workplace.”

It also means students work with constantly updated information. Textbook revisions take years; changing an Internet site or making a CD ROM takes seconds. Supplemental materials on CD arrive by mail and may offer students a video presentation with a professor demonstrating appearance, gestures and body language.

Eventually, videos may arrive via Internet streaming. But for now, with many students using dial-up connections, instructors limit information to bulletin boards, e-mail, Web links and specific online course materials.

While demand for this sort of course is exploding, both at ECU and throughout the nation, there are some complications. Online learning can be time consuming for professors and for students, since all information must be entered into a computer and then downloaded and studied.

Another challenge is providing clinical experience.

“We believe that professional practice experiences are important,” Layman said. These experiences include going to acute care settings, rural clinics and industries with large groups of employees.

The online programs hope to provide practical professional experiences in several ways. Students can sign on with a local health care provider or with one closer to their area.

Despite the immense capabilities of the Internet, it cannot provide the human touch. Students need to connect with instructors and with each other, Layman said.

To provide this human element, students and faculty meet face to face at the start of each semester and recommended meetings take place at mid- and end-semester.

Paul Bell, an associate professor of health information management, has been working with online learning for several years. He first became acquainted with the concept when completing his doctoral coursework at N.C. State University. His own research examines how well students function in an online environment.

As an instructor, he uses his experience as a student to help make online coursework effective and human.

“It can be difficult to include a human element,” he said. “The first thing we do is take time to introduce ourselves to each other through e-mail. I ask students to create their own Web page. Then they visit each other’s Web page.”

Bell found that asking students to open up on their Web page enables them to get to know each other.

“We talk about the weather, where we’re from. It’s very nonthreatening,” he said. “Then, they feel they can use the technology and can feel comfortable in the new environment.”

Through these experiences with the computer and with each other, graduates can develop the sophisticated skills and resiliency they need to succeed, Layman said.

“I think we are helping to create a very flexible workforce that can respond to changes, a workforce that can solve problems by using information resources. A workforce that recognizes the need for lifelong learning,” she said. “It’s a combination of flexibility, a positive view of change.”
ECU names Thomas dean of the School of Allied Health Sciences

By Jane Martin
Dr. Stephen W. Thomas has been selected dean of the East Carolina University School of Allied Health Sciences. Thomas has served as interim dean since April 2001.

A professor of rehabilitation studies at ECU, Thomas holds a Doctor of Education in rehabilitation and served as chairman of the Department of Rehabilitation Studies in the school from 1998 to 2001.

ECU conducted a nationwide search this spring to fill the post. The appointment became effective July 1.

"Dr. Thomas has the vision, commitment and understanding to lead the School of Allied Health Sciences," said Dr. Michael J. Lewis, ECU vice chancellor for health sciences. "He was by far the best candidate for the job, and we look forward to working with him as the school expands its degree offerings and as the university moves forward on construction of a new facility for the school."

In 2006, the School of Allied Health Sciences will move into a new 127,000-square-foot building, part of a consolidated health sciences campus to be built using funds from the 2002 statewide higher education facilities bond referendum. This spring, the university expects to break ground on construction of the new buildings totaling 270,000-square-feet for the Schools of Allied Health Sciences and Nursing and the Laupus Health Sciences Library on property adjacent to the Brody School of Medicine and Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Thomas replaces Dr. Harold P. Jones, who joined the University of Alabama-Birmingham in January 2001.

"I'm honored to be chosen as dean and am excited about the role that I will play in taking the school to the next level of excellence," Thomas said. "We're exceeding our goals in several areas, including enrollment, development of new degree programs and the movement of several programs from the bachelor's to master's and master's to doctoral levels."

Thomas sees the construction of the school's new facility and an emphasis on research as priorities on allied health's horizon. "We have many strong research programs looking at different aspects of health care, and I plan to build on these," Thomas said.

Prior to coming to ECU, Thomas held academic, research and administrative positions with the University of Arizona in Tucson, the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Thomas earned his Ed.D. and his M.S. degree in rehabilitation from the University of Arizona and his bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

He and his wife, Melodie, have two daughters, Darby and Morgan, and a set of identical twin granddaughters, Tess and Mary Lou, born Sept. 3, 2002.
Looking for a silver bullet

CLSC graduate travels the world overseeing clinical trials for HIV vaccines. One day, through the work of many dedicated scientists and colleagues, he hopes a preventative solution can be found for this deadly virus.

By Jane Martin

When Jason Ezzelle received the Outstanding Senior Award in 1997, faculty within the Department of Clinical Laboratory Science knew he was destined for success.

Through his career, Ezzelle is breaking new ground as he oversees clinical trials for HIV vaccines for PPD Development, a subsidiary of PPD Inc., a worldwide provider of research and product development services for pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device companies.

“It has only been in recent years that such companies have begun hiring clinical laboratory scientists or medical technologists in increasing numbers,” said Dr. Richard Bamberg, CLSC department chairman at East Carolina University. “Traditionally, registered nurses have been used for these positions, but more companies are hiring CLSC graduates to coordinate drug, vaccine and medical product trials.

“Because of the extreme attention to detail CLSC graduates develop and because of their knowledge of quality control, quality assurance and data management, biotechnology companies are interested in hiring graduates with bachelor’s degrees and a few years of experience.”

For Ezzelle, his job allows him to travel internationally while tapping into his wealth of clinical experience. He began his career as a technologist in the microbiology lab at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Within a couple of years, Ezzelle began to take notice of the calls he frequently received at home from job recruiters.

“I always thought I would be in a medical laboratory,” Ezzelle told CLSC seniors during a recent talk at ECU. “It’s hard for you to see all of the opportunities that are out there for you.”

PPD Inc. and some of its competitors were interested in having Ezzelle come to work with them. In the final analysis, Ezzelle chose the Wilmington-based international company. He’s pleased with his salary and loves the challenge of his work along with the frequent travel to countries such as South America and Africa.

While he was a student at ECU, Ezzelle worked the night shift and on weekends at Wal-Mart. “I just wanted to pay for my truck,” he said, laughing. “I was fortunate to get a job right out of school and gain the experience that companies such as PPD are seeking. It’s very hard to find well-trained medical technologists these days.”

As part of Ezzelle’s work, he makes site visits to labs where clinical trials are being administered. He monitors the labs and reviews the data for each clinical trial protocol. In addition to his clinical trials for HIV vaccines for PPD Development, a subsidiary of PPD Inc., a worldwide provider of research and product development services for pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device companies.

Class Notes

1971
Roger A. Cook ('71, M.S. Rehabilitation Counseling) has recently retired from the U.S. Army Medical Department, having served 22 years as an audiologist and hospital administrator. Roger lives in San Antonio, Texas.

1993
David A. Kibler ('93, B.S. Occupational Therapy), OTR\L, CHT, has been working in outpatient orthopedic hand and upper extremity rehabilitation for nine years. David passed the Certified Hand Therapist exam in 2001. David lives in Belews Creek, N.C.
expertise, Ezzelle also ensures that the research labs have correct documentation ranging from properly signed informed consent forms to registration with the lab’s institutional review board (IRB).

“I review the lab results along with the narrative notes by the physicians,” Ezzelle said. “If any adverse events occur in the study, I also review their records to make sure they’re in compliance. From the lab perspective, I review their procedures and specimens that they have in storage and verify their samples.”

A Goldsboro native, Ezzelle has worked with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in writing procedures and check lists for the international laboratories he oversees. Receiving the approval of NIH for his protocols and guidelines is a point of pride for Ezzelle.

Through his travels, Ezzelle is also learning about different cultures and how this understanding and appreciation for social differences can enhance his work and interactions with scientists in other countries.

As a student at ECU, Ezzelle drew the positive attention of faculty. “Jason was a bright and capable student while in the CLSC program,” Bamberg said. “He has had a productive career and seems to have enjoyed both his clinical work at the bench and his more administrative and oversight position with PPD Inc.”

Speaking to students
Each year, Bamberg asks Ezzelle to take time out of his hectic schedule to speak with seniors in the CLSC program at ECU.

“I have Jason come back to campus and speak with seniors about his career path to show them how many exciting options are available to CLSC graduates,” Bamberg said. “Currently, there is a shortage of clinical laboratory scientists in medical labs across the country. Employers are calling to find potential employees at a much higher level than in previous years.”

Ezzelle credits his education at ECU as giving him the variety of skills he needs to be successful in his career. Of particular note are the report writing classes he had under Madge Chamness.

“I frequently have to write reports on inspections and my findings,” Ezzelle said, smiling mischievously. “Mrs. Chamness made us write every day, and I hated every moment I had to spend writing. I wanted to be in the lab working on my clinicals. I used to say to myself, ‘why am I wasting time writing when I have clinical work coming out my ears?’ Today, I’m sorry for all those things I said about my writing class. I’m so thankful she required this of us. I now know how to write reports and how to cut down on jargon—to say what you mean to say efficiently.”

In his experiences working with other clinical laboratory scientists, Ezzelle is quick to compliment ECU’s program. “You know that when you get a graduate from ECU, that they won’t put out anyone who isn’t very good at what they do,” Ezzelle said. “ECU’s program produces well-rounded graduates.”

Ezzelle is thankful to have a career he loves in a work setting that has broadened his horizons. Whether it’s seeing lions over the side of a vehicle as he travels between labs in Africa or tasting interesting foods such as crocodile steaks or ostrich or just taking a day off to fish in Peru, Ezzelle knows his work holds meaning across several continents and brings hope in a battle against a killer virus.
Amputees are focus of study

By Jane Martin

Dr. Bruce Albright wants to see what it feels like to walk in his patient’s shoes. Or, exactly what pressures are being placed on the surviving foot for amputee patients with diabetes.

By spring, Albright hopes to have 10 patients enrolled in his study. He’s examining the use of an early post-surgical fitted prosthesis (EPOP) and how it reduces excessive pressure on the surviving foot.

“For a person with diabetes who has lost a limb or toes to the disease, it’s important to understand the location and amplitude of the pressure that’s being exerted with each step in the surviving foot,” said Albright, a professor of physical therapy. “By determining the amount, location and duration of maximum pressures on the bottom of the surviving foot, we can design therapies or interventions to reduce further trauma from plantar pressure and hopefully reduce the risk of additional amputations.”

Future studies will include the analysis of plantar pressures in patients with different stages of diabetic neuropathy.

An integral component in Albright’s study is the use of a computerized shoe insert. Each insert has 99 sensors that measure the amplitude, location and direction of movement of pressures on the bottom of the foot while inside the shoe.

The study is conducted through referrals from physicians within the Rehabilitation Center at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

“This is part of a focus on biomechanics within the Department of Physical Therapy in which we’re studying human motion and its influence on the lower extremities in regard to individuals with diabetes,” said Dr. Denis Brunt, PT chair. “We’re hoping to better understand this disease process and target therapies that can reduce the likelihood of amputation and improve the quality of life for these patients.”

Beth Lambeth Memorial Scholarship presented
Sonja Downes Ellington of Burlington, a student in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies, is the recipient of the 2003 Beth Lambeth Memorial Scholarship.

The scholarship is awarded on the basis of exemplary leadership, scholarship and character. Candidates also must possess a dedication to helping others, involvement in rehabilitation organizations and enthusiasm for the rehabilitation profession. Established by Lambeth’s family, the award is given annually in memory of Lambeth, who was a graduate student in rehabilitation counseling at ECU.

Evan receives McClellan Scholarship from NCRA
Gail Marie Evan of Erie, Pa., a student in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies, is the recipient of the North Carolina Rehabilitation Association (NCRA) TL McClellan Memorial Scholarship Award.

The $750 award is given to two students enrolled in rehabilitation or related studies of human service at universities, colleges, community colleges and technical schools in North Carolina. The purpose of the scholarship is to promote professional excellence in the practice of rehabilitation and its related fields.

Recipients are chosen based on academic achievement, community involvement and school participation as well as their potential for contributing to the advancement of rehabilitation in North Carolina.

Graham receives state PA scholarship
Barry G. Graham of Pembroke, a student in Physician Assistant Studies, is the recipient of the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants (NCAPA) grant.

Only students who are entering their final year of training are eligible for the competitive scholarship. The program is supported through the NCAPA Endowment. Established in 1992, the NCAPA Endowment supports the PA profession by granting educational scholarships through sponsorship of philanthropic and research activities.

OT student receives Ledonia Wright Scholarship
Brandon Johnson, a student in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is the recipient of a 2003 Ledonia S. Wright Scholarship from East Carolina University.

Ledonia S. Wright was a former associate professor in the Department of Community Health and an advisor to the Society of United Liberal Students (SOULS). She dedicated her life to make a difference for African-American students at ECU. Wright was a magna cum laude graduate of Shaw University in Raleigh and attended Yale University. In addition to ECU, she taught at Harvard University. The Ledonia S. Wright Afro-American Cultural Center was established on the ECU campus in 1979 and is a focal point for cultural education throughout eastern North Carolina. The scholarship in her honor is awarded each year in the fall and spring to an outstanding student.
Inspiring a lasting impact

Jean Elaine Mills’ love of East Carolina University and desire to make a difference in the lives of fellow African-Americans will live on through a new memorial lecture series at ECU. Dr. Donald Ensley’s encouragement served as the inspiration for this donation to the School of Allied Health Sciences.

By Jane Martin

Amos T. Mills III lovingly describes his late sister’s drive and determination. She put her heart and soul into every challenge that she faced.

Mills, a Fuquay-Varina attorney, hopes to keep her spirit of discovery and community outreach alive through an inspirational tribute to one of her former graduate school instructors—Dr. Donald Ensley. Through a $25,000 donation to the Medical Foundation Inc. of ECU, the Jean Elaine Mills Memorial Seminar and Lecture Series has been established and will be held through the assistance of the Eastern Area Health Education Center.

Its purpose is to bring attention to critical health care issues facing minority populations and to seek solutions.

“African-Americans experience a much higher rate of diabetes, stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure and colon cancer—to name a few of the prevalent health issues,” Mills said. “My sister, Jean, died from breast cancer in October 2000.”

Mills said his sister would be pleased with the establishment of the lecture series. “For too long, a disproportionate number of blacks are dying too early—their expertise is taken away from us,” Mills said. “We hope this lecture series will help spark solutions to help stem this trend.”

In the early 1980s, Jean looked into graduate programs after teaching school for three years. At ECU, she found supportive faculty and chose to focus on community health issues. She was inspired by Ensley, former chairman of the Department of Community Health in the School of Allied Health Sciences. Ensley is now ECU assistant vice chancellor for community engagement.

“How I first met Jean was through her father,” Ensley said. “He asked about the program I directed at ECU and said his daughter might be interested in pursuing her master’s degree. I encouraged him to send her to see me.

“She did very well in our program,” Ensley said. “I remember her being studious, very mature and focused. I’m deeply honored to be part of this special tribute to such an outstanding student and quality individual as Jean Mills. The university thanks Amos Mills for this generous gift in her memory.”

Jean earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1977 and a master’s in public administration with a concentration in community health from ECU in 1984. While at ECU, she was the first student in the university’s history to be selected for the Presidential Management Internship Program (PMI), established in 1977.

PMI is designed to attract outstanding individuals from a variety of graduate and academic disciplines for a possible career in federal government. Jean worked with the Naval Sea Systems Command Center in Crystal City, Va., and subsequently for the Environmental Protection Agency and later the Federal Aviation Administration. She lived in Prince George’s County in Maryland, where she also was a successful entrepreneur and real estate broker.

An advisory board will be established this year with the first seminar slated for 2004-05.
Building a pipeline

High school students from five eastern North Carolina counties experienced college life first-hand as they developed time management and effective study skills through an innovative diversity program.

By Jane Martin

This past summer, 43 rising high school juniors got a six-week taste of what it’s like to live in a college dorm without air conditioning, while learning about 10 different allied health professions.

Sponsored through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the School of Allied Health Sciences hopes the career exploration program will net a diversified group of well-prepared freshmen in fall 2005.

By the end of the summer session, they had narrowed their career choices to four.

This academic year, the students must complete six hours of clinical observation at health care facilities in their local communities in each of their four chosen professions. When they arrive at the 2004 summer institute, each student will have narrowed his or her career choices to two.

Also this year, four incoming freshman at Shaw University will be eligible for the AHCOP 2004 summer institute set for June 7-July 16.

"Our goal is to create a pipeline of students from diverse backgrounds who have the skills they need to be successful in their allied health studies at ECU," Bamberg said. "The program this past summer went extremely well, and we learned a lot about what works best for high school students in an on-campus setting."

Other fields of strong interest were clinical laboratory science, occupational therapy, communication sciences and disorders and physical therapy.

At the end of the 2004 institute, the students will pare down their career choices to one, and mentors from ECU’s allied health faculty will be assigned to the rising high school seniors and Shaw University students.

The AHCOP high school students who are accepted by the university will be eligible to enroll in fall 2005. Shaw University students will continue to receive mentoring by ECU faculty throughout their undergraduate studies to help ensure they meet application requirements for one of ECU’s master’s level degree programs in allied health sciences. Their projected enrollment at ECU is fall 2007.

ECU’s Allied Health Careers Opportunity Program (AHCOP). Its main goal is to increase the diversity of students pursuing allied health degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level at ECU.

“They also took science, reading and writing reinforcement classes,” said Dr. Rick Bamberg, chairman of the Department of Clinical Laboratory Science and primary investigator for the grant. “And they had community volunteer experiences along with SAT preparation classes and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) classes. By the end of the summer session, they had narrowed their career choices to four.”

This grant program is an outgrowth of the School of Allied Health Sciences Task Force on Diversity that was established in 1999,” Bamberg said. “Part of our long-range action plan is to secure external funding for initiatives that allow us to develop a more diverse student body within our allied health programs.”

The three-year grant is from the Health and Human Services’ Health Careers Opportunity Program. ECU hired Cathy Howell as coordinator for the program along with program assistant, Judy Spell-Dupree, and counselor Elizabeth Hand.

"The students were not that different from traditional freshmen, except that they are still very young," Howell said. "For many, sharing a room, especially a suite, was hard. Walking to class was strenuous for most since they don’t move around as much in high school, and the three-hour classes were especially difficult for many."

AHCOP participants must come from an educationally or socioeconomically disadvantaged background and have at least a cumulative 3.0 grade-point-average in math and science along with letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors.

The allied health professions that received the highest level of interest from the students were pharmacy and physician assistant studies, according to Howell.

"Building a pipeline"
ABC News wins Emmy and FREDDIE Awards for report on CSDI’s stuttering research

By Jane Martin

An August 2002 story on stuttering research at East Carolina University has garnered an Emmy Award for “Good Morning America” (GMA) and ABC News. The 24th annual News and Documentary Emmy Awards were presented by the National Television Academy Sept. 3 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York.

Dr. Timothy Johnson, medical editor for ABC News, along with producer Ami Schmitz-Levine and a team of executive and senior producers and anchor Terry Moran won in the category, Outstanding Feature Story in a Regularly Scheduled Newscast, for their report entitled, “Miracle Anti-Stuttering Device.”

The ABC team is also the recipient of an International Health and Medical Media Award, known as the FREDDIE Award, sponsored by MediMedia. The network won for the same report in the Basic and Clinical Science category and received the honor in November in Los Angeles.

“We’re extremely proud of the scientists that developed the SpeechEasy device and the national recognition their work has brought to East Carolina University,” said Dr. Michael J. Lewis, vice chancellor for the Division of Health Sciences. “Most of all, we’re proud of the life-changing impact this breakthrough has had for so many individuals who deal with this challenging speech disorder.”

In addition to the August 2002 GMA story, the ECU researchers and the SpeechEasy device have been featured in numerous national media reports including “NBC Nightly News,” “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Montel” along with a second report in November 2002 on “Good Morning America.”

Since becoming available to the public in June 2001, more than 2,300 people who stutter have been fitted with the SpeechEasy. Janus Development Group in Greenville holds exclusive marketing and distribution rights to the SpeechEasy and has licensed more than 90 dispensers across the nation.

The SpeechEasy is worn similarly to a hearing aid in one of the stutterer’s ears. It emulates choral speech and acts as a miniature public-address system by altering the pitch or frequency of the stutterer’s voice. Known as delayed auditory feedback, this method tricks the user’s brain into recognizing a second voice speaking in unison. When someone who stutters speaks in unison with others, his or her stutter is eliminated.

“NBC Nightly News,” “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Montel” along with a second report in November 2002 on “Good Morning America.”

An abundance of opportunities

The School of Allied Health Sciences needs your support to build an even brighter future

Charitable giving to the School of Allied Health Sciences is critical.

What is so earth-shattering about that statement? After all, don’t all universities want and need philanthropic support? While that assumption is correct, East Carolina University and its School of Allied Health Sciences are at a significant juncture in their existence. Never in its 35-year history has the school needed to more proactively secure financial support from private sources. Here’s why:

State supported versus state assisted — Many individuals, foundations and businesses view a public institution, like ECU, to be one that is supported by the state. The state of North Carolina, like many states across our nation, is experiencing a budget crisis that has filtered down to its governmental entities. Public funds that are allocated to the School of Allied Health Sciences have become constrained. In order to achieve its mission, the school must view itself to be a public entity that is assisted financially by the state while it actively procures necessary resources from private sources of funding.

Charitable gifts benefit students — This issue of Alliance has highlighted the future home of the School of Allied Health Sciences on the west side of Greenville. While it is exciting to plan and move into a new facility with outstanding high-tech offerings, the real story is not found in bricks and mortar or technology. Charitable giving to this aspect of the school is an investment in students. They are the ones who will receive the utmost benefits from learning and conducting research in a quality facility that will mirror the workplace.

We are the ultimate beneficiaries of our charitable giving — Paradoxical as it may sound, when alumni and friends give to the school, they are investing in quality health care to be provided to our communities now and in the future. Allied Health Sciences students will graduate and provide necessary therapy and rehabilitation services, research and health care communication in North Carolina and beyond. When you give to the School, you end up giving back to yourselves and your community.

In the coming months, the school will provide more details for alumni and friends regarding the significant role they can play in advancing the new building. There will be opportunities for naming within the building and through endowments.

If you have any questions, please contact me via e-mail at munnt@mail.ecu.edu or by calling locally at 744.2238 or toll free at 888.816.2238.

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The American Health Information Management Association’s (AHIMA) Foundation of Research and Education (FORE) has awarded Alan Agbele the FORE Diversity Scholarship. Agbele is a junior in Health Information Management (HIM).

In 2003, a total of 50 FORE Merit Scholarships were awarded nationally to outstanding students pursuing degrees in health information administration and health information technology. Also among scholarship recipients are health information management professionals pursuing advanced degrees to further their careers.

A native of Ghana, West Africa, Agbele’s parents, Walter and Rebecca Agbele, now live in Raleigh. “I feel very honored and am both excited and thankful to receive this honor,” Agbele said. “I was also surprised, after all it’s very competitive.”

Since the program’s inception in 1991, $293,000 in scholarships have been awarded to more than 225 students across the United States.

Dr. Elizabeth Layman, chair of the Department of Health Services and Information Management, said the scholarship is a reflection of Agbele’s excellent organization and communication skills along with his academic merit. “These skills typically translate into outstanding academic achievement and also success in the student’s career track,” Layman said. “Based on the interactions of faculty within our department, Alan is a self-directed student who takes responsibility for his own success. Independent learners like Alan can use this attribute to their advantage both in the classroom now and in the workplace throughout their careers.”

Layman noted that this is the second consecutive year an ECU student has received the FORE Merit Scholarship. Criteria for the scholarship include academic achievement, volunteer and work experience along with commitment and suitability to the HIM profession. Upon graduation from ECU, Agbele plans to work as a clinical data specialist or in clinical research targeting drug development.

FORE is the charitable affiliate of AHIMA, a professional association that represents more than 45,000 HIM professionals who work throughout the health care industry.

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Rehabilitation Counseling continues its national ranking
The graduate program in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling was ranked 15th in the nation, once again by U.S. News and World Report magazine. The 2003 America’s Best Graduate Schools cited ECU’s program for the fourth year in a row.

The Department of Rehabilitation Studies has submitted a proposal to plan a doctoral degree to the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. Approval is anticipated this year with the degree program being in place by 2005.

Dickerson honored by Temple University and AOTA
Dr. Anne Dickerson, Department of Occupational Therapy chair, was presented Temple University’s Distinguished Occupational Therapist Award for outstanding achievement and service to OT.

In addition to the Temple honor, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) presented Dickerson with its Recognition of Achievement Award in June. This national award recognizes occupational therapists who have made notable contributions to the profession and its consumers in a focused area of OT practice.

Dickerson was also re-elected for a three-year term as the chairperson of the Professional Program Director Education Council for AOTA.

Givens appointed as interim CSDI department chair
Dr. Gregg Givens has been named interim chair for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders by Dr. Stephen W. Thomas, SAHS dean.

Givens, a professor of audiology, assumed the leadership post Aug. 14.

Dr. Michael Rastatter, chair since 1994, stepped down in August. He continues as a researcher and professor in the department.

Ensley named assistant vice chancellor
Dr. Donald Ensley has been appointed as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement at ECU. Ensley will continue to serve as a professor in the Department of Community Health.

A native of Belhaven, Ensley earned his master’s and doctoral degrees from Michigan State University. He also earned a master’s in public health degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has taught at ECU for the past 25 years and has co-chaired the N.C. Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force with the late state Sen. Ed Warren since 1994.
Allied Health Sciences welcomes 5 new faculty

The School of Allied Health Sciences announces the following faculty additions: Dr. Sherri M. Jones, Dr. Terry Jones, Dr. Robert R. Kulesher, Dr. Shari Sias and Dr. Leonard Trujillo.

Sherri Jones, associate professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, comes to ECU from the University of Missouri School of Medicine.

A native of Nebraska, she earned her undergraduate, master’s and doctoral degrees in audiology and hearing science at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Her research expertise is in neuroscience. She conducts basic research investigating normal development of auditory and vestibular function and factors that can affect development including environmental factors and genetics.

Sherri is also interested in developing vestibular compound action potential recordings for use as a clinical test of the vestibular system. She has received research funding from the MU Research Board, Deafness Research Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.

Sherri and her husband, a professor of surgery and physiology at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, have two young daughters and a son who is a college junior.

Also joining the school is Terry Jones as assistant professor in the Department of Physical Therapy.

A native of Kansas, Jones earned her undergraduate degree from Washburn University, her master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Kansas.

Prior to coming to ECU, she was a NIH Post-Doctoral Trainee at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine. Terry’s previous research focused in skeletal muscle protein modification that occurs with aging and signaling pathways of proteins involved in skeletal muscle metabolism. Her research at ECU will continue in skeletal muscle focusing on diabetes and obesity.

Terry Jones and her husband, an environmental engineer specializing in water treatment distribution and wastewater treatment collection and conveyance, have one daughter, who is a nursing student in Kansas.

Kulesher joins the Department of Health Services and Information Management as assistant professor. His prior teaching experiences include adjunct position at Penn State and St. Joseph’s universities and a visiting professorship in public policy and administration at Rutgers University-Camden.

He earned his B.A. in psychology from Villanova University and his MHA from Washington University in St. Louis. After a 20-year career in hospital and nursing home administration, Kulesher earned his Ph.D. in urban affairs and public policy at the University of Delaware.

His research focuses on the impact of Medicare reimbursement changes on health care providers. Additional areas of interests include national health policy, health care financial management, health care of the poor and uninsured, health insurance, Medicare and Medicaid.

His wife is a registered nurse and works as a coordinator of home health care services at the Jefferson University Health System in Philadelphia. They have two sons: a music major at UNC-Chapel Hill, and a high school senior.

Sias comes to ECU after a faculty appointment at Marshall University in the Counseling Department. At ECU, she is an assistant professor in the Rehabilitation Studies Department.

A native of West Virginia, Sias received her undergraduate degree from Marshall University, her master’s degree from The Citadel and her doctoral degree from The College of William & Mary.

Her areas of clinical and research interest include the study of addictions and marriage and family counseling. She has also worked in a variety of mental health settings and has been working in the counseling field since 1986.

Trujillo, named assistant professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, comes to ECU from Texas Woman’s University where he had faculty and administrative roles.

A native of New Mexico, Trujillo earned a B.A. in humanities from St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver and a B.S. in occupational therapy from Colorado State University. After a career as an occupational therapist in the U.S. Air Force, that included working as an instructor at the Academy of Health Sciences, Fort Sam Houston in Texas, Trujillo earned his master’s degree in computer resource and information management from Webster University. He earned his doctoral degree in educational administration at Texas A&M.

He has numerous national and regional presentations in his area of research and development in assistive technology.

Trujillo and his wife, who has degrees in elementary education and accounting, have a daughter, a freshman at Seton Hall University, and an 11-year-old son.
Dean’s Office
Stephen W. Thomas, Ed.D.
Professor and Dean
Kevin O’Brien, Ph.D.
Professor and Associate Dean
Vicki Johnson
Dean’s Secretary
Kit Roberson
Marketing/Admissions
Patricia Simpson
Accounting
Teresa Tripp
Personal

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Donald Holbert, Ph.D.
Professor
Suzanne Hudson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Paul Vos, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Rhonda Bode
Administrative Assistant

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Professor and Chair
P. Karen Sullivan, Ph.D, SM (ASCP)
Associate Professor
Kathleen Schulman, M.S., B.S., M.T.(ASCP)
Clinical Assistant Professor
Ann C. McConnell, M.T.(ASCP)
Lab Manager
Melinda Doty
Administrative Assistant

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Assistant Professor
Deborah Bengala, M.A.
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Professor
Director of Graduate Studies
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Joseph Kalinowski, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Michael Rastatter, Ph.D.
Professor
Martha (Betty) Smith, M.S.
Clinic Director
Andrew Stuart, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Marrianna Walker, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Monica Weathers, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Mark Allen
Technology for Distance Learning
Marianne Baines
Administrative Assistant
Sheila Fatzke
Administrative Assistant
Robbin Nelson
Administrative Assistant

Community Health
Donald Enley, Ph.D.
Professor
Health Services and Information Management
Elizabeth Layman, Ph.D., RHIA,
CCS, FAHIMA
Professor and Chair
K. Cyrus Whaley, Ed.D., R.T(R)
Program Director, Health Services Management
Paul Bell, M.S., RHIA, CTR
Associate Professor
Myra Brown, MBA, RHIA
Associate Professor
Robert Kulesher, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Melinda Doty
Administrative Assistant

Occupational Therapy
Anne E. Dickerson, Ph.D.,
O.T.R./L., FAOTA
Professor and Chair
Tony Bright, M.S., O.T.R./L.
Clinical Instructor
Betsy Daniels, M.S., O.T.R./L.
Clinical Instructor
Carol Lust, Ed.D., O.T.R./L.
Clinical Instructor
Jane Painter, Ed.D., O.T.R./L.
Associate Professor
Lionard Tomillo, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Beth Veale, Ph.D., O.T.R./L.
Associate Professor
Peggy Wittman, Ed.D.,
O.T.R./L., FAOTA
Associate Professor
Alicia Mahoney
Administrative Assistant
Carolyn McKeel
Administrative Assistant

Physical Therapy
Denis Brunt, Ed.D., P.T.
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Bruce C. Albright, Ph.D., P.T.
Professor
Pat Stavarakas Hodson, M.S., B.S., P.T.
Clinical Associate Professor
Walter L. Jenkins, DHS, PT, ATC-L
Associate Professor and Associate Chair
Terry Jones, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Mary Susan Templeton, MPH, P.T.
Professor
James E. Tracy
Clinical Associate Professor
Lori Tracy, M.S., B.S., PT, NCS,
Clinical Associate Professor
D.S. Williams, Ph.D, P.T.
Assistant Professor
Cynthia Cox
Administrative Assistant
Doris Johnson
Administrative Assistant

Physician Assistant Studies
Larry Dennis, MPAS, PA-C
Professor and Chair
N. Richard Ehly, M.S., PA-C
Clinical Coordinator
Peggy “Dody” McMillen, PA-C
Academic Coordinator
Gary M. Trube, PA-C
Distance Learning Clinical Coordinator
Francis J. Winn Jr., Ph.D.
Admissions Director and Research Coordinator
Rich Weiser
Technical Coordinator for Distance Learning and Information Technology Coordinator

Rehabilitation Studies
Paul P. Alston, Ph.D., CRC
Professor and Chair
Director of Graduate Programs
Martha H. Chapin, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Director of Undergraduate Rehabilitation Services
Lloyd Goodwin, Ph.D, LPC, CRC-MAC
Professor, Director of Substance Abuse & Clinical Counseling
Shari Sias, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Mark A. Stebick, Rh.D.,
LPC, CRC, CCM
Associate Professor, Director of Rehabilitation Counseling
Sharon Shallow, M.A.Ed.
Clinical Instructor
Stephen W. Thomas, Ed.D, CRC, CVE
Professor
Director of Vocational Evaluation
Cathy Moore
Administrative Assistant
Calendar 2004

February
12-13  21st Annual NCACA Conference, High Point
22-27  NCAPA Winter Conference, Sheraton Imperial, Research Triangle Park

April
National Counseling Awareness Month
National Occupational Therapy Month

May
National Better Hearing and Speech Month
7  School of Allied Health Sciences Convocation, Williams Arena
8  ECU Graduation Ceremony
11-14  NCHIMA Annual Meeting, Adams Mark Hotel, Winston-Salem

June
1  Last day to apply to graduate school for fall semester 2004

October
1-2  NCOTA State Conference, Sheraton Four Seasons

Class Notes
Alliance would like to run news about ECU Allied Health graduates—career successes, promotions, and the like—but we need your help. Please fill out this form, clip it, and send it in. In a future issue we’ll update your classmates on where you are and what you’re doing. Thanks for your help!

Please return to:
Alliance Class Notes
Office of News & Information
Venture Tower, Suite 202
P.O. Box 6028
Greenville, NC 27835-6028

Name______________________________________________________________________
Name at graduation __________________________________________________________
Undergraduate class year _____________________________________________________
Graduate degree and class year ________________________________________________
Home Address _______________________________________________________________
City/State ___________________________ Zip ___________________________
Business Address _____________________________________________________________
City/State ___________________________ Zip ___________________________
Home Phone _________________________ Business Phone________________________

What’s happening? ___________________________________________________________
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