A message from the dean

It's almost here! Our move into the new building on the health sciences campus will take place during the spring semester. Our target is to begin teaching classes March 20, the Monday after spring break. The School of Nursing and the Laupus Health Sciences Library will follow in May. Unofficial plans are to cut the ribbon on the complex sometime during the 2006 fall semester, and you will be invited to attend this historic event.

Helping lead the move will be Dr. Beth Velde, an associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, who has been named the new assistant dean for special projects.

When I engage in some official activity in the Belk Building or simply walk the halls and see students in class, I think to myself, “One last time.” Everything we are now doing in the Belk Building will occur in our new 127,000-square-foot facility this time next year. With the Laupus Library on one side, the School of Nursing on the other and the Brody School of Medicine next door, opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary teaching, research, service and clinical practice seem endless, and faculty are already building these bridges.

Naming opportunities for the school, building, foyer, classrooms and labs will soon be announced to help endow these spaces so that they can be as advanced 20 years from now as the day they opened. These modern facilities will prepare students to work in today’s high-tech, wireless health care settings. The proximity to other schools, resources, research labs and clinical settings at the medical school and Pitt County Memorial Hospital will offer students and faculty more working relationships with a broad range of professionals, increasing their experience with interdisciplinary health care teams.

While we prepare for our move, here are some other highlights from this past year:

In the area of education, the doctoral program in rehabilitation counseling and administration accepted its first class of six students this past fall. The physical therapy doctoral program accepted its first class of 30 students last May, the same month the baccalaureate program in health services management graduated its inaugural class. The master’s-level physician assistant studies program graduated its inaugural class in July.

In the area of research, the school had a record increase of 464 percent in federal funding this year with $1.25 million in total funds received — the fastest funding growth at ECU. NIH grants led the way. Two special research projects are one to study falls among the elderly and another called ROAD1 to study driving safety among older motorists, one of ECU’s four federal funding priorities.

In the area of service, the school held its first Jean Mills African-American Health Symposium in April at the Monroe Center, and the second is scheduled for Feb. 10. The topic for both is obesity among African-Americans in eastern North Carolina. You are invited to attend this annual event.

We have exciting plans for the 2005-06 academic year and we will keep you posted. As always, when you are in the area, please stop by for a visit. You are always welcome.

Stephen W. Thomas, Ed.D.
Dean
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Mary Letshwiti drives into the sweltering African countryside day after day, caring for children with a dreaded diagnosis. Botswana has one of the world’s highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection, and Letshwiti is making her daily rounds tending to children affected or infected by the disease.

As outreach coordinator of Botswana-Baylor Children’s Clinical Centre of Excellence in the capital of Gaborone, Letshwiti, 35, is part of a team that includes a physician and dietician, and sometimes other volunteers, who screen babies, children and adults for HIV. On average, she sees about 10 clients per day because of the driving distance between homes.

“We do HIV testing in the family’s homes using rapid tests,” she said. The test reduces wait time from months to minutes, hastening treatment if needed.

“We refer adults who turn out HIV positive to their local hospitals for further tests, and children who are HIV positive receive care at our pediatric clinic or their local hospitals if they live very far from Baylor clinic,” Letshwiti said.

The team cares for entire families, not just children, who sometimes live with grandparents or other relatives because their parents have died from AIDS or other illness or accident. Many of the families are poor and can’t afford transportation for follow-up visits. Orphans and at-risk children also receive government assistance through community and social programs.

“It is not easy to screen people for HIV/AIDS, but I feel somebody must do it. One of the things that keeps me going is that I believe by doing so we are saving lives,” Letshwiti said. “We emphasize prevention as well during counseling.”

Giving support to families who may otherwise feel very much alone is one of the most rewarding parts of her job, said Letshwiti, a native of Botswana and a 2000 rehabilitation services graduate of the School of Allied Health Sciences at East Carolina University. She went on to receive her master’s in rehabilitation counseling from Utah State University in 2002.

“Going to live in the United States, I could see that having grown up in Botswana I appreciate small things, partly because here we grow up having very little,” said Letshwiti, who as a child never had a toy from a store. She recalled making rag dolls or balls with what they could find. “It was nice to experience a different culture from ours.”

The skills she learned as a student are crucial in her job, said Letshwiti, who also works part-time for the University of Botswana assisting students with disabilities.

In addition, she facilitates a group of adolescents who are living with HIV and being treated through her center, a state-of-the-art treatment facility staffed collaboratively by U.S. and Botswanan health professionals. The center is a partnership among the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, the Princess Marina Hospital in Gaborone and the government of Botswana.

An estimated 350,000 people, including 37 percent of all adults in Botswana, are living with HIV/AIDS, AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is a complex of illnesses that arises from infection with the HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus. The virus and illnesses have devastated large parts of Africa.

Slightly smaller than Texas, Botswana...
has a population of 1.6 million people. Located above South Africa in the southern tip of the continent, the former British protectorate gained independence in 1966 and has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country. Diamond mining has fueled much of the economic growth as well as tourism, farming and cattle. Still, high rates of unemployment and poverty exist.

“In Botswana, we’ve been hard hit by HIV/AIDS so much that at the moment job opportunities are around HIV/AIDS, and it seems people with other disabilities are more forgotten,” she said.

After receiving her master’s degree, Letshwiti joined her husband in Belgium, where they lived a little more than a year and where she volunteered with Special Olympics before returning home to Botswana.

Letshwiti’s husband is manager of safety and occupational hygiene for Debeers Botswana Diamond Company in Gaborone. The couple has two children, Tiso, 5, and Kutlo, 3.
Heidi Kelley thought stroke was an old person’s disease. But at age 41, she had a massive stroke which left her completely immobilized. Kelley, now 48, has progressively improved and lives with expressive aphasia—a speech impairment caused by stroke—which includes all of North Carolina, particularly the eastern part of the state. In the coastal plain of the Carolinas and Georgia, stroke rates are 1.3 to 2 times the national average with whites and blacks, men and women and those between the ages of 45 and 85 sharing equally in the greater than 40 percent excess risk of stroke mortality. Nationwide, African Americans are more likely to die from stroke than whites.

Betsalel began using the camera more than 10 years ago to photograph his students’ community service learning projects. He is an associate professor of political science at UNC-Asheville. He also has used photography to capture the issue of homelessness in the Asheville area and to document Kelley’s anthropological field work in Spain.

“After Heidi’s stroke, we decided it was important to document and record her rehab and recovery,” Betsalel said. Stroke has a powerful effect on survivors and their families, he said. “It is as much about the nature of human relationships and love as it is about anything else,” he said. “Without connection with other people, we have found stroke survivors and co-survivors do not do as well. What we have learned and hope people come away from the exhibition with is that stroke, like other illnesses and resulting disabilities, is a part of life. And rather than keep these things out of sight, these are human experiences that we need to look at and learn from. As such, our project is about building strong and resilient communities, what Martin Luther King Jr. referred to as ‘beloved community,’ in which all are recognized with compassion and dignity.”

Kelley and Betsalel brought a previous photography exhibit to ECU in 2003 titled “Mind’s Fire: Selections from a Photographic Diary of Rehab and Recovery,” during the School of Allied Health Sciences’ 35th anniversary.
Images from “Travels in Stroke Country” remain on exhibit in the rehabilitation center at Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville. The black-and-white photography exhibit will move from the hospital to the new allied health building after it opens this spring. Several images from the exhibit are shown above. They detail the lives of stroke survivors across North Carolina.

(All photos by Ken Betzalel).
For online learners, portable lectures may be the next big thing. The first podcast, or recorded Internet message, appeared this fall in allied health sciences. It is one of two course podcasts at East Carolina University.

Paul Bell, associate professor in health services and information management, offers the podcasts for his online class in applied medical sciences. The recorded message has music, humor, and a look at the week’s assignments.

Students find the message on the course Web site and save it to a computer or portable music player, such as an iPod, in the popular .mp3 format.

Bell said the broadcasts have found a warm reception.

“I wanted to find out how many students would listen to the podcast,” he said. “I’ve gotten some anecdotal feedback from students who say they really like it.”

Podcasting is a member of the Internet communication family that includes Web logs, or blogs, video, songs and photos. These recorded journals and messages are often produced on Apple computer products, such as the iBook and iPod, which play music via software called iTunes.

The “i” stands for “Internet” and the “iPod” is a small portable music player so-named for its compact shape.

Podcasters have created elaborate radio shows to air their opinions on music, politics, science and just about everything else. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, says the term “podcasting” originates from combining “iPod” with broadcasting. It is misleading, since the messages are not really broadcasts and do not require an iPod.

Less important than semantics is the podcasting revolution.

“The number of podcasts online is having an exponential increase, almost like the phenomenon of blogs,” said Dr. Xiaoming Zeng, assistant professor of health services and information management, who helped Bell develop the podcast experiment.

“Podcasts bring you mobility and flexibility,” he said. “Every person has a different learning style. It’s not only learning style but lifestyle, too. You can just download it to your PC or portable .mp3 player. High-speed Internet connection is preferable, he says, because dial-up download could take several minutes.

Bell’s mid-semester message for a unit on the endocrine system begins with the singer Seal performing Steve Miller’s “Fly Like an Eagle.” It reminds that “time keeps on slipping away” for the semester.

“I was looking for a way to get students interested, to get them to log on to the course,” Bell said. “The hardest thing with distance learning is getting students to log on regularly.”

Podcasts offer an alternative to visual-only learning, a feature Ava Cavenaugh of Wallace appreciates.

“It’s more than just reading something on a screen,” said Cavenaugh, 45. “It makes you feel like you’re part of the class instead of on your own in cyberspace.

“With distance courses you have to dig everything out yourself, which is sometimes difficult,” she said. “I like to hear his voice.”

She has no iPod and saves the file to her computer.

“I didn’t even know what a podcast was until this semester,” she said. “But I really like it.”

Student Joyce Bustamante, 31, of Greenville has a busy life as a medical office manager and listens to her assignments when she has time.
“I take it with me when I go for a walk,” she said. “After hours is perfect for me.”

The recorded messages help clarify the assignments.

“It helps to hear them instead of having to read and interpret it yourself,” she said. “There's less room for error. I'm sometimes afraid that when I'm reading material I could interpret it incorrectly. Without having it verbally, there's always that chance.”

Student Victor Moturi of Fayetteville would like to see the trend spread to other classes.

“The podcast is a big step in distance learning education classes,” he said by e-mail. “You can download it to a CD and listen to it anywhere at any time. In most of the other classes, you receive your study material in writing, which is good. However, if only they could add the podcast of the study material to it, it could be better.”

Student Kourtney Thompson, 21, has another view. “I do better learning by myself rather than listening to a lecture.”

Is Dr. Zeng using podcasts in his classes? Not yet. “I let him be the pilot,” he said of his colleague Bell.

Though Zeng has the technical know-how, he may not have the right mix of pop culture for his students in health information and information technology.

“I don’t have good taste in music,” he said. “The music I listen to is Chinese.”

Paul Bell’s love of music evolved into the first course podcast in the School of Allied Health Sciences.
Dreams of playing pro football ended when Marlon Nolen took a hard fall on the practice field.

But during the long recovery that followed, he never lost his drive to win. Today, he has a new life plan to become an occupational therapist and inspirational speaker.

Nolen, an East Carolina University senior working toward a degree in health services management, is only 23, but he has a lifetime’s experiences.

Four years ago, while a sophomore at Winston-Salem State University, he suffered serious injury during football practice. A tackle, a fall and a headache are what he remembers. He was in a coma for five days, his left side paralyzed.

“With a brain injury, I didn’t know what was going on,” he said. “I thought I was waking up in my dorm room, but I was in ICU. I tried to get up from the hospital bed and fell to the ground because my left leg wouldn’t move.”

“I was in a wheelchair and couldn’t walk at all,” he said. “My speech was slurred. I couldn’t do anything like I wanted to do.”

He privately vowed to walk out of the hospital and did, with the aid of a cane.

“I started setting goals for myself, really high goals,” he said. “After two weeks or so I started noticing a little movement in my left side. I started to take little steps with my left foot, on the balance bars.”

“I was really determined,” he said. “I didn’t want to stay like that.”

Through it all he held a deep commitment to push himself. After a year’s recovery at home in Morehead City, Nolen enrolled at ECU in 2002.

“I am very ambitious,” Nolen said. “I really wanted to go to school. I would go to the gym every day and many people said it inspired them to see me working. They told me it affected their lives.”

Four years later, he is vice president of the Future Health Care Leaders of ECU, a group he helped start this year. He is also a Web designer for TriBeta, the student biology honor society, member of the Minority Association of Prehealth Students, hall president and former singer with Victory Campus Ministries. In 2003 he was named to the National Dean’s List Honor Society.

Every day he tutors 8-year-olds at a local community center. Stirring presentations at two local high schools brought more speaking offers.

He willingly shares his time with others. To stay closer to campus friends, study groups and the library, he lives in a dormitory, though his classes are online.

He tutors a friend in anatomy.

He faces some physical challenges and continues to regain mobility, though “most people can’t tell that anything has happened to me,” he said.

Dr. Robert Kulesher, assistant professor and director of the health services management program, became aware of Nolen’s story as they discussed a class project on stroke. Students often choose research topics with personal meaning, Kulesher said.

Knowing Nolen’s story helped Kulesher understand his special circumstances.

“He’s trying to build a future,” Kulesher said. “Because of his injury, he is interested in health care. It fits his situation quite well.”

These days Nolen aims beyond personal goals, spreading hope as he tells the story of how, in August 2001, he landed on his head during practice. Teammates later said he didn’t look like himself and watched, helpless, as he collapsed before them. He had a stroke and partial paralysis.

After some time at Forsyth Memorial Hospital in Winston-Salem he returned to his hometown. In all, he was hospitalized for two months.

That seems long ago as he develops ways to reach out to others.

At the Building Hope Community Life Center in Greenville, he helps third-graders read, solve problems and develop life skills.

“I help them with homework, help them with math skills,” he said. “I am a mentor for them, someone who cares.”

Mentally he feels fitter than ever. Weeks of physical and other therapies sharpened his ability to focus. “I remember things from when I was 3 years old, just like before,” he said.

He has one notable change.

“The difference I have with cognition is with my attention,” he said. “I don’t watch TV anymore.”

“Last year, I fell asleep during the Super Bowl,” he said. “I thought it was my calling to go to the NFL; now I’m falling asleep during the Super Bowl.”
Children at the Building Hope Community Life Center in Greenville surround Marlon Nolen, who overcame a football injury with dedication, persistence and hope. He now has a new plan for his life to become an occupational therapist and inspirational speaker. He helps tutor the 8-year-olds every day.
Behind the wheel

Initiative assesses seniors’ ability to drive safely

By Doug Boyd

Ninety-three-year-old Theresa Yoder doesn’t drive her Buick sedan much — about three times a week, with her farthest journey being to the cemetery on the edge of town. Nevertheless, through an East Carolina University study, she’s brushing up on her skills to make sure her trips are safe.

“I think it’s a wonderful program,” she said of the Research for Older Adult Drivers Initiative, a project of the Department of Occupational Therapy at the ECU School of Allied Health Sciences. “I encourage anybody to do it.”

Leaders of the ECU project, known as ROADI for short, hope to determine ways to assess three key areas important for safe driving: vision, cognition and motor function. ECU has identified ROADI as a university priority. The program has received two grants totaling $20,000 from the university’s Research and Creative Grant Committee. The grants will pay for data collection of participants in Pitt County Memorial Hospital’s InRoads rehabilitation program for older drivers and those with disabilities or impairments.

“With the baby boomer population, the number of older drivers on the road will significantly increase,” said Dr. Anne Dickerson, professor and chair of ECU’s occupational therapy department. “And we baby boomers love our cars.”

But, she added, “You need to have the skills to be able to keep yourself safe.”

ROADI is one of the first programs aimed at assessing the skills of older drivers and helping them stay behind the wheel safely or determine if they need to relinquish their keys. The program will be part of the department’s assistive technology program. Dickerson thinks North Carolina, an attractive state for retirees, is a good place to start such a program.

“We’re in a prime state that has retirees, so we feel we’re in a perfect place to have older drivers evaluated,” Dickerson said.

Only a handful of driver-evaluation programs exist in the state; the only one in eastern North Carolina is PCMH’s InRoads program. Nationally, few centers focus on older drivers.

Due to better medical care, increased educational levels and higher incomes, more people are living longer. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1994 one out of every eight Americans was age 65 or older. The bureau projects by the year 2050, one in five Americans will be 65 or older. One in 20, or 5 percent, will be 85 or older, up from 1 percent, or 3.8 million, in 1996. In 1998, the average U.S. life expectancy was 76.1 years; at the start of the 20th century, it was below 50, according to government studies.

Those same studies say almost three out of four men over age 85 are licensed drivers. Data suggests that within 20 years, more than 90 percent of all men over age 65 will be or will have been licensed drivers.
Those trends—high percentages of licensed drivers, longer lifespans and increased elderly population—mean in years to come streets and highways will have many more older drivers than today.

“(Evaluation programs are) extremely important, especially since our elderly population is growing so rapidly,” said Page Riggs (’98), an occupational therapist and driver rehabilitation specialist with InRoads. “Older drivers are really something we haven’t had in the United States up until the last twenty years.”

Earlier this year, Dickerson and Dr. Leonard Trujillo, assistant professor of occupational therapy, visited the National Driving Evaluation Center at the University of Florida, and the University of Michigan’s Transportation Research Institute and met with North Carolina’s congressional delegation and leaders of the American Occupational Therapy Association and the Highway Safety Research Center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Further grants from automobile manufacturers and
other organizations are possible. Dickerson and Trujillo have been invited to join a panel for an NIH grant to develop a self-assessment for older drivers.

ROADI originated from the graduate certification program in assistive technology, which began in 2002. After some research, Dickerson and Trujillo realized older drivers were an emerging area for the occupational therapy profession but underdeveloped in all areas of the country.

“Occupational therapists are the key people to be doing this because we can … make the adaptations for the drivers,” Trujillo said.

ROADI has three proposed steps. First, the investigators will examine current evaluations and learn if they predict problems with driving. These techniques include using the Interactive Metronome, assessing motor and process skills and studying data from the InRoads program.

Next, they will examine whether different interventions, including neurofeedback, can help in driver evaluation and adaptive training.

The final phase will be to establish a program to train older drivers. Dickerson and Trujillo hope to have a full-time occupational therapist on board to work as a certified driver rehabilitation specialist. They also hope to have a full-sized car with passenger driving controls, an adapted minivan with high technology driving adaptations and a driving simulator.

“Our overall objective is to keep drivers on the road as long as possible but safely,” Trujillo said. “Physicians are going to find, more and more, they’re going to have to make these decisions” about whether older drivers can still be safe behind the wheel.

Toward that end, Trujillo and Dickerson are working on adapting an AMPs, for assessment of motor and process skills, to driving. For example, they would measure whether a driver is able to look over his or her shoulder before changing lanes and how they make decisions behind the wheel.

Dickerson and Trujillo are certified in the Interactive Metronome. Among other uses, this computer device can help assess and rehabilitate gross and fine motor skills through rhythm and timing. Finding the right place for the device in assessing and rehabilitating driving skills is next. “It does make changes and people do make improvements,” Trujillo said. “We just don’t know how long that is and does it translate into driving.”

Interactive Metronome Inc. has pledged support of all the equipment and leased usage hours for the evaluation and intervention system, a contribution valued at more than $20,000.

ROADI could bring ECU to the front of addressing needs to evaluate and help older people drive better, through adaptive equipment or restrictions, such as not driving at night. And that could help older drivers stay safer longer.

That’s good news for Yoder, who gestured toward her Buick and said with a smile, “That car is still a honey.”
Matters of the heart
Unique residency program trains physician assistants in cardiology

By Crystal Baity

East Carolina University has developed the only post-graduate residency in cardiology for physician assistants in the country.

The goal is to place specially trained physician assistants in rural areas supervised by cardiologists who likely will be practicing in another town. The need is acute in eastern North Carolina, which has high rates of heart disease, said Dr. Wayne Cascio, cardiology division chief and professor of medicine in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU.

Cascio and Larry Dennis, chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies in the School of Allied Health Sciences, collaborated on the development of the two-year program that functions like a cardiology fellowship.

Physician assistants have delegated authority to practice medicine and prescribe medication under the supervision of a physician. “Every physician assistant who practices in the state must be licensed by the North Carolina Medical Board,” Dennis said.

“A P.A. can run a clinic in Ayden, for instance. Physicians don’t have to be on site. The physician-physician assistant team concept is the essence of what we do,” Dennis said.

Cascio estimates an additional 30 cardiovascular health care providers are needed in the North Carolina counties east of I-95 alone. “We need practitioners to keep people from getting cardiovascular disease and, if they get sick, we need practitioners to treat them.”

At the same time, fewer physicians are training in cardiology. Across the country, there was a 13 percent decline in the number of cardiologists in training between 1994 and 2002. Fewer heart specialists combined with an increasing older population creates an additional burden. Each year, 700 to 800 cardiologists enter the workforce; only about 580 pass their boards. Significantly more leave the profession, Cascio said.

“We’re losing more than we’re generating and the consequence is that we have a real demand on cardiologists,” he said. As a result, cardiologists are sought after, demand high salaries and tend to locate in urban areas. “You might have an easier time getting a board-certified cardiologist to Greenville but in the outlying areas it is almost impossible.”

Specially-trained physician assistants can fill the void, Cascio said, much like family nurse practitioners and other health professionals practicing in rural areas.

In the program, P.A. residents will focus on primary prevention in heart and vascular disease, treating high cholesterol and checking risk factors. They also will monitor patients who already have disease including hypertension, diabetes, congenital heart disease, abnormal heart rhythms and vascular disease. They will learn to assess risks and perform limited clinical diagnostics such as treadmill testing and echocardiograms, Cascio said.

Dennis’ role has included helping develop the program concept, defining licensure requirements and providing general advice and direction. Cascio has developed the curriculum. At press time, students were being recruited to start the program in November.

The incentive (Continued on page 20)
The move is a top priority for Dr. Beth Vilde, who has been appointed assistant dean of special projects in the School of Allied Health Sciences. Vilde, a full-time faculty member in the occupational therapy department, will spend approximately one day a week coordinating the move.
Handle with care
Moving to a new building is all in the details

By Crystal Baity
Every switch, outlet and jack must work come opening day.

Consider too: parking, telephones, mail delivery, security, desks, chairs, classrooms, labs, floors, windows, furniture, wall color, keys, a place to eat.

Since its conceptual stage seven years ago, Dean Stephen Thomas, his faculty and staff have been planning and preparing for the 127,000-square-foot building that will be the new home of the School of Allied Health Sciences at East Carolina University.

“The level of detail comes right down to office by office by office,” Thomas said.

The entire school – nine departments, more than 80 faculty and staff – is scheduled to move from the Carol Belk Building over spring break. They plan to hold the first class in the new building on March 20. Nursing and the health sciences library will join them after final exams.

Understandably, Thomas has enlisted help.

Committees have been formed, inventories have been taken, spring cleaning has begun early. He recently appointed Dr. Beth Velde, a full-time faculty member in the occupational therapy department, as assistant dean of special projects.

First on her list is the move.

“It’s not just a matter of moving in, it’s also what happens after you move in; if something isn’t working, this key doesn’t work on this door, this light switch works intermittently, the top button works but the bottom one doesn’t - those little things,” Thomas said.

Velde will spend approximately one day a week coordinating the move. In a separate room away from her office, she is assembling file folders full of information and plotting the move on a 6-foot paper timeline, identifying all major events that need to occur and steps to make it happen.

“Can you imagine all the keys that have to be made?” Velde asked. “Who gets master keys? Or nameplates for doors. What will the nameplates look like? Will they be attractive?”

To start, Velde must secure 6,500 boxes and 325 rolls of packing tape. Approximately 35,000 books alone must go. Some departments have delicate equipment or research apparatus that must be disassembled, put in their new space, then reassembled to manufacturer’s specifications.

Velde will work with facility services to deal with overflowing garbage cans or things stacked in hallways. “While they won’t be moving with us, they will definitely be impacted by the move,” she said. “I’m trying to understand the move from as many perspectives as possible and plan proactively.”

Allied health’s 1,000 students are a primary concern. A café will open on the first floor, replacing vending machines at Belk. Future plans call for a free-standing student services support center with financial aid, counseling, admissions, a cafeteria and possibly recreation. A temporary student services area is planned in space to be vacated by Laupus Library. The facility will serve all health sciences students.

“I see this as an extension of the...”

By the numbers

- 3,500 boxes of books (approximately 35,000 books)
- 1,500 boxes of files
- 1,500 boxes of supplies and materials
- Will need at least 325 rolls of tape
- Other things to be moved include wheelchairs, pillows, children’s toys and play furniture, boxes of “bones,” skeletons
ECU campus,” Thomas said. “I don’t want people to get a sense that it’s East Carolina University in two places.”

Depending on where they live, students may need to plan for longer commutes. Parking also may cost more for some students. ECU assigns spaces marked A, B, or C. A is the closest and most expensive, with C further away. At Belk, some students without stickers park in nearby retail areas and walk, which won’t be an option at the new school.

There are 950 spaces, designated both A and B. The C lot will not be completed until summer and is farther away. Since the move is coming in the middle of a semester, university parking will allow C permit holders to park in the B lots and B permit holders to park in the A lots at the new building to avoid having to get replacement stickers. University, city and hospital buses also will service the new building, officials say.

Physician assistant graduate students likely will have a shorter driving distance because the program is now located about eight miles out at VOA Site C off N.C. 43. Students spend five days a week in the classroom the first 15 months of the program.

“We’re looking forward to the move. We’re looking forward to developing more collegial relationships with other faculty and students,” said Larry Dennis, chairman of the department of physician assistant studies.

Since it is not located in Belk, the P.A. studies program will not move until May. Another department that may vacate at the end of the semester is communication sciences and disorders, said Dr. Gregg Givens, chairman of the largest department in the school with 15 faculty, 85 graduate students and 50 undergraduates.

The speech-language and hearing clinic serves approximately 200 clients, children and adults, who must have access to services including speech therapy, hearing evaluation and hearing aids.

Custom-made sound booths for hearing evaluations must be sunk into floors. “The

There is no better time than now to make a philanthropic gift to help your department move to its new home and the next level of educational excellence. Send your tax deductible gift to the Medical Foundation of East Carolina University, 525 Moye Blvd., Greenville, N.C., 27834. In the check memo section you can designate your gift to the School of Allied Health Sciences or directly to your department. To know more about how your gift can make a difference, call Troy Munn, director of development, at (888) 816-2238 or (252) 744-3523.

Remembering the old
Helping to build the new

Memories of classes in the Carol Belk Building now hold a special significance. Not only do they represent the beginning of so many fine careers in health care, but they also represent the end of an era.

In the spring, your school will move to the health sciences campus and a new future. New labs will be outfitted, classrooms furnished and memories made.

The synergy of being on the new health sciences campus adjacent to the Laupus Library creates untold possibilities for collaboration with the School of Nursing and the Brody School of Medicine. Your school and the department from which you graduated will be training more needed health care professionals in state-of-the-art teaching space.
floors have to be the exact measurement and, if they’re not, the custom booths won’t fit them,” Givens said.

Some equipment has to be taken down, set back up and recalibrated. “You can’t take a hammer and screwdriver and put it together yourself,” he said.

Once the department relocates, it will be the first time in 20 years that everyone will be in the same building.

“My only regret is moving away from the baseball field,” said Givens, a Pirates baseball fan and former Little League coach, whose office is a short walk from Clark-LeClair Stadium. “I won’t hear the crack of the bat in the spring.”

One of the smallest departments, yet one with most of the fragile equipment, is clinical lab science. Two student teaching laboratories and a prep lab contain delicate glassware, instruments, complex chemicals and equipment that must be handled with care.

“Bio-hazardous and chemical compounds will have to be moved by experts who move that kind of thing,” said Dr. Richard Bamberg, department chairman. “Environmental health and safety will have to decontaminate some instruments because they are used with all biological samples.”

The size of the lab equipment varies from lightweight table top items to heavy biological hoods. Temperature and time play a role. “Some are very sensitive. They can’t be put in a truck and sit for 10 or 12 hours. We also have a lot of refrigerated reagents. If they get above room temperature, it can damage stability.”

In the physical therapy department, Dr. Denis Brunt’s faculty and staff have decided to move all their own computers and research equipment. The biomechanics lab has a $500,000, 500-pound piece of equipment that will need a harness and special movers.

Faculty members hope the location will lead to more interdisciplinary research with other departments and the schools of nursing and medicine. “Our balance and falls lab fits nicely into what will be an important initiative at the health center, which is geriatrics,” Brunt said.

One final challenge is moving into a building that was designed several years ago.

“If you were to design a house and not move in for three years, things may change in your life,” Thomas said. “You may have had a baby, and the nursery is now a regular room, or whereas you had one baby, now you have two. Things happen.”

The school has 18 classrooms not including teaching labs. Last year alone brought in major research projects that eventually may require additional space.

“If I had it to do over again, I would say build in an inflation factor to account for increasing costs and overbuild the building to accommodate future growth,” Thomas said. “If we added another department, we’d have to put in a modular unit or go (back) out to VOA.”

Right now, faculty is looking forward to more space than they have now.

“It’s a new outlook, a new day, a chance to revitalize again,” Bamberg said. “It’s going to be a real nice building.”

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Therapeutic care

ECU Physical Therapy, a new outpatient orthopedic physical therapy clinic, has opened at ECU Physicians Firetower Medical Office on Fire Tower Road in Greenville.

The clinic, owned by East Carolina University’s Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Allied Health Sciences, provides comprehensive rehabilitation and treatment of sports and orthopedic injuries. Common injuries include ligament strains, muscle sprains and tendinitis, joint bursitis, osteoarthritis and cartilage injuries.

The clinic also serves as an educational setting for medical and physical therapy students, who shadow licensed physical therapists as they treat patients. In addition to physical therapy, the Firetower Medical Office provides medical care, sports medicine, imaging, stress testing, psychology and laboratory services.

For more information, contact clinic director Kevin Youngs at 252-744-1122 or youngsk@ecu.edu.

Getting down to basics with swallowing disorders

By Garnet Bass

As a speech pathologist, Teresa Lever found one of the most frustrating parts of her job was trying to help patients cope with chronic swallowing disorders, or dysphagia. Treatment options were limited, especially for people with progressive neurological diseases such as Parkinson’s. Now, as a doctoral student in communication sciences and disorders, she’s investigating short-term coping strategies and potential long-term treatment.

Swallowing disorders typically fall under the treatment of speech pathologists because speaking and swallowing involve many of the same muscles. Swallowing alone calls on more than two dozen muscles from the lips to the top of the stomach working in coordination. When those muscles go awry, the result can be malnutrition, dehydration or pneumonia, if food takes a wrong turn and goes into the trachea. As a result, 90 percent of Lever’s hospital caseload involved trying to help people learn new swallowing techniques.

What she taught them came primarily from on-the-job training. “There’s not much research out there to explain the most effective treatments or why treatments work,” she said. “Much of it is based on behavioral science, and that doesn’t tell us why it works. I want to get down to the basics, muscles and nerves.”

She has begun by studying a typical coping strategy, called effortful swallowing, to see whether the exaggerated swallowing technique actually has an effect on the motion of the esophagus. Collaborating with the gastrointestinal department at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, she’s measuring the pressure of the squeezing motion that results from normal and effortful swallowing. She measures the strength and endurance of the contractions using sensors placed in the mouth and lining a catheter inserted through the nose down the throat to the stomach. If results from normal, healthy volunteers look promising, she’ll move on to see whether they hold up for people with neurological swallowing disorders.

A more long-term investigation centers on the nerves that order the swallowing response. In some diseases, unwanted proteins produced in the nerves interrupt their signaling processes. Ultimately, this can impair muscle strength, range of motion and coordination. Working with Dr. Alexander Murashov of the Brody School of Medicine physiology department, Lever is beginning to investigate whether a process called RNA interference can be used to disrupt the production of those proteins.

Their first experiment, involving the sciatic nerve in mice, yielded promising results. “In our experiment, we were able to suppress the protein we were interested in and the effects traveled toward the spine,” she said. “So we may be able to attack a central nervous system disease by treating the peripheral nerves.” For her dissertation, Lever plans to follow up on that work with more specific application to swallowing disorders.
The next level

Rehabilitation counseling and administration and physical therapy offer doctoral programs

By Crystal Baity

Two new doctoral programs, one in rehabilitation counseling and administration and the other in physical therapy, are now being offered in the School of Allied Health Sciences at East Carolina University.

Of the first group of six rehabilitation counseling and administration students, more than half have master’s degrees in rehabilitation counseling with work experience. “It is a diverse group,” said Dr. Daniel Wong, director of the program. “Clinical experience is critical. You understand the field much better and can apply it to higher learning. It goes hand in hand.”

Several students plan to use their terminal degree to become faculty members or professors. Others plan to continue their clinical practice or do both. Students are planning research in areas such as disability and employment and the effect of substance abuse on families, Wong said.

Doctoral student Ben Selby has operated a private practice, Big Wave Therapy in Williamston, for two years and previously worked as a substance abuse counselor at Tideland Mental Health Center. He received his master’s of science dual degree in rehabilitation counseling and substance abuse counseling from ECU in 1997. He decided to go back for his doctorate to become a counselor educator. Selby’s research will look at children and families from a multi-system approach in hopes of preventing or mitigating problems facing rural areas.

Another doctoral student, Chris Cubero, works full-time as a high school counselor for the Nash County School System and part-time in a private practice as a group facilitator for substance abusers. He graduated from ECU with a master’s degree in 2002. The terminal degree will benefit Cubero by offering flexibility in career choices to ways of providing new or additional services to those in need. He eventually would like to teach at the university level. He also has interest in the Hispanic Latino population because of his father’s family in Costa Rica.

The doctoral program will meet the need for terminal degree professionals in clinical and administrative roles in service settings. A secondary objective addresses the need for university faculty in North Carolina and nationwide, said Dr. Paul Alston, chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Studies.

In physical therapy, the changing health care system requires the graduating physical therapist to be prepared for direct access and more autonomous practice, said Dr. Denis Brunt, chairman of the Department of Physical Therapy.

As a result, ECU is transitioning from a master’s to a three-year doctoral degree program. The competitive program will admit 30 students each year. More than 120 people applied this year.

Addie Chlebnikow is part of the DPT class that started in May and will graduate in 2008. The change from a master’s to a doctoral degree has resulted in more coursework, clinical and field work. She describes the class as an extended family.

Chlebnikow, originally from Charlottesville, Va., received her bachelor’s degree in exercise physiology in 2002 from ECU. She also played on ECU’s softball team. She previously worked as a physical therapist technician in the Brody School of Medicine. Now she is a graduate assistant in the motion analysis lab in the physical therapy department.

She was drawn to physical therapy because she wants to help people reach their goals, get back to work or play sports. “It’s a hands-on job. You’re not sitting behind a desk all day,” Chlebnikow said.

According to the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, more than 90 percent of programs will be accredited to offer the DPT in the next five to seven years. ECU’s move to the DPT degree will allow graduates to remain competitive and function in a more demanding health care arena. ECU is the primary source of physical therapy practitioners in eastern North Carolina and provides 27 percent of physical therapists statewide.
Combating obesity

African-American families in eastern North Carolina weigh more and are getting heavier at faster rates than whites.

The issue of obesity and ways to combat the problem, which is not limited to minorities, was the focus of the inaugural Jean Mills African-American Health Symposium held April 6.

More than 100 health care professionals and members of the community attended the conference featuring keynote speaker Annie B. Carr of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Sessions addressed treatment and services for children and adults.

Kristen Borre, an associate clinical professor of pediatrics in the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and associate scientist at the N.C. Agromedicine Institute, said the group with the lowest risk for obesity is urban white girls. They tend to be more athletic, have more opportunities for organized sports and activities, and are more concerned with body image. Low-income families don't have access to those same activities and tend to eat less healthy foods.

Early intervention is key, Borre said. If children are overweight at age 3, they are more likely to become obese adults.

The Growing Up FIT! program is one intervention program being used in the Pitt County elementary schools to provide resources to help increase physical activity and nutrition.

The symposium was held in collaboration with the ECU School of Allied Health Sciences, Division of Health Sciences, Eastern Area Health Education Center and the ECU Medical Foundation through a generous gift in the memory of Jean Elaine Mills.

Mills 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. She died from breast cancer in 2000.

The symposium was created by Amos T. Mills III, Jean’s brother, in an effort to keep her spirit of discovery and community outreach alive. The purpose is to bring attention and seek solutions to critical health care issues facing minority populations.

The next symposium will be held Feb. 10 and will address the psychosocial aspects of obesity in African Americans. •

(Continued from page 13)

for a P.A. would be having specialized training and additional certification.

“The other advantage, too, is if someone is interested in cardiology and internal medicine and is interested in staying in the area, you’ve got a ready-made job,” Dennis said.

During residency, students will be employed by Pitt County Memorial Hospital, a strong supporter of the program.

Scott Jones, senior vice president of operations at PCMH, said the hospital is excited to be a part of such an innovative program.

“Part of our mission is to improve the health status of residents in eastern North Carolina, and this is a very effective way of doing that,” Jones said. The hospital is also assisting with tuition reimbursement.

ECU’s program is unique because many of the post-graduate residencies available to physician assistants are in surgery, Dennis said.

Residency training for physician assistants is not required by any state. Training usually occurs on the job, including the intense clinical rotation required for graduation, Dennis said.

In recent years, ECU’s P.A. program has transitioned from a bachelor’s to a master’s degree. The coursework has increased from 80 to 99 hours and the department has added eight courses. It is the only P.A. program in the UNC system. The others are at Duke University, which founded the first P.A. program in the United States in 1965, Wake Forest University and Methodist College. •
Fear factor

Researchers study seniors and falling

By Crystal Baity

Climbing stairs. Going to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Stepping in or out of the tub.

Any of these activities could lead to a fall.

A new interdisciplinary study at East Carolina University is measuring seniors’ perceptions and propensity to falls. Led by Jane Painter of the occupational therapy department and Leslie Allison of the physical therapy department, graduate students are surveying older adults who live independently in a senior apartment complex.

The students will examine what may make seniors afraid of falling, check for risk factors and determine ways to help prevent falls.

Occupational therapy students Kira Cogdill, Justin Daugherty and Puneet Dhinga will conduct surveys with volunteer participants age 60 and older to determine their concerns about falling. Physical therapy students Amanda Jernigan and Patricia Whitehurst will test balance and assess risk for falls.

Once complete, the findings will be shared with the participants, who have the option of having the results of the assessments sent to their physician. The seniors also will receive a night light.

Participants will learn things they can do to personally minimize their risk of falling and enhance their quality of life.

Falls are common among seniors, occurring in approximately one out of every three older adults in the United States. Falls are the leading cause of accidental death among women and the fourth leading cause of accidental death in men aged 65 to 85 years old, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Studies show that fear of falling is prevalent in up to 50 percent of all community-dwelling seniors whether or not they have experienced a fall.

Researchers hope the results of the study will help occupational and physical therapists become more cognizant that a senior may have a fear of falling even though he or she has never fallen and how this fear may make the person become less active, putting the senior more at risk of falling. The study will help therapists design intervention strategies to break the cycle of fear and improve seniors’ lives.

Funding for the study is being provided by Pitt County Memorial Hospital through Pitt Partners for Health Older Adult Health Subcommittee with support from the Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program.
By Crystal Baity

Stanley “Stas” and Brenda Humienny of New Bern have established the first and only endowed scholarship in the Department of Clinical Lab Science at East Carolina University.

The couple, both 1979 graduates of the department, is also giving to the Dean’s Priority Fund, which benefits faculty development in the School of Allied Health Sciences. For many years, the couple has also supported the Susan T. Smith Clinical Laboratory Science Student Fund, named in honor of the founder of the program.

Brenda’s personal experience as a student on a “frayed shoestring budget” played a role in establishing the scholarship. “I was not going to be able to go the final semester of my senior year,” she said. She was interning with a pathologist who generously gave her $500. “It was like a million,” she said, enabling her to complete her college education.

Stas said the couple wanted to contribute to the education of future students and give back in appreciation for what they have received through the years. The couple met at ECU and have been married 26 years.

Brenda, originally from Erwin, worked six years in hematology and microbiology at Craven Regional, Pitt County Memorial and Lenoir Memorial before turning her financial planning hobby into a career. She became a certified financial planner and started her own business that quickly grew, all the while following her own investment advice.

Following graduation, Stas, who already had a bachelor’s degree in botany from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, went on to receive a master’s in biology at Duke University.

New Bern couple endows first and only scholarship for clinical lab science

Pay it forward

Faculty and Staff
Hill, morphed his interest in chemistry and computers and worked in the first computerized laboratory in eastern North Carolina at Lenior Memorial Hospital in Kinston. He worked at Brody School of Medicine and Craven Regional before leaving the lab in 1996 to join Brenda’s business and work full time as her computer support technician.

The couple decided to sell the business and retire in 2004, even if just for two or three years, to travel and enjoy life while they are young and healthy. Stas, 52, and Brenda, 53, recently returned from a three-week trip to China. Earlier this summer, they visited Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons. They would like to visit all 50 states as well as the British Isles and Rome.

A New Bern native, Stas still does consulting work and teaches as an adjunct faculty member in the CLS department. Brenda is already thinking about a third career involving cooking.

As for their philanthropy, they would like to “leave it a little better than before, and try to help people help themselves.”

To learn more about giving opportunities, contact Troy Munn at (252) 744-3523, toll free at (888) 816-2238 or e-mail at munnt@ecu.edu.

(Continued on page 24)
Kristin Farmer, a senior in the Department of Health Information Management, received the Peggy H. Wood Scholarship. The scholarship was established to honor Wood upon her retirement from ECU. Wood began the Health Information Management program and chaired it for 26 years. During her tenure, she trained most of the health information management professionals in eastern North Carolina. As the scholarship recipient, Farmer served as student representative on the HIM Advisory Committee.

Lisa Brit (See photo), a graduate student in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies, received the 2005 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. The award is given annually by the Lambeth family in memory of Beth Lambeth, who was a graduate student in rehabilitation counseling.

Tanya Todd and Marchelle Allen, seniors in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, received the Bunting Scholarship for 2005. Keri Vinson, a senior in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, received one of four student scholarships awarded by the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants in 2005.
Dr. Anne Dickerson, professor and chair of the occupational therapy department in the School of Allied Health Sciences at East Carolina University, served as one of 1,200 delegates at the national White House Conference on Aging held Oct. 23-26 in Washington, D.C. Dr. Leonard Trujillo, assistant professor in the ECU occupational therapy department, served as an alternate delegate.

Dickerson and Trujillo’s research with older drivers was instrumental in their appointments by Sen. Richard Burr and Gov. Mike Easley. The research project, ROADI (Research for the Older Adult Driver Initiative – see page 10), is defining protocol for driver screening, evaluation and rehabilitation to address three key functions: vision, cognition and function.

Both Dickerson and Trujillo received a $10,000 ECU Research and Creative Grant for their older driver research. They also presented a poster on the subject at the 57th Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America.

Meta Michaelsen Downes, a longtime faculty member in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, has received the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award in Education from Bethany College.

Downes graduated summa cum laude in 1958 with a bachelor’s degree in modern languages. She earned a master’s degree from Middlebury College following study at the University of Paris on a Fulbright Scholarship. She taught French at West Virginia, Penn State and East Carolina universities. At ECU, she earned a master’s of education and a master’s in speech pathology. An associate professor in speech pathology, Downes has been honored for her work numerous times by the North Carolina Speech, Hearing and Language Association. She is married to Shelton Downes, a 1956 Bethany graduate and professor emeritus at ECU. They have three children, Eric, Karen and Sonja, and two grandchildren, Kathryn and Ryan.

The NBC program “Three Wishes” aired a show this fall featuring the SpeechEasy device developed by three ECU researchers in the School of Allied Health Sciences. The show, which grants wishes for people across the United States, gave the device to an Atlanta-area man. Drs. Joseph Kalinowski, Michael Rastatter and Andrew Stuart in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders spent more than 10 years researching the use of altered auditory feedback to produce fluency for stutterers. The research led to the development of SpeechEasy, which has been spotlighted on national TV and in news publications across the country.

In addition for their work, Kalinowski, Rastatter and Stuart received the 2005 President’s Award from the North Carolina Association of Educators.

Dr. Beth Velde and Dr. Peggy Wittman of ECU’s occupational therapy department participated in a panel at the annual QUIG conference held in Athens, Ga. QUIG is an international, interdisciplinary qualitative research conference. The panel also included Drs. Marie Pokorny of the ECU School of Nursing and Sharon Knight of Health Education. The presentation highlighted the use of the creative arts in teaching and research.
1974
Kay Gooding (B.S. Health Information Management) is director of the health information technology program at Pitt Community College and lives in Winterville with her 14-year-old daughter, Emily. Gooding received a master's of education from ECU and a master's of public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, both in 1980.

1982
Thomas Dickens (B.S. Health Information Management) of Durham is assistant emergency coordinator for Durham County.

1983
Kelly Holt Hill (B.S. Medical Record Science) of Albemarle is director of health information management and privacy officer for Stanly Memorial Hospital. Hill received a master's degree in adult education in 1997 from NC A&T State University.

1986
Wanda Buck Card Tenpenny (B.S. Health Information Management) of Greenville is the instructional coordinator for medical office administration at Pitt Community College. She moved into a new home in January.

1990
Melissa Chavis Stenger (B.S. Medical Record Science Administration) of Wilmington works as coordinator of health information management at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. She has two sons, ages 5 and 2.

1992
Tammy Hare Downum (B.S. Medical Record Administration) of Edenton recently resigned after 13 years as manager of health information services at Chowan Hospital. She is married to John Downum and they have three children, Jack, 10, Patrick, 7, and Hank, 1. She will be taking care of her family and helping in her husband's business.

1996
Christina Brown (B.S. Health Information Management) of Tampa, Fla., is national compliance manager for Kforce HealthCare Staffing.

1997
Lynn Shelly Newcomb (B.S. Health Information Management) of Ocean City, N.J., is a senior implementation consultant for Eclipsys. She installs electronic medical record systems. She and husband, Pete, have two children, Blake, 9 months, and Haley, 2.

1998
Vickie Herrin Smith (B.S. Health Information Management) of Locust is a coding specialist at Stanly Memorial Hospital. Vickie and husband, Jared Smith, a fellow ECU graduate, have two daughters, Sarah, 5, and Lauren, 2. Jared is pastor of Meadow Creek Primitive Baptist Church in Locust.

Sandy R. Wynn (B.S. Health Information Management) of Bear Grass is manager of health information services for Physicians East. She and her husband have been married nine years and have a daughter, Morgan Ashley Wynn, 2.

1999
(See photo) R. Bradley Myers (B.S. Occupational Therapy) of New Bern is area director for Crystal Coast Therapy Services in Morehead City. He earned a master's in health education and promotion. He married Kellie Zagorski of New Bern on Aug. 20. Kellie recently graduated from the UNC School of Law.

2000
Jennifer Boyd (B.S. Health Information Management) of Greenville, S.C., is working part-time as a program coordinator in disaster/emergency management for Greenville County. She and her husband have two children, ages 5 and 2.

Nacole Taylor Everette (B.S. Health Information Management) of Greenville and husband Sammy celebrated the birth of their son, Dylan, on June 23. Nacole is employed as transcription manager in the health information management systems department at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Mary Letshwiti (B.S. Rehabilitation Services) of Gaborone, Botswana, works as full-time outreach coordinator for the Botswana-Baylor Children's Clinical
Centre of Excellence, a clinic for children with HIV/AIDS and their families. She also works part-time for the University of Botswana Disability Support Services. She earned a master's of rehabilitation counseling from Utah State University in 2002.

2002

Peggy Atkinson (B.S. Rehabilitation Services) of Wilson teaches adult basic skills at Wilson Technical Community College.

Melissa Weiss Chappell (B.S. Health Information Management) of Edenton is manager of health information services at Chowan Hospital. Chappell serves as secretary for the NCHIMA Coastal Carolina Region. Melissa and husband, Quintin, celebrated the birth of their son, Caleb, on Jan. 31.

2003

Patrick K. Kennedy (B.S. Health Information Management) of Clayton married Tamara E. Whitfield (B.S. Health Information Management, 2002) on June 19, 2003. Patrick has been promoted to revenue integrity manager at Nash Health Care Systems in Rocky Mount.

Frances Anais Rainford (B.S. Health Information Management) of Durham is medical records director at Treyburn Healthcare in Durham. She received her master's of business administration with health care management concentration from ECU in 2005.

Tiffany Baker Roberts (B.S. Health Information Management) of Hertford works as medical records coordinator at Albemarle Mental Health Center in Elizabeth City. She is expecting a baby in January.

Alicia Stouffer (B.S. Health Information Management) of St. Petersburg, Fla., plans to marry in May in Jacksonville, Fla. She is taking a class for a risk management license.

2004

LaSonya Williams Barnes (B.S. Health Information Management) of Greenville was married July 23 and is a coding consultant with LexiCode Corporation.

Talita E. Irizarry (B.S. Rehabilitation Services) of Greenville is working as an individual and community supports program coordinator for Easter Seals United Cerebral Palsy. The program assists people with disabilities in maximizing their individual potential and providing support and respite for families.

Amber Codi Rouse (B.S. Health Information Management) of Grifton works as a site coordinator for Smart Document Solutions, the world’s largest document processing company, in the Brody School of Medicine. She is currently working towards a master's degree in education. She will marry in March.

Ashley Wagner (B.S. Health Information Management) of Winston-Salem is working as an assistant project manager on two research studies, women's health memory and alcohol-related consequences prevention, at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center.

2005

Erin Ballance (B.S. Rehabilitation Services) of Greenville works as an activities assistant at Cypress Glen Retirement Community.

Ronald E. Bremer (M.S. Physician Assistant Studies) of Durham recently scored 843, well above the minimum of 350, on the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination. Once licensed, he will work as a physician assistant in Selma through his employer, Carolina Express Care of Knightdale.

Miranda Salib (B.S. Health Information Management) of Raleigh is an electronic medical records specialist with NextGen Healthcare.

(Continued from page 24)
The School of Allied Health Sciences announces the following faculty additions: Leslie K. Allison, Spencer Cole, Dr. Thomas K. Ross, Dr. Sharon Rutledge and Dr. Paul Toriello.

Leslie K. Allison, assistant professor in the Department of Physical Therapy, received her bachelor’s in physical therapy from the University of Pennsylvania, and her master’s of science in motor control and learning from Oregon State University. She is scheduled to receive her doctorate from the University of Maryland in June.

Allison’s clinical work has been in neurological physical therapy with expertise in the evaluation and treatment of postural control disorders. Her research focus is multi-sensory integration, imbalance and falls in the elderly. She previously taught at Midwestern University in Downer’s Grove, Ill. Allison enjoys sea kayaking, swimming, reading, travel, singing, theater and movies. Her husband, David Ginsburg, recently retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after 29 years of service. They have one son, Justin, who recently married and lives in Eugene, Ore.

Spencer Cole, clinical coordinator in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, received physician assistant training at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College. He received a bachelor’s of science in management from Northern Kentucky University. He completed his master’s of science in motor control and learning from Oregon State University. He then spent 32 years in the U.S. Navy, serving as a physician assistant in several locations. He is a native of Kentucky and enjoys photography, sailing, camping, hiking and reading.

Dr. Thomas K. Ross, assistant professor in the Department of Health Services and Information Management, received his doctoral degree in economics from Saint Louis University. He earned a master’s of business administration with a concentration in finance and accounting, a master’s of arts in communications and a bachelor’s in business administration, all from the University of Cincinnati.

Ross comes to ECU from King’s College, where he taught in the graduate health services management program. He previously worked in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University South Bend where he developed and oversaw a health management program for physicians.

Dr. Sharon Rutledge joins the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders as a clinical supervisor and instructor for doctoral and undergraduate students in audiology. Rutledge received her bachelor’s in Communicative Disorders and master’s in Audiology from East Tennessee State University and a doctorate of Audiology from the University of Florida. She comes to ECU from private practice and the Nash County Schools.

Originally from Ohio she lived in east Tennessee for 13 years. She and her husband, Mark, have three daughters, ages 5, 3 and 3.

Dr. Paul Toriello, assistant professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Studies, received a bachelor’s in psychology and a master’s in rehabilitation counseling from Wright State University. He received his doctorate in rehabilitation specializing in substance use disabilities from the Rehabilitation Institute at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Toriello’s research interests include organizational change, lifestyles of recovering addicts, motivational interviewing and self-determination theory.

For his motivational interviewing research, he won an American Rehabilitation Counseling Association Research Award. Toriello has participated in grant projects funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and other national funding organizations. Toriello is a certified rehabilitation counselor, a certified substance abuse counselor and clinical supervisor.
Purple Alert is a grass roots effort designed to organize and communicate important facts to East Carolina University constituents by phone, e-mail or fax.

Purple Alert will present current and proposed legislative issues affecting ECU, provide a forum for discussion, and provide contact information for legislators who make decisions. Elected officials depend on you as constituents to be informed and communicate your interests to them.

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