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In June 2017, Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews retires from Mercer after 44 years, as the longest-serving academic dean in the University’s history and as the guiding force behind the Mercer Health Sciences Center. **BY SYLVIA WROBEL**

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Georgia Baptist College of Nursing alumna Kaitlin Chance helps lead human trafficking prevention and education

Health Sciences Center students learn to assess and prevent falls in older patients

Mercer’s four health sciences units embrace diversity initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes for all
FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D.

This letter to you, the students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the Mercer Health Sciences Center, is my last for Reach magazine. I’ve been at Mercer University for more than four decades, and now is the right time for me to retire. During my time at Mercer, I’ve seen all four of our health sciences schools establish themselves on a regional and national stage. Mercer’s commitment to the health sciences has evolved over my time here, so I wanted to use this opportunity to reflect on the Health Sciences Center and its future.

Back in the mid-2000s, then-University President Kirby Godsey told me that he wanted to start a physician assistant program in Atlanta. Piedmont Healthcare was keen to have another avenue from which these healthcare professionals could enter into its healthcare system. Emory University had the only Atlanta-based PA program at the time, and Piedmont expected to hire more PAs as the role of doctors was changing. Across the country, healthcare teams were beginning to rely more on PAs and nurse practitioners for many of the responsibilities that doctors previously held.

Dr. Godsey was eager to start the program, and I then asked him to change the name of the Southern School of Pharmacy to the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences to house the PA program. The name change, I reasoned, would better reflect the College’s national presence and aspirations and allow the University to add other health sciences programs to the College in the future. He agreed. We changed the name and enrolled our first students in the PA program in 2008.

In the meantime, a new University president, William Underwood, came on board. I shared with him my vision of growing the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences with innovative and transformational programs and also joining it with the University’s Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and School of Medicine under an umbrella organization called the Mercer Health Sciences Center. President Underwood shared this vision and charged me with three important objectives: enhancing interprofessional education to teach future physicians, pharmacists, nurses, PAs, physical therapists and other healthcare professionals how to work together in a cohesive team; educating more healthcare professionals for our growing and aging population; and producing greater collaborative research among the health sciences schools to treat and cure disease.

The PA program grew quickly in a short time, and we added a Doctor of Physical Therapy program. Both programs soon needed their own infrastructure, and President Underwood moved both programs into the new College of Health Professions. This would give the University four schools/colleges — medicine, pharmacy, nursing and health professions — under the umbrella of the Health Sciences Center. In the meantime, I had been working with the medical school to relocate its public health program into the new College. In addition to the public health program, CHP also recently added a clinical medical psychology program, and there are plans to further expand the College’s programs in the upcoming years.

In less than a decade, the Mercer Health Sciences Center has made tremendous progress. The Center provides an infrastructure that brings more efficiency and effectiveness in our advertising for the recruitment of students and in the placement of students on clinical rotations. The Center also gives the health sciences at Mercer a branding opportunity to showcase the “interconnectedness” of our programs. No healthcare professional can work in a silo in today’s healthcare system, and the Mercer Health Sciences Center is built around that philosophy. As a result, we have built a robust interprofessional education program that prepares our students to be team- and practice-ready. And for our faculty, we are fostering greater research collaboration between the health sciences academic units. This spring, we’re holding a health sciences center research symposium on the Atlanta campus to showcase ongoing collaborations and to foster new ones.

There are many more exciting initiatives that lie ahead for the Mercer Health Sciences Center, and I am confident that the Center will continue to play a vital role in the life of the University. I am just honored and blessed to have been able to contribute in some way to its evolution.

Regards,

Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for Health Sciences
Provost Appoints College of Pharmacy Dean Search Committee

Provost D. Scott Davis, Ph.D., has appointed a search committee to help identify and recruit a successor to Mercer’s Dr. H.W. (Ted) Matthews, the University’s longest-serving academic dean, who will retire this summer.

Upon his retirement, Dr. Matthews will have led the College of Pharmacy for 27 years, the longest tenure for a pharmacy dean since the school merged with Mercer in 1959.

“Finding a successor to Ted Matthews is going to be a challenge because of the outstanding leadership and long tenure he has given the College of Pharmacy,” Dr. Davis said. “The new dean will have big shoes to fill, but I am confident the search committee will help us identify a leader for the College who will further advance its distinguished track record of excellence in pharmacy education and research.”

The search committee is chaired by Nader Moniri, Ph.D., associate dean for research and associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the College of Pharmacy. Other members of the committee include Ajay Banga, Ph.D., chair and professor of pharmaceutical sciences and co-director of the Center for Drug Delivery Research; Susan Miller, Pharm.D., chair and professor of pharmacy practice; Grady Strom, Ph.D., vice chair and associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences and director of the College of Pharmacy’s Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning; Nicole Metzger, Pharm.D., clinical associate professor of pharmacy practice; Ed Schutter, PHARM ’77, Mercer trustee, and president and CEO of Arbor Pharmaceuticals; Larry Braden, PHARM ’65, former Mercer trustee, current member of the College of Pharmacy Board of Visitors and president of Lacey Drug Co.; and Priscilla Danheiser, Ph.D., dean of Mercer’s Penfield College.

Dr. Matthews began his association with Mercer as a student. While earning a degree in chemistry from Clark College, he enrolled in Mercer’s Southern School of Pharmacy, graduating in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees (1971 and 1973 respectively) in pharmaceutical biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he was a National Institutes of Health Pre-Doctoral Fellow and a Fellow of the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education. His alma mater in the fall of 2015 awarded him with a Citation of Merit, one of the highest awards given by the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He completed postdoctoral work at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the Hospital Infectious Disease program.

He joined the faculty of Mercer’s School of Pharmacy in 1973. His commitment to teaching excellence earned him the Outstanding Teacher Award. Over the next decade, he held a number of administrative as well as faculty positions, including associate dean for the School of Pharmacy and assistant provost of the University. After serving for a year as interim dean, he was appointed dean of the School of Pharmacy in 1990. Over the years he has received numerous awards from state and national pharmacy and pharmacy education organizations.

Dr. Matthews was instrumental in establishing the Mercer Health Sciences Center, and in 2012, was named senior vice president for health sciences, in addition to his responsibilities as dean of the College of Pharmacy.

Pharmacy Partners with IAMR to Offer Students New Research Opportunities

The College of Pharmacy recently partnered with the Alpharetta-based Institute for Advanced Medical Research, a private clinical research organization, to provide new patient-centered research opportunities for students. Students seeking the Pharm.D. degree or the Pharm.D./Ph.D. clinical scientist degree will be able to participate in a wide range of Phase 1-4 clinical trials addressing various diseases.
“Through the College’s partnership with the institute, pharmacy students can practice hands-on clinical and translational research, bridging the gap between bench and bedside,” said Nader Moniri, Ph.D., associate dean for research in the College of Pharmacy. “This partnership brings the clinical scientist track to fruition, as well as provides a value-added experience to our Pharm.D. students.”

The new Institute for Advanced Medical Research at Mercer, housed on the University’s Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta, is led by Angelo Sambunaris, M.D., an expert on the treatment of anxiety, depression and insomnia who has conducted more than 200 clinical trials. Faculty from the College of Pharmacy, as well as from other schools within the Mercer Health Sciences Center, will be able to work with Dr. Sambunaris and his team on clinical studies.

“Through integration into a clinical research team to conduct clinical research trials, students and faculty will have practical experience with methodologies involved in testing new and innovative medications,” Dr. Sambunaris said. “These clinical trials also will provide students insight into opportunities in the pharmaceutical research world, including with the Food and Drug Administration, clinical research organizations, and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.”

“As one of the nation’s first such collaborations between a private pharmacy school and an independent clinical research institute, our partnership will help shape the future of patient-based health care delivery and discovery,” said H.W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the College and senior vice president for health sciences. “Our new clinical research setting promotes greater skills in the areas of leadership, critical thinking and problem-solving, making our graduates more effective practitioners.”

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Nursing

**College of Nursing Receives $350K Federal Grant to Improve Workforce Diversity**

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing was awarded a nearly $350,000 grant by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to increase nursing education opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including racial and ethnic minorities who are underrepresented among registered nurses. The HRSA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The College of Nursing is one of 13 nursing programs across the country to receive this grant. The funding, authorized under Title VIII, Section A21, of the Public Health Service Act, will support the College’s Dedicated to Diversity (D2D) project. Funding will extend over a one-year budget period and focus on retention of nursing students through student stipends, scholarships and opportunities for mentorship and partnerships. In addition, the grant provides academic and peer support.

“It gives me great pleasure to express my enthusiastic support for the Dedicated to Diversity project,” said Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College. “Our nursing program is strongly committed to improving the retention of our diverse nursing student population. The proposed aims listed in this project are truly innovative and they reflect the mission of the University.”

Lanell M. Bellury, Ph.D., RN, AOCNS, OCN, associate professor, serves as principal investigator and project director for the grant, which involves collaboration with the Department of Public Health in Mercer’s College of Health Professions as well as the Atlanta Black Nurses Association.

“The Dedicated to Diversity project will heighten the overall cultural awareness within the College to one that can make positive strides toward cultivating diversity in the profession of nursing,” said Dr. Bellury. “Overall, the project aims to provide support to facilitate the success and retention of our students.”

Participating students began the academic year early with a two-day intensive, immersion experience to promote their success in the College’s rigorous BSN program. In addition to academic and financial support, the D2D Scholars are provided opportunities for professional empowerment, social support and service learning.

The College recently entered its second semester of D2D support. The following junior nursing students are active participants within the program: Andrea Amez, Ifunanya Rose Amobi, Suly Castillo, Tamecia Chelsey, Tamika Dennis, Chavay Dickerson, Kristen Fields, Teressa Hill, Helen Mwaura, Sabrina Neves, Cassaundra Pierce, Nicholas Reynolds, Mamadou Sanon, Jimina Smith, Toi Thomas, Brittanny Thomas-Pearson, Rachael Wadley and Yoldine Valery.
The interdisciplinary collaboration of the D2D program incorporates faculty in the College of Nursing and College of Health Professions. Nursing faculty include assistant professor Tammy Barbe, Ph.D., RN, CNE; professor and Piedmont Healthcare Endowed Chair of Nursing Laura Kimble, Ph.D., RN, FNP-C, FAHA, FAAN; associate professor and associate dean for the undergraduate program Cindy Rubenstein, Ph.D., RN, CPNP-PC; assistant professor Jennifer Bartlett, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CHSE; clinical assistant professor Natasha Laibhen-Parkes, Ph.D., RN, CPN; and assistant professor Mary Garvin-Surpris, Ph.D., RN. College of Health Professions faculty include professor and director of the Department of Public Health Center for Evaluation and Applied Research Huey Chen, Ph.D.; and assistant professor of practice Cheryl Gaddis, DrPH, MPH.

This project is supported by the HRSA under grant number D19HP29808, Nursing Workforce Diversity Program, for $349,650. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

Medicine

Coliseum Medical Centers, School of Medicine Announce Residency Partnership

Hospital Corporation of America’s South Atlantic Division and Macon’s Coliseum Medical Centers announced last August the launch of graduate medical education (GME) training programs in partnership with Mercer School of Medicine.

“Among our most pressing healthcare challenges is ensuring an adequate supply of well-educated healthcare professionals to meet the needs of people in this region,” said Mercer President William D. Underwood. “I could not be more pleased that Coliseum Medical Centers is joining with other leading hospitals around the state to address the urgent need for more quality residencies. These new residencies, coupled with the quality residencies at Navicent, will build on the momentum that already exists as we work together to make Middle Georgia a destination for patients seeking the highest quality health care.”

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Institutional Review Committee granted initial accreditation for Coliseum to provide internal medicine and psychiatry residency and fellowship opportunities to medical school graduates in July 2017. Mercer will provide faculty support, research opportunities, medical libraries and simulation support.

The development of these new programs results from a broader national commitment to creating best-in-class residency programs across the country by HCA. The programs at Coliseum are a part of an investment made by HCA to establish 150 new residency and fellowship programs over the next few years, adding 2,500 new physician-training positions in 17 states.

“The United States is facing a worsening physician shortage, and many experts expect that by 2025 we will be short more than 90,000 physicians and providers. What is even more concerning is that there are just not enough residency slots in the nation for the number of medical school graduates every year. The development of quality residency and fellowship programs is paramount to ensuring that we, as a nation, have the capacity to care for our communities for decades to come,” said John Lucas, vice president for graduate medical education, HCA South Atlantic Division.

Coliseum Medical Centers intends to recruit 10 internal medicine residents each year for a total of 30 residents and four additional psychiatry residents each year for a total of 16 residents. The programs will incorporate a variety of experiences that allow residents to focus on inpatient, specialty and ambulatory patient care experiences. Additionally, Coliseum plans to add residency positions in family practice and emergency medicine as well as a transitional year program in subsequent years with the goal of offering 100 residency positions by 2020.

Since graduating its first class of physicians in 1986, the School of Medicine also has maintained a residency partnership with Macon’s Medical Center, Navicent Health. Navicent, with Mercer as an academic partner, has offered strong graduate medical education programs that positively impact access to quality medical care in Georgia.

“Continued growth of residency positions in Georgia is important to addressing the severe shortage of physicians this state is now experiencing. This deficit is most evident in rural and underserved areas,” said Jean R. Sumner, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine. “If our graduates, who are all residents of Georgia, are able to enter a residency in Georgia, they almost always stay in state to practice. This new partnership with Coliseum adds to the superb clinical training already offered by Navicent for our students and only strengthens the medical care community in Macon and Middle Georgia.”
Walker Appointed Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Macon, Columbus

Patrice N. Walker, M.D., has been appointed assistant dean of diversity, equity and inclusion for the School of Medicine’s Macon and Columbus campuses. She joins Bonzo Reddick, M.D., MPH, who serves in this role on the Savannah campus.

“Mercer University School of Medicine values diversity in our student body, faculty and staff. We are committed to the goal of producing physicians who come from diverse backgrounds, races and experiences to serve the people of Georgia,” said Jean R. Sumner, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine. “The mission of the School of Medicine is to educate doctors and other health professionals to care for underserved and rural populations in this state.”

Dr. Walker began her journey in medicine as a native of Monroe County. She graduated from Mary Persons High School and then attended Georgia Institute of Technology, earning a degree in applied biology. Inspired by the mission of the School of Medicine, she returned to Middle Georgia to earn her medical degree from Mercer and complete her residency training at the Medical Center of Central Georgia. Dr. Walker is now a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist and is employed by the Navicent Health Physician Group.

Teaching always has been a passion for Dr. Walker. After working in the private sector for a number of years, she has become an educator of resident physicians and medical students. This was accomplished through her appointment as associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Mercer, as well as taking on the role of clerkship director for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Navicent Health. She is a two-time recipient of the National Faculty Award presented by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology for promoting high standards of residency education.

Additionally, Dr. Walker was voted director of OB/GYN medical staff at Navicent Health for the 2016-2017 term. She also serves on the board of directors for the Crisis Line and Safe House of Central Georgia, a nonprofit organization that aids individuals and families who are victims of domestic violence.

“Dr. Walker is an accomplished physician with a wide range of expertise,” said Dr. Sumner. “Her guidance in this important area will be invaluable.”

MUSM, Georgia 4-H Launch Initiative to Cultivate Interest in Medicine in Rural Georgia

The School of Medicine and Georgia 4-H have joined forces to offer a unique experience for 4-H’ers interested in a career in the medical field.

“Setting Your Sights on Medical School” is one of several initiatives being developed through a new partnership between the School of Medicine and Georgia 4-H. The program, for ninth- through 12th-graders, is intended to inspire and enable youth from rural Georgia to pursue healthcare careers.

Twenty-four 4-H’ers from across South Georgia attended the pilot event last fall. They participated in interactive stations to explore rural health needs and medical school resources. They also spent time with medical school faculty, staff and students and learned about basic requirements to apply to medical school.

The event was coordinated by Jean R. Sumner, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine, and Laura Bland, director of community outreach and population health, as well as Lee Anna Deal, Southeast District 4-H program development coordinator, Brandi McGonagill, Bleckley County 4-H agent, and Abby Smith, Effingham County 4-H agent.

“Mercer University School of Medicine is honored to partner with Georgia 4-H,” said Dr. Sumner. “4-H is an outstanding service-based leadership organization that offers life-changing opportunities to young Georgians. Mercer is committed to its mission to improve access to health care in rural and underserved areas of this state by providing physicians to this state. Mercer School of Medicine only admits Georgia residents. Together we can open doors to young people from across this state, and particularly from rural areas, who are interested in entering health professions and returning to rural Georgia to serve.”

“We are so excited that Mercer University School of Medicine reached out to Georgia 4-H in an effort to help young people from rural areas of Georgia make going to medical school a reality,” said Deal. “Our mission in Georgia 4-H is to offer opportunities like this for young people to acquire knowledge and develop skills to help them reach their goals. Hands-on learning experiences, like this event at Mercer, are just the type of programming 4-H’ers get excited about being a part of. We hope that we have impacted these young people in a positive way to help them reach their future goals.”

Twenty-four 4-H’ers from across South Georgia participated in the School of Medicine’s first “Setting Your Sights on Medical School” program last fall.
School Honors ‘Father of the Personal Computer’ and Member of Charter Class

The School of Medicine held a special event during Homecoming last October in memory of Henry Edward “Ed” Roberts, M.D., “Father of the Personal Computer” and a graduate of the School’s first class of physicians in 1986.

The event culminated in the unveiling of a bronze bust of Dr. Roberts in the medical school lobby by Mercer President William D. Underwood; Dean Jean R. Sumner, M.D., who was a member of the inaugural class; and Thomas Hope, M.D., a neurologist and faculty member who taught members of the Class of 1986.

Born in Miami, Florida, in 1941, Dr. Roberts was an engineer, entrepreneur and physician who invented the first commercially successful personal computer in 1975. He entered the University of Miami with the intention of becoming a doctor but changed majors and joined the Air Force after getting married and starting a family.

In 1965, Dr. Roberts was selected by the Air Force to return to college, complete his degree and become a commissioned officer. In 1968, he earned an electrical engineering degree from Oklahoma State University and returned to service with the Air Force.

He went on to co-found an electronics company called Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS). Initially, the company worked on electronics for model rockets, before Dr. Roberts bought out his partners and began focusing on digital calculators. He eventually developed and produced the first low-cost computer kit, called the Altair 8800.

The Altair 8800 landed him on the cover of Popular Electronics magazine in January 1975, attracting the attention of Bill Gates, then a student at Harvard, and Paul Allen, who would write a software program to run on Dr. Roberts’ computer. MITS continued to grow, and, in 1977, Dr. Roberts sold the company. He returned to rural Georgia to become a farmer but never lost the drive to become a physician.

Mercer’s new medical school, which opened in 1982, proved to be the perfect fit for Dr. Roberts to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a physician. The University entered into a public-private partnership with the state of Georgia to help fill a critical shortage of physicians in Georgia and nationwide. The school would only accept Georgia residents and was founded on the principle of training physicians for the citizens of rural and medically underserved areas of Georgia.

Upon completion of his internal medicine residency at the Medical Center of Central Georgia, he established his practice in Cochran, Georgia, in 1988, and remained there until his death on April 1, 2010.

Kohse Named Managing Partner of Mercer Medicine

Larry Kohse, M.D., assumed the role of managing partner of Mercer Medicine, the Mercer School of Medicine’s (MUSM) multi-specialty physician practice, last May. In that role, Dr. Kohse works with the school’s Physician Advisory Committee to direct the physician-led practice.

“Dr. Kohse brings to the practice a wealth of knowledge and skill. Not only has he run his own practice, he is an outstanding clinician with academic interests,” said Jean R. Sumner, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine.

Dr. Kohse earned his bachelor’s degree with honors in microbiology from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, where he also did graduate work in virology. He completed his Doctor of Medicine at the University of British Columbia, as well.

After completing an internal medicine residency, he accepted a fellowship in endocrinology from the Cleveland Clinic. He remained there for eight years as a staff endocrinologist before relocating his practice to Macon in 1995.

Dr. Kohse is board certified in internal medicine, endocrinology and metabolism, and recently was certified in clinical densitometry.

He has served as a professor of internal medicine and chief of the Endocrinology Division at MUSM since 2013.

He will maintain his consultative practice in endocrinology at Mercer Medicine.

Mercer Medicine is a multi-specialty physician practice and a subsidiary of MUSM and the Mercer Health Sciences Center. Its physicians specialize in cardiology, critical care medicine, endocrinology, infectious disease, nephrology, psychiatry and behavioral health, pulmonology, sleep medicine and sports medicine. Backed by the academic resources of the University, Mercer Medicine physicians also conduct groundbreaking clinical research in their specialized fields. Mercer Medicine currently employs more than 30 faculty physicians with clinic locations in downtown Macon and on the University’s Macon campus.
Led by Faith

Nursing Alumna Finds Purpose in Human Trafficking Prevention

By JAMIE DICKSON

When Kaitlin Chance, BSN, RN, enrolled in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing in 2012, she knew she wanted to be a pediatric trauma nurse, but she had no idea where her white coat would take her.

Chance, who works in the emergency department at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), is now a leader in human trafficking prevention and education as well as a health advocate for sexual assault victims.

Human trafficking also is known as modern-day slavery, and Georgia is not immune to the crisis. According to the Georgia National Human Trafficking Hotline, more than 200 trafficking cases were reported in 2016 alone.

Chance’s interest in advocating for trafficking victims was spurred when she attended a human trafficking conference through her church. She learned the average age of entry into trafficking was 12-14, and the average life expectancy of a victim of trafficking is seven years. “I was under the assumption that if you’re doing it, then you want to do it. Because why would you do something that you didn’t want to do? But sadly, I was so wrong,” she said.

She remembers the first time she helped treat a trafficked patient as a student nurse at CHOA. The attending physician didn’t believe the victim’s story. “She had a hard time absorbing what she heard,” Chance said. “She had a hard time believing it was real.” The patient’s physical exam was consistent with her account of what happened, and after that, Chance made educating doctors and fellow nurses a priority. “I was very vocal about educating my coworkers and the doctors who I worked with,” she said.

Chance was legislative director for the Georgia Association of Nursing Students, where she used that platform to write a resolution — or a call to action — for nursing students. The resolution expressed a need for more detailed policies and procedures for human trafficking victims who visit hospitals.

The resolution eventually got the attention of the Emergency Nurses Association, where Chance worked with leaders to develop a position statement. The statement outlined the need for human trafficking patient awareness in the emergency department setting.

“An overwhelming majority of people who identify as survivors of human trafficking had at one point gone through an ED setting in their captivity, and no one offered them help,” Chance said. “Even if you can identify they are being trafficked, a lot of them won’t want your help, but just to stay silent isn’t what we’re called to do as medical professionals.”

After she graduated from the College of Nursing, Chance joined Out of Darkness, the anti-human trafficking ministry of the Atlanta Dream Center. The nonprofit’s mission is to reach, rescue and restore all victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Chance said to date the organization has rescued close to 1,000 victims of trafficking. Last year, Chance was appointed chair of the group’s medical team, where she teaches doctors and medical professionals how to recognize victims of trafficking and how to help them.

In addition to her involvement with Out of Darkness, Chance is working to become a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). SANE nurses receive special training to conduct sexual assault evidentiary exams for rape victims. When a suspected sexual assault victim is admitted to its emergency department, CHOA currently calls Child Protective Services, which sends its nurse practitioner to complete a forensic exam. Since there is only one nurse who serves the three CHOA campuses, wait times for the victims can be long.

“There is a need for this here,” Chance said. “I want to help implement the practice of SANE nurses into our department so it decreases wait times for the victim. There has to be a better way, and we are always looking for better ways to take care of our patients.”

Chance also was instrumental in changing the hospital’s policies and procedures in regards to the treatment of sexual assault victims. “It put me at the table with a lot of nursing directors, and I’m so honored that they value my opinion and trust me with this project,” she said.

Chance attributes her faith to her ability to tackle the sensitive and oftentimes gut-wrenching work she does. “More than anything, I feel like I’m able to do this well — or I’m able to do it at all — because it is what God has called me to do,” she said. “There are so many times when it weighs heavy on my heart, and I try to step back and remove myself or protect myself, but the Lord just always brings me back and reaffirms for me that this is what He has called me to do.”

Chance, who hopes to receive her SANE credentials later this year, received the University’s Wallace Duvall Excellence in Leadership award at commencement in May 2015, and she is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. She recently applied to a Doctor of Nursing Practice program with a focus in pediatrics.
In June 2017, Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews retires from Mercer after 44 years, as the longest-serving academic dean in the University’s history and as the guiding force behind the establishment and growth of the Mercer Health Sciences Center. The changes he wrought — and the gracious, inclusive, supportive, contagiously enthusiastic leadership style with which he made those changes — are already the stuff of legend.

Dr. Matthews’ vision was broad. As dean, he has renamed Mercer’s pharmacy school twice, once to better reflect its national character and another time to provide the infrastructure needed to add and grow the health sciences programs of physical therapy, physician assistant studies and public health. As senior vice president for health sciences, he worked with deans of Mercer’s medical, nursing and health professions schools, directing cooperative initiatives and creating an environment where students could learn with, about and from each other, moving successfully into interdisciplinary health care after graduation.

His vision continues to be emulated by other schools. But Dr. Matthews never set out to be an education leader. He wanted to become a well-known scientist. Twists he now sees as “providential” led him down a different path. Former Dean Oliver Littlejohn recognized his talents and gave him

**"EXCELLENCE WITH A CARING ATTITUDE"**

BY SYLVIA WROBEL
increasing responsibilities. He increasingly fell in love with the school, its dedicated faculty and appreciative students. As he moved up the administrative ladder, he had an epiphany. He saw the school’s potential, knew he understood what it needed, and realized he could have a bigger impact there than anywhere. At that moment, he said, making his alma mater the best it could be became personal. “From then on, I had fire in my bones.” As his successes grew, so did his opportunities, but that fire kept him where he knew he belonged.

Finding the way to pharmacy

Ted Matthews always loved learning. A talented high school baseball and basketball player in the Miami area, where he grew up, he turned down a baseball scholarship in favor of an academic one to Clark College in Atlanta. Dr. Matthews also liked explaining what he had learned. He was good at it. A work-study bottle washer in Clark’s chemistry lab, he quickly was promoted to teaching assistant, work he continued throughout his undergraduate and pharmacy school education. But, he said, he didn’t yet “connect the dots” about what education meant to him.

A chemistry major, Dr. Matthews was pondering his next step when Clark classmate Ronald Myrick became the first African-American to enroll in Mercer’s Southern School of Pharmacy. Dr. Matthews knew nothing about pharmacy, but listening to his excited classmate, a dual pharmacy degree suddenly seemed like a good stopover on the way to graduate school and scientific fame. After earning a M.S. and Ph.D. in pharmaceutical biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Matthews returned to Atlanta to join the Mercer faculty as assistant professor of medicinal chemistry.

As the second black student at a time when many students still came from highly segregated communities, Dr. Matthews was determined to “work hard and demonstrate character.” He believed excellence was the antidote for racism, and, he recalls with a smile, he was good in school. Helping classmates with his strong tutoring skills didn’t hurt. Many remain good friends.

If race was not a problem for Dr. Matthews, money was. He didn’t have the $900 for his last year’s tuition and fees, but he did have confidence in himself. He got in line, confessed he couldn’t pay, but promised if Mercer would lend him the money, he would pay it back and make his alma mater proud. The University would receive quite a return on this investment.

First, however, Dr. Matthews wanted a Ph.D. One of his mentors, a chemistry professor at Clark, urged him to apply to the University of Wisconsin. Wisconsin’s pharmacy school was known as the “dean’s pharmacy school” for having trained so many leaders. Dr. Matthews had two thoughts: “great” and “where is Wisconsin?” He had to look on a map — and look hard — before he found Wisconsin, but he bought a winter coat, enrolled, and later became a National Institutes of Health Pre-Doctoral Fellow.

In 1973, after earning a M.S. and Ph.D. in pharmaceutical biochemistry, Dr. Matthews returned to Mercer, joining the faculty as an assistant professor of medicinal chemistry. He later completed postdoctoral studies at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s hospital infectious disease program, though he never intended to stay in Atlanta.

At Wisconsin, Dr. Matthews had been taught by Nobel laureate scientists with intensive research programs. In the 1970s, Mercer’s Southern School of Pharmacy had no basic science research, and instead, solely focused on teaching. However, Dr. Matthews still pursued his interest in research on top of the heavy teaching load expected of faculty. His first successful grant application netted a $500 piece of equipment. A year later, when former classmate Stanley Pollock arrived at Mercer after completing his own doctorate,
the two old friends not only co-taught courses but also worked together nights, weekends, Christmas and other holidays on research. One of their first studies, titled “Biochemical control of lymphocyte responses in adjuvant-induced polyarthritis in rats,” a study of treatment for arthritis, used a rat model developed by Dr. Pollock. “Because Ted was a biochemist and I was a pharmacologist, we taught each other a lot,” said Dr. Pollock. “Because we were such close friends, we also had a lot of fun.” And success. Their $75,000 grant from the Pfeiffer Foundation was a first for the school. In 1975, Dr. Matthews was named its first director of research, and he, Dr. Pollock and other new faculty began collaborating with researchers at Atlanta University, Emory, Georgia State and Georgia Tech. Although the school remained focused on undergraduate education, a new trend had begun.

Up the administrative ladder

Over the next several years, Dr. Matthews held an ascending series of positions, each further broadening his perspective. Four years as research director, four as assistant dean, two years as assistant University provost.

In 1985, he was disappointed when Dr. Littlejohn left the deanship and he wasn’t offered it. Like other twists on his path, he now believes it turned out to be providential. New Dean Dick Gourley recognized Dr. Matthews’ strengths and asked him to be associate dean for academic affairs. Dr. Matthews countered. He wanted to be associate dean, period, part of everything happening in the school. In his new role, he was involved in all new initiatives while continuing to teach, do research and serve on committees for everything from student enrollment to curriculum changes to faculty promotions. He headed the committee planning the new pharmacy school building. During the next four years, as the two men worked closely, the school established its first master’s degree in pharmacy administration and Mercer’s first Ph.D. program. Enrollment went up; research grants, contracts and publications increased. And Dr. Matthews learned a lot. “I already had the vision,”
he said. “Working with Dean Gourley taught me how to get things done.”

When the dean position opened again in 1989, Dr. Matthews was appointed acting dean until the search committee made its unanimous decision the following year. The deanship was his.

**Taking the helm**

One of Dr. Matthews’ first tasks as dean was both physical and symbolic. When he was a student, Southern was housed in a small, rather dilapidated building near what is now Centennial Olympic Park. As a faculty member, he worked in a bigger but increasingly cramped building on Boulevard, also in downtown Atlanta. In 1991, as dean, he joyfully oversaw the school’s move to spacious quarters on Mercer’s Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus, set on 200 heavily wooded acres in the Atlanta suburbs. For the University, the move reflected the restructuring of its Atlanta campus from undergraduate liberal arts to a graduate and professional center. For the growing pharmacy school, the move meant stretching out in three buildings, one new and two renovated to meet classroom and laboratory needs of almost 500 students. Sharing the campus also gave the school access to a cafeteria, physical education center, library and — important to Dr. Matthews — faculty and students from other academic units.

Dr. Matthews took on his new job with gusto, recruiting outstanding faculty — looking back, he considers the men and women he recruited and mentored his biggest contribution to the school — and building the infrastructure they needed to fulfill their potential.

Almost from the beginning of Dr. Matthews’ deanship, pharmacy practice professor Candace Barnett was at his side as an associate dean for academic affairs, helping him strengthen, build, evaluate, then build again the curriculum and degree programs. As his responsibilities grew, so did hers, to executive associate dean or, as Dr. Matthews usually refers to her, his right hand. Their 32 years working together have been “a privilege — and instructive,” she said. “He made us feel motivated, valued, optimistic.”
Making clinical research a priority

Dr. Matthews believed faculty should be part of a “community of scholars.” Always the builder, he created programs that both set the school apart and helped faculty achieve their goals in research productivity and good teaching. Mercer already had a Drug Information Center available to health professionals. Dr. Matthews added the Center for Clinical Research, making the College one of the few private pharmacy schools able to conduct clinical trials on campus. Researchers tested drug safety and effectiveness, the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of drug response, interaction, bioavailability and other areas, including novel drug delivery systems. The new Center for Pharmacometrics uses complex methodology for drug science, from basic research to drug design to optimal use in patients. The Center for Clinical Outcomes Research and Education both conducts research to improve medication use and provides education to patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals and decision-makers.

In 2014, Dr. Matthews named Nader Moniri as the school’s first associate dean for research, a position Dr. Moniri also sees as infrastructure, designed “to grow and support our research capabilities and productivity.” In addition to overseeing research efforts, part of his job is to support faculty, providing help from project development to grant writing.

Dean Matthews, said Dr. Moniri, is demanding — well-defined promotion and tenure guidelines spell out faculty responsibilities — but never more so of others than of himself. He values success — prioritizing money, equipment, space and other resources to researchers most likely to see a return on investment in extramural funding — but, Dr. Moniri added, Dr. Matthews cares even more about people.

The man who wanted to be a renowned scientist has spent enormous effort helping others reach that goal. As dean, he saw the College of Pharmacy’s National Institutes of Health funding increase from zero to $2.8 million.
Expanding education programs

Long-time pharmacy faculty member Grady Strom believes the dean’s passion for teaching is his greatest contribution. Many busy pharmacy deans leave teaching behind, he said. Dr. Matthews always remained active in the classroom, wanting to be a role model and, Dr. Matthews himself admits, unwilling to give up that contact with students. He always encouraged the faculty to embrace innovative teaching, especially active learning. He himself was an early adopter of the “flipped classroom,” in which students view video lectures before class, so that in-class time could be devoted to exercises, projects or discussions. He also implemented pedagogical research to measure the effect of different teaching methods on student learning.

Before becoming dean, Dr. Matthews, the scientist, had published 50 articles in biochemical pharmacology. As dean, his productivity increased but topics now were education. His grant-winning success also went up, but the more than $2 million he won as dean supported scholarships, curriculum enhancement and new educational models. He also became increasingly influential in national pharmacy education organizations, serving on a number of boards and on the site visit teams for the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

And just as Dr. Matthews built infrastructure to help faculty become better researchers, new programs enhanced their teaching effectiveness. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, headed by Dr. Strom, consists of faculty who have received the Distinguished Educator Award (as has Dr. Matthews) and who serve as mentors to new faculty.

A new curriculum in the early 1990s emphasized problem-based learning, expanded service-based practice experiences and postgraduate opportunities. Dr. Matthews worked with the Kroger Company to start one of the nation’s first community pharmacy residency programs. In 1981, as Dr. Matthews was taking on increasing responsibility in the school, it had become first in the South and fifth in the nation to offer the Doctor of Pharmacy — the highest level of professional pharmacy education — as its sole degree. That was a gamble, since it meant an additional year compared to competing schools, but had quickly paid off, adding to the school’s national reputation. As dean, Dr. Matthews added to the widely-respected Pharm.D. and Pharm.D./MBA a dual Pharm.D./Ph.D. option with a clinical track and a combined Pharm.D./MPH degree. Both degrees advanced the school’s standing in the scientific community. Dr. Matthews also worked with his University of Georgia counterpart to offer a program allowing pharmacists with a bachelor’s to complete their Pharm.D. degree.

In 1992, the first pharmacy Ph.D. student received his diploma from a proud Dean Matthews, who grew the program from one student to its current enrollment of almost 45. The earliest graduates almost all went into the pharmaceutical industry. Today, helped by a teaching certificate program, almost half become faculty at other colleges.

A new name for an expanded game

When former Mercer president R. Kirby Godsey was thinking about a physician assistant program, Dr. Matthews convinced him it should be located on the Atlanta campus under the pharmacy school, with the caveat that the school be allowed to change its name from the Southern School of Pharmacy to the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. The name change reflected the school’s national presence and aspirations and would allow for the addition of new programs in the future.

The first PA students enrolled in 2008. PA soon added an advanced cardiology residency. In 2010, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences also began enrolling students in a new Doctor of Physical Therapy program. Both were successful and illustrated Dr. Matthews’ leadership style.

Dr. Leslie Taylor came to Mercer in September 2009 to begin the professional physical therapy program. She said, “Within 13 months, we had our inaugural Doctor of Physical Therapy class. Dr. Matthews believes that if you have the vision, you should go for it. Solutions, not barriers.” She quickly discovered something else his other faculty already knew. He was open to and excited about new ideas, especially those on the cutting edge. When she mentioned her desire to offer postprofessional programs, residencies and fellowships, his immediate reaction was tell me about it. A fully functioning PT clinic on campus? What do you need to make it happen? In short order, Mercer’s physical therapy program offered Georgia’s first orthopedic PT residency, first residency...
Dr. Ted Matthews has accomplished a lot of things, but he would like to be remembered for being a good man, a man of integrity, guided by his faith and focused on the interests of the faculty and students for whom he had responsibility.

His colleagues already think of him that way, friend and mentor, sometimes guardian angel, always ready to help them achieve their best. Quick with praise for those who succeeded, even writing personally to every faculty member whose teaching evaluations reached the high level he wanted. Compassionate with those who struggled, gently asking if they had considered this approach or sharing something from his own life.

When colleagues were going through challenges in their personal lives, the dean somehow always knew, always remembered, offering counsel, promising prayers. One long-time faculty member recalls how his very sick wife received a handwritten letter from the dean, saying he was thinking of her and offering some scripture that had been helpful in his own life.

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Students were a special joy for Dr. Matthews, as was obvious in the classroom and at his annual ice cream parties on the lawn, when “the Dapper Dean,” as he is known around Mercer, exchanged his snazzy suits and ties for an apron. And he helped organize and was supportive of all student organizations.

Derek Polly, PHARM ’09, a clinical pharmacy specialist who precepts Mercer pharmacy students in Emory University Hospital Midtown’s ICU, says Dr. Matthews’ knowledge about and concern for his academic flock of faculty, students and alumni remind him of a pastor in a small church. Jannifer Johnson, PHARM ’94, recalls how Dr. Matthews patiently talked her through career decisions, from entering pharmacy school to taking a challenging job in the pharmaceutical industry. “He listened hard, then helped me think through decisions like a scientist would, fact-based, decisive, but he also often added an applicable scripture.”

Dr. Matthews loved walking the halls or campus, staying in touch. His door has always been open. Long-time administrative assistant Genice Johnson sometimes fretted over what that availability did to his schedule, but she knew that for Dr. Matthews other people always came first.

Matthews’ greatest accomplishment is the impact he made on those around him.

in neurologic PT (in collaboration with the Shepherd Center), and first residency in cardiovascular and pulmonary PT. If complications arose, he told her, Don’t worry, doc. I’m out there on the limb with you.

In 2013, the college’s name changed again — once again in response to a growing structure. In 2012, Dr. Matthews persuaded President William Underwood to establish the new Mercer Health Sciences Center. It encompassed the School of Medicine on the Macon and Savannah campuses and, on the Atlanta campus, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. A year later, in 2013, a new College of Health Professions was established to house the PA and PT programs added earlier by Dr. Matthews, as well as the public health program formerly housed in the School of Medicine. At the same time, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences became simply the College of Pharmacy. He was named senior vice president for health sciences, charged with overseeing the new Health Sciences Center.

The scope of his responsibilities had widened, but nothing changed about his philosophy of listening, seeking buy-in and bringing everyone into the process.

Linda Streit, later to become nursing dean, said that Dr. Matthews immediately welcomed “the new college on the block,” working with its leadership to find common interests and ways students could interact. “He encouraged collaboration between health professions long before it was fashionable.” She also could see the kind of basketball player he must have been: the one who always passed the ball to whomever had the best shot, the one who shucked off personal praise by acknowledging everyone else involved.
All I did, he would say, was give them what they needed to get the job done.

This help was not limited to the health professions. Mercer Law School Dean Daisy Floyd prizes the lunches she and Dr. Matthews shared after the monthly meeting of deans from all of Mercer’s campuses. As he had for so many, he became a valuable mentor, giving her “wisdom gained through years of experience.”

“Ted Matthews has been an extraordinary leader in the Mercer community for well over four decades,” said President Underwood. “He has been a visionary leader in the health sciences, launching Mercer’s Physician Assistant and Doctor of Physical Therapy Programs, leading the University to establish the Mercer Health Sciences Center, and enhancing interdisciplinary education among medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and the health professions. Under his leadership, the College of Pharmacy has become recognized as among the nation’s finest, with an internationally recognized research program supported by world-class scientists and talented Ph.D. students preparing for careers in academia and industry. Even this does not capture the impact that Ted Matthews has had at Mercer. He was on the search committee that brought me to Mercer. He has been a Dean of Deans, helping select and mentor many of his colleagues through the years. His contributions to Mercer are immeasurable. I enjoy working with him, I benefited from his wise counsel, and I am proud to call him my friend.”

Looking back

Everything Dr. Matthews set out to do at the college has been done, he said — or, in the case of the proposed new pharmacy building, put at the ready. He half-jokes about the building, for which plans and fundraising are underway, that “Moses didn’t reach the Promised Land, but God showed it to him.”

True to his work ethic and energy, Dr. Matthews continues to go full-tilt during his last days in office. He doesn’t expect to slow down. He won’t be involved in academics — that’s for the new dean and new senior vice president for health sciences (jobs that will be separated after he leaves) — but he will take on special projects as needed. He also plans to spend more time on family, faith and friends.

He and Marlene, his wife and soulmate of almost 50 years, have two sons, a daughter-in-law and a granddaughter, all living nearby. Dr. Matthews is a longtime associate pastor at the nondenominational Fellowship of Faith Church, in charge of marriage and children’s ministries, a frequent minister and Bible study teacher. He wants to travel more, including back to Israel, a place that brought the Bible to life for him.

“Making Mercer the best it can be has been a labor of love,” he said. “I look forward to seeing others build on what we’ve done.”
Health Sciences Center Students Participate in Interprofessional Service-Learning Project
RECENTLY, STUDENTS IN MERCER’S HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER participated in an interprofessional service-learning project focused on a team approach to fall risk assessment and prevention for older adults. Coordinated by David Taylor, PT, DPT, GCS, clinical assistant professor of physical therapy, and Ruth McCaffrey, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, FAAN, professor of nursing, the project brought together students and faculty from the physical therapy, physician assistant studies, public health, pharmacy and nurse practitioner programs — all of which are part of the geriatric interdisciplinary healthcare team with a vested interest in fall prevention and management.

Using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries) protocol, students screened older adults for fall risk. The students gained an increased awareness of the benefits of collaboration between healthcare providers and increased knowledge of evidence-based intervention and management strategies to reduce fall risk. Left: Pharmacy student Santiago Munoz, PA students Tammy Luu and Meg Hanshaw and PT student Hemal Patel assess fall risk of older adults. Below: Faculty and student teams including Patel and Dr. McCaffrey (top) and Humberto Reinoso, Ph.D., RN, FNP/ENP-BC, clinical assistant professor of nursing, and PT student Megan McLain (bottom) consult with a patient.
Dr. Jennifer Knaack

Faculty Spotlight

Jennifer Knaack, Ph.D., assistant professor in the College of Pharmacy, is passionate about human rights and putting a stop to chemical warfare. She is an on-call scientist for the American Association for the Advancement of Science — a program that allows scientists to be connected to groups focusing on human rights issues.

“The On-call Scientists program is a neat opportunity for scientists to be involved with human rights,” Dr. Knaack said. “I’m really passionate about this, and this is a priority for me, because if I’m not able to go into these areas to directly help people, then I can do this. And we’re always trying to make sure that other scientists are aware that these sorts of opportunities exist for them.”

Before joining Mercer’s faculty, Dr. Knaack worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a chemical warfare expert where she developed and studied tests to determine if a person has been exposed to chemical warfare agents. At Mercer, she oversees a lab where she and her team of graduate students develop diagnostic methods for measuring exposure to synthetic or natural toxins.

Through the On-call Scientist program, Dr. Knaack was contacted by Amnesty International last summer to determine if a series of rocket attacks in Jebel Marra, Sudan, were acts of chemical warfare.

Between January and September 2016, Jebel Marra — a remote, mountainous region of Darfur — underwent several rocket attacks that decimated villages and, according to Amnesty International, may have killed between 200-250 people, with many, or most, being children. Amnesty International believes the attacks were perpetrated by Sudanese military forces as an act of genocide. Jebel Marra has little to no healthcare facilities, so civilians were left untreated or received very little care.

Dr. Knaack and a former scientist for the Department of Defense, Keith Ward, were asked to review photos and personal testimony of the victims of the attack. According to Dr. Knaack, the wounds associated with the attacks appeared to be consistent with symptoms of chemical weaponry.

Dr. Knaack and Ward independently determined the likely agent used in the attack was sulfur mustard. Dr. Knaack’s analysis was included in a 100-page report submitted to the U.N. The report contained many grisly photos of injured children, women and men.

In September 2016, Dr. Knaack and Ward were asked to attend an Amnesty International press conference at the U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York City. There, Dr. Knaack fielded questions from journalists and was interviewed on-camera by the French news agency Agence France-Presse. She also was quoted by CNN.

Last October, Dr. Knaack participated in a conference call with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague. The OPCW and U.N. meetings took place in an effort to increase awareness of the attacks and persuade the U.N. to investigate the Sudanese government.

Dr. Knaack hopes her work will not only help put an end to chemical warfare but also bring justice to those who have been victimized.

“I’d like to see that nobody gets away with chemical weapons attacks, and that the people who are being attacked are getting some supportive therapy or assistance or aid,” she said.

This is not Dr. Knaack’s first investigation with Amnesty International. She also has assisted with the analysis of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. While one could easily feel helpless in the face of such human rights abuses, she reminds herself that she is doing what she can to help.

“At some point you have to stop and say ‘I’m doing what I can do. And this is the best I can do,’” Dr. Knaack said. “I can’t stop people from releasing these agents and people being exposed to them, but I can at least help call attention to the problem and hopefully contribute to stopping it.”
Leslie Taylor, PT, Ph.D., MS
College of Health Professions, Atlanta

‘Evaluating evidence-based fall prevention programs’

Leslie Taylor, PT, Ph.D., MS, is associate dean and professor of physical therapy in the College of Health Professions. She is currently working on a project, funded by a subaward from the State of Georgia’s Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services, titled “Evidence-based Falls Prevention Programs.” The overall grant project, funded in the amount of $399,918 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, is intended to advance the implementation and dissemination of evidence-based fall prevention programs and strategies across the state.

Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for those 65 years of age and older. Every 14 seconds, an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three adults ages 65 and older fall each year. Many of these falls result in moderate to severe injuries that limit the ability to live independently and increase the risk of early death. Older adults who have fallen often report an increased fear of falling again, leading to reduced physical activity and increased social isolation and depression.

Dr. Taylor serves on the project’s management team, and in collaboration with the College’s Center for Evaluation and Applied Research, is involved in analyzing data related to efficacy of fall prevention programs, as well as completing a process evaluation related to fall prevention efforts, protocols and delivery methods within the state.

The goals of this project are to significantly increase participation in evidence-based fall prevention programs to reduce falls and fall risks among older adults and persons with disabilities, and to create an integrated, sustainable evidence-based program network.
Jennifer L. Bartlett, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CHSE
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, Atlanta

‘Development of ethical competence in undergraduate nursing students’

Jennifer L. Bartlett, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CHSE, is an assistant professor in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. An intensive care nurse by trade, Dr. Bartlett transitioned into hospital education and higher education in 1999. She maintains clinical expertise through clinical engagement with students, work in the simulation laboratory and maintenance of board certification in medical-surgical nursing. Dr. Bartlett has contributed to the renowned Brunner & Suddarth’s Textbook of Medical-Surgical Nursing as well as Fundamentals of Nursing: The Art and Science of Person-Centered Nursing Care.

Dr. Bartlett’s research interests primarily fall into the category of scholarship of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on nursing ethics, simulation and interprofessional education. Her dissertation on the development of ethical competence in undergraduate nursing students led to the creation of a proposed undergraduate ethics curriculum that is being used to inform her current work with the American Nurses Association’s (ANA) Ethics Education Subcommittee. Due to her experiences as a trained ethics consultant who served on an active ethics committee, Dr. Bartlett intentionally embeds ethical principles into her teaching, both in the classroom and simulation settings. This work led to an invitation from the ANA to present at this year’s national conference. As a certified simulationist, Dr. Bartlett has presented locally, nationally and internationally. Her published and in-process work focuses on simulation as a structured, powerful tool for both nursing and interprofessional education.

As a recognized expert, Dr. Bartlett was invited to Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, where she serves as a consultant, training nursing faculty in core principles of simulation and working to design, implement and evaluate curriculum-based simulations.

Dr. Bartlett is on the project team for the College’s Dedicated to Diversity nursing retention program, funded by a $349,650 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Her work concentrates on promoting academic success. Front-loaded boot camps focused on adapting individual learning styles, making space for self-care and implementing study strategies to introduce students to the program. Ongoing interventions, including student-driven tutoring sessions and tailored simulations, capitalize on this start to drive integration and application of knowledge. Dr. Bartlett worked with the team to extend this work through a recently submitted $1.9 million HRSA grant proposal, titled “Dedicated to Diversity: Risk to Resilience.”

Cynthia Rubenstein, Ph.D., RN, CPNP-PC
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, Atlanta

‘Innovative teaching strategies and student retention and success’

Cynthia Rubenstein, Ph.D., RN, CPNP-PC is associate dean for the undergraduate program and associate professor in Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN). As a pediatric advanced practice nurse, she has engaged in pediatric clinical research to improve parental self-efficacy in the prevention of childhood obesity in preschool children. She was a sub-investigator in a four-year, $3.4 million U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant to develop an online nutrition educational program for WIC families in Virginia. The program has subsequently been replicated in West Virginia, Oregon and Utah. Recognized as an expert in pediatric population health, Dr. Rubenstein contributes a book chapter on this topic to the textbook recognized as the gold standard in community health nursing, Stanhope and Lancaster’s Public Health Nursing.

As a Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education on-site accreditation evaluator and recipient of the 2013 American Academy of Colleges of Nursing’s Excellence in Innovation and Teaching Award, Dr. Rubenstein is nationally recognized as an expert in nursing education. Her research in this field is situated in the areas of innovative teaching strategies and student retention and success. Her findings have been published in peer-reviewed journals on the use of a public blog to increase political self-efficacy in BSN students, the role and effectiveness of student evaluations of teaching for faculty evaluation, and student perceptions and interpretation of items on student evaluations of faculty teaching. She is primary author on an accepted manuscript evaluating faculty/student perceptions of and recommendations for successful iPad integration in a GBCN program. This journal has also selected the manuscript to highlight in an abstract video.

Committed to student retention and success, Dr. Rubenstein is on the project leadership team for the College’s Dedicated to Diversity (D2D) nursing retention program, funded by a $349,650 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The program focuses on promoting success for undergraduate nursing students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds to ultimately increase diversity in the nursing workforce by addressing academic, social, physical and mental health, financial, and professional needs of these students. Dr. Rubenstein is a co-investigator for a subsequent $1.9 million HRSA grant proposal, “Dedicated to Diversity: Risk to Resilience,” which expands upon the D2D program and is currently under review.
Jeffrey L. Stephens, M.D.
Harold Katner, M.D.
Rafael Ponce Terashima, M.D.
School of Medicine, Macon

‘Studying HIV and other infectious diseases in Middle Georgia’

The School of Medicine’s Infectious Disease Division was established in 1985 and has served the Middle Georgia community for more than three decades through ongoing research related to the HIV epidemic that plagues the area in addition to other areas of general infectious diseases.

Jeffrey L. Stephens, M.D., serves as professor and chair of the Department of Internal Medicine. He has a robust clinical trial program, with multiple patients currently enrolled in a trial of bictegravir, a next-generation integrase inhibitor against HIV. He is also enrolling patients in a study that compares a new formulation of HIV medication versus the standard of care for prevention of HIV, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). A graduate of Mercer’s second class of physicians, Dr. Stephens returned to the University in 1992 and has served on the faculty since.

Harold Katner, M.D., professor and chief of infectious diseases, is currently researching an innovative HIV treatment study with a new combination therapy via monthly, long-acting injections. He also is contributing to a National Institutes of Health grant that was awarded to the University of Connecticut for improving HIV drug adherence. Dr. Katner joined the Mercer faculty in 1985 and has been involved with research that has resulted in more than 40 publications and scores of national and international presentations. He has cared for more than 1,200 patients with HIV/AIDS and presented more than 500 HIV prevention programs to the community.

Rafael Ponce Terashima, M.D., assistant professor, is currently working on several studies at Medical Center, Navicent Health in Macon related to urinary tract infections and antimicrobial resistance to Staphylococcus aureus. He also is involved in a long-term study of schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease, in Brazil involving the spatial association of the disease and fecal water contamination through the use of microbial source tracking, geographic information systems and mathematical modeling. Dr. Ponce Terashima’s additional research interests include recurrent clostridium difficile infection.

Jennifer L. Barkin, Ph.D.
School of Medicine, Macon

‘Supporting women through childbirth and in the postpartum period’

Jennifer L. Barkin, Ph.D., assistant professor of community medicine and obstetrics and gynecology, received her educational training in biostatistics (M.S.) and epidemiology (Ph.D.) at the University of Pittsburgh. Her postdoctoral training in psychiatric epidemiology at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center further cultivated her interest in women’s mental health, particularly during childbearing years. “We need to do a better job of supporting women through childbirth and in the postpartum period and respecting the process as a major physiological and psychological event and transition,” said Dr. Barkin. “Women are often learning to care for an infant in the wake of a caesarian section or a difficult labor.”

Dr. Barkin developed a self-report measure of postpartum maternal functioning, the Barkin Index of Maternal Functioning (BIMF), that is being used internationally in academic, clinical and community-based settings. The BIMF has also attracted considerable commercial interest and was licensed as an outcomes measure in two separate industry-sponsored clinical trials. The aim of the trials was to test the efficacy of a novel, hormone-based treatment for postpartum depression. More recently, a company that provides support for clinical trials contacted Dr. Barkin regarding an international health economics study that will require administration of the measure in the U.S., Italy, Japan, Germany and the U.K. The company also expressed interest in working with Dr. Barkin on the development of a tablet version of the measure. The instrument also is being requested for implementation in major health networks in Pennsylvania and in various research studies, including a study of caregivers of school-aged children in Uganda who may or may not be HIV infected.

Dr. Barkin works closely with the OB-GYN residency program at Navicent Health in downtown Macon. Along with clinical faculty and residents, she has examined sociodemographic and clinical correlates of postpartum maternal functioning in the clinic’s primarily low-income patient population. Dr. Barkin’s work on self-care within the context of motherhood is novel and has been lauded by reproductive and maternal health groups.

Over the past year, Dr. Barkin has been working closely with OB-GYN program director Kristina C. Hawkins, M.D., on several projects, including an investigation of how markers of ovarian reserve are impacted by race and weight. Dr. Barkin and Dr. Hawkins are developing a program for resident wellness within the Navicent Health system.
‘Making anti-platelet medications more effective’

Kathryn Momary, Pharm.D., began taking a closer look at anti-platelet medications when she was in residency and fellowship to advance her skills as a pharmacist and researcher. The class of drugs was widely prescribed to thin out the blood to prevent clots in patients who have had a heart attack or stroke. Then along came clopidogrel, otherwise known as Plavix. “Plavix was a big deal when it came out,” said Dr. Momary. “It expanded the treatment options for patients. There was only one other drug on the market at the time Plavix came out, and it had lots of side effects, and it was not as effective.”

But Dr. Momary and other health care practitioners saw an inconsistent response among patients to the drug. Intrigued, she began researching clopidogrel. Clopidogrel is known as a pro-drug, which means it is inactive until the body “turns on” the compound. “The transition within the body is varied,” said Dr. Momary. “Some people have a genetic variant that affects how the drug works. Essentially, the enzymes that metabolize the drug are ineffective. Twenty to 30 percent of Caucasians have this variant.”

However, genetic variants in the drug metabolizing enzymes aren’t the only cause for patients not to respond to clopidogrel. Drug interactions that block clopidogrel activation also can lead to inconsistent response. Dr. Momary and her College of Pharmacy colleague, Nicole Metzger, Pharm.D., published a paper on a patient with HIV and cardiovascular disease whose HIV drug ritonavir had rendered clopidogrel ineffective, marking the first reported case of such an interaction. The patient’s blood test had shown that he did not have a genetic variant that would have affected clopidogrel, and he had had a heart attack while on the blood thinner. The report, which the pharmacist researchers published in an HIV and AIDS journal to help alert infectious disease practitioners about the drug interaction, should help refine drug treatments for patients with HIV. Patients with HIV are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, Dr. Momary noted.

Dr. Momary continues her research into blood thinners with two new studies into another such drug, warfarin or Coumadin. Elderly patients have varied responses to warfarin and are at increased risk for the serious side effect of bleeding. Dr. Momary wants to pinpoint predictors to better assist patients older than 70 years who are taking warfarin. She also is studying how healthcare practitioners can better determine the dosage of warfarin that a patient should take. Practitioners usually have to adjust the dosage based on the patients’ lab tests, which are often laborious.

‘Effects of exposure to amphetamine derivatives on behavior and cognition in mice’

The immediate perils of substance abuse are well known, but researchers increasingly are looking at a new facet of addiction — that recovering amphetamine addicts may be cognitively impaired long term. Scientists do not fully know the long-term effects of abuse of amphetamines on the brain. “We do not yet know if the brain repairs itself — if it does, it is likely that it does so very slowly,” said Kevin Murnane, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the College of Pharmacy.

Dr. Murnane has studied exposure to amphetamines in mice in order to understand how these drugs may affect the human brain. In a recent study, mice were exposed to methamphetamine or methylendioxymethamphetamine (“Ecstasy” or “Molly,” its current street name), and then he measured their performance on tasks designed to gauge learning and memory. The levels of serotonin and dopamine also were measured, and Dr. Murnane found that amphetamines led to a depletion of both neurotransmitters. He found an 80- to 90-percent drop in dopamine levels in some parts of the brain after exposure and that reduced dopamine levels in specific brain regions, such as the striatum, was the strongest predictor of poor learning and memory. “People with substance-use disorders related to amphetamines show dysregulation of brain dopamine systems as well as memory and reaction time problems,” Dr. Murnane said. “When dopamine is depleted, it also may lead to emotional and affective problems.”

Dr. Murnane continues to build on this research, most recently with a new study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse focused on “bath salt.” These substances have similar effects to amphetamines, but their sale can be more difficult to control. His research group will examine learning and memory as well as affective problems in mice that have been exposed to these substances. Some bath salts have been outlawed, but new chemicals are emerging. Even more troubling, some bath salts are known to cause very strong surges in dopamine and to have powerful effects that can last for many hours, suggesting that they may be even more dangerous than amphetamines.
School of Medicine faculty member Jacob C. Warren, Ph.D., was named Outstanding Researcher of the Year by the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) at the association’s annual conference in Minneapolis in May. The conference is the largest gathering of rural health professionals in the nation.

Since joining the medical school in 2013, Dr. Warren, who serves as Rufus Harris Endowed Chair and director of the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities (CRHHD), has published more than 20 peer-reviewed journal articles, delivered more than 30 professional presentations and published the text *Rural Public Health*.

As director of CRHHD, he oversees a multi-million dollar portfolio of federal funding that supports the Center’s efforts.

The largest of these initiatives is a National Institutes of Health Center of Excellence grant that supports a comprehensive research, training and community engagement initiative working to eliminate rural health disparities throughout southeast Georgia. Through this effort, he has led the development and testing of a novel, telehealth-delivered diabetes and hypertension self-management interventions for patients receiving care at clinics for uninsured and underserved populations, and to see the work I have been doing here at Mercer in the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities recognized in this way is truly humbling.”

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and well-being of rural Americans and providing leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research. NRHA membership is made up of 21,000 diverse individuals and organizations with an interest in rural health.

Much of his work has focused on developing a curriculum for psychologists who work in integrated care settings. As the demand for population health increases, so does the need to effectively train psychologists in the competencies that are necessary to work within integrated care settings.

Working with APA Division 38, Dr. Stillman developed a freely available introductory curriculum as a resource for graduate training programs and affiliated clinical training sites.

“This is quite an honor to be named Outstanding Researcher of the Year by the National Rural Health Association,” said Dr. Warren. “I have been very fortunate to have the ability to focus my career on improving health in rural and underserved populations, and to see the work I have been doing here at Mercer in the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities recognized in this way is truly humbling.”

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Dr. Stillman earned his Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Florida International University and both his Master of Science in clinical psychology and Doctor of Philosophy in clinical psychology with a concentration in health psychology from Nova Southeastern University.

He is editor of the *Journal of Psychology: Open Access*, an editorial board member of the *International Journal of Psychology and Counseling*, a peer reviewer for the *American Journal of Bioethics* and a member of the Society for Health Psychology Integrated Primary Care Committee.

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The NFLA, sponsored by The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International and The Elsevier Foundation, is a highly selective, 20-month mentored leadership academy. It is designed to support the recommendations of the 2010 Institute of Medicine report, titled “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health,” which calls for “health organizations, including nursing organizations and nursing schools, to provide nurses greater opportunities to gain leadership skills and put them into practice.”

“I congratulate Dr. Bellury as she accepts new opportunities to learn from mentors and leaders around the world. Her knowledge, experience and education provide a strong foundation for her participation in this team-based project to advance nursing education,” said Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing.

The NFLA pairs aspiring full-time, non-tenured faculty leaders, called scholars, with experienced leadership mentors, supported by NFLA faculty members. The academy curriculum includes a variety of educational strategies for developing leadership knowledge, competence and outcomes, and is designed to foster academic career success, promote nurse faculty retention and satisfaction, encourage personal leadership development and cultivate high-performing, supportive work environments in academia.

### College of Health Professions

**Sheena D. Brown-Waller**, Ph.D., MSCR, clinical assistant professor of physician assistant studies, received a $7,993 grant for “Diversity within Physician Assistant Education: Assessing Perceptions of Promotions and Tenure Opportunities among Underrepresented Minority Physician Assistant Faculty” from the Physician Assistant Education Association’s Don Peterson Research Grants Program.

**Joseph Donnelly**, PT, DHS, OTC, clinical associate professor of physical therapy, received the Legislative Leadership Award from the American Physical Therapy Association, Government Affairs Section in recognition of his work to advance the practice of physical therapy.

**Elizabeth Dickerson**, M.D., clinical assistant professor, and **Asif Saberi**, M.D., clinical associate professor, were selected to serve on the Medical Advisory Committee for the Good Samaritan Health Center of Gwinnett.

**Cheryl L.R. Gaddis**, DrPH, MPH, assistant professor of public health, was elected to a two-year term as a governing councilor of the Public Health Association Public Health Education and Health Promotion Section.

**Henry “Hank” Heard**, DHSc, PA-C, clinical assistant professor of physician assistant studies, was selected to serve as a member of the Government Relations and External Affairs Council for the Physician Assistant Education Association.

**David Taylor**, PT, DPT, GCS, clinical assistant professor of physical therapy, received the Merit Award for Exceptional Service and Achievement in Education from the Physical Therapy Association of Georgia.

### College of Pharmacy

**Ajay K. Banga**, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, was awarded $231,330 from CONRAD/U.S. Agency for International Development for “Transdermal patch for HIV prophylaxis.” Dr. Banga also was awarded $50,000 from Johnson and Johnson in New Brunswick, New Jersey, for “In vitro human skin permeation studies;” $35,000 from Merck Millipore in Germany for “Micromoulding of poly (vinyl alcohol) microendodites;” and $16,270 from Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd. for “Intradermal absorption enhancement for water soluble macromolecules.”

**Ajay K. Banga**, Ph.D., principal investigator, and **Jennifer Knaack**, Ph.D., assistant professor and co-investigator, were awarded $30,000 from L’Oréal for “Intradermal delivery of cosmetic agents by physical technologies.”

**Martin D’Souza**, Ph.D., professor, and **Kevin S. Murnane**, Ph.D., were awarded $440,108 from the National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for a project titled “A Novel Neuropeptide Brain Delivery System for Epilepsy.”

**Nader H. Moniri**, Ph.D., associate professor, and **Kevin S. Murnane**, Ph.D., assistant professor, were awarded $154,220 from the National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for “FFAR4 and nigositrial function: A novel target treatment of PD?” Dr. Moniri, principal investigator, and Murnane, co-investigator, were awarded $10,000 from the United Soybean Board under the Soy Health Research Program (SHRP) for “Effects of soybean oil on FFAR4 activity in Parkinson’s Disease.”

**Kevin S. Murnane**, Ph.D., assistant professor and principal investigator, was awarded $138,798 from the National Institute of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse for “Receptor pharmacology and toxicology of second-generation pyrolidine ‘bath salt’ cathinones.”

**Samuel K. Peasah**, Ph.D., assistant professor, was awarded $3,030 from Valenta for “Evaluating the impact on diabetes control and economic outcomes with V-Go at Northeast Florida Endocrine and Diabetes Associates: A retrospective cohort analysis.”

**Maria M. Thurston**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor, was named an invited peer reviewer for the American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy. Dr. Thurston also was appointed to the American College of Pharmacists Pharmacy Lyman Award Selection Committee, the Georgia Pharmacy Association Continuing Professional Education Advisory Committee and the 2017 American College of Clinical Pharmacy Awards Committee.

### Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

**Jennifer Bartlett**, Ph.D., RN-B.C., CNE, CHSE, assistant professor, was invited to the American Nurses Association Ethics Education advisory board.

**Lanell Bellury**, Ph.D., RN, AOCNCS, associate professor, was selected as one of 10 participants in the 2016 Oncology Nursing Society Foundation Endowment Oncology Nurse Scientist Intensive in San Antonio, Texas.

**Eilane Harris**, RN, M.S., CC RN, clinical associate professor, was honored for five years of service on the board of trustees for Developmental Disabilities Ministries of Georgia. Her tenure includes time as vice chair, chair of residential services committee and a member of the executive search committee.

**Fran E. Kamp**, RN, M.S., clinical associate professor, received the Frontline Simulation Champion Excellence Award at the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning conference in Grapevine, Texas.

**Ruth McCaffrey**, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, FAAN, professor and Doctor of Nursing Practice coordinator, was the Mary Faust Speaker and Lecturer at Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Dr. McCaffrey also served as keynote speaker at the American Garden Association Conference in Miami, Florida, as well as the North American Japanese Garden Association’s biennial conference in Delray, Florida. She was associate editor for the Journal of Holistic Nursing and a reviewer for Holistic Nursing Practice.

**Dr. Bellury**

**Linda A. Streit**, Ph.D., RN, dean and professor, was re-elected Region 7 coordinator for Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society for 2015-2017. This position provides chapter support for Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Puerto Rico.

### School of Medicine

**Richard F. Camino-Gaztambide**, M.D., M.A., clinical associate professor, associate dean for diversity and inclusion, and psychiatry clerkship director, was recognized as a distinguished fellow by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

**Monique Davis-Smith**, M.D., associate professor and residency program director in the Department of Family Medicine, received the BRONZE Program Director Recognition Award from the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors. The award recognizes continuous learning and improvement through scholarly activity, peer and professional development and recognition, and commitment and service to the specialty and to medical education.

**Edwin W. Grimsley**, M.D., professor of internal medicine, associate dean for clinical education, clerkship director and Mercer Medicine compliance officer, was selected as a Master in the American College of Physicians. Dr. Grimsley is only the 29th Master from the state of Georgia.

**Alice House**, M.D., FAAPP, dean of the Columbus campus and professor of family medicine, was appointed to serve on the United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 2 Clinical Skills Test Material Development Committee, as well as on the National Board of Medical Examiners Internal and Family Medicine Subject Test Committee.

**Edward C. Klett**, M.D., professor in the Department of Biomedical Sciences and Biomedical Problems Program director, received the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Pathology Informatics at the Pathology Informatics Summit meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Melissa Klings**, DVM, director of the Animal Care Facility and Macon campus attending veterinarian, was appointed to the Small Mammal Scientific Committee for this year’s International Conference on Avian, Herpetological and Exotic Mammal Medicine in Venice, Italy. Dr. Klings also was appointed co-chair of the Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians annual conference to be held in September.

**Tina Thompson**, Ph.D., senior associate dean of academic affairs, was appointed to the National Board of Medical Examiners Cross-Step Behavioral/Psychiatry/Neuroscience Item Review Committee.

**Robert J. Visalli**, Ph.D., associate professor of microbiology, was appointed as one of four national co-chairs to oversee the American Society for Microbiology Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program, the premier undergraduate research fellowship program for aspiring microbiologists in the United States.
In 2002, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies published a groundbreaking study that reported minorities are less likely to receive the same quality of health care as their white counterparts. While the causes of these disparities are varied and complex, the study revealed that more minority providers are needed to ensure health equity.

Ted Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences, said diversity in the health sciences is crucial for many reasons. “A diverse student body increases cultural sensitivity, enriches the learning environment, encourages newly-trained healthcare practitioners to be more aware of the need to practice in underserved areas, improves the relationship between a patient in a diverse population and the healthcare...
provider, and ultimately provides increased accessibility, affordability and quality health care for all patients,” he said.

The School of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and College of Health Professions are each committed to educating culturally competent professionals — both by recruiting a student body that reflects the diversity of the communities they will serve and also by providing in-classroom and extracurricular opportunities to learn how to provide quality health care to patients of all backgrounds.

School of Medicine

Once a month on the School of Medicine’s Savannah campus, a group of about 35 students gather for about an hour. They aren’t meeting to study or commiserate about exams. Instead, they discuss how race and ethnicity affect health outcomes.

“We kind of joke around and say we all put our foot in our mouths sometimes. And we all agreed to become comfortable being uncomfortable,” said Bonzo Reddick, M.D., MPH, FAAFP, the Savannah campus’s chief diversity officer. In 2015, the School hired its first diversity officers to provide oversight and coordination of the diversity efforts for the School and to create inclusive and supportive campus environments.

Since his appointment, Dr. Reddick has not only created the aforementioned Diversity in Medicine group but also has worked with admissions to better recruit qualified candidates of underrepresented minority backgrounds. “For example, we had only one black male in recent years, but now we have three black males in the first-year class alone,” Dr. Reddick said. The school also has seen an increase in Latino students.

Jean Sumner, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine, said when it comes to diversity, the School is putting its money where its mouth is. “I think that diversity is important. And I think if you say that then you need to demonstrate that. We need to recruit a student body that reflects the population of Georgia,” she said.

Patrice Walker, M.D., was appointed Macon’s chief diversity officer earlier this year. She hopes to create a more structured diversity education curriculum. “During our training as physicians, we are taught to look at the patient as more than just their disease process,” she said. “This means understanding how their spiritual beliefs, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other myriad factors may impact their medical decision-making and access to care. And the ability to do this may not come naturally to all of us. So we need a system in place to make sure...”

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— Dr. Sheena Brown-Walker
that our Mercer graduates have the tools they need to do this.”

**College of Health Professions**

Having grown up in a rural community, Gail Parsons assumed she understood the health disparities faced by underserved populations. “I was wrong,” she said.

A $1.1 million, five-year HRSA grant is allowing Parsons to train to be a physician assistant in one of Georgia’s medically underserved communities. Parsons, who plans to practice in rural North Georgia upon graduation, said she has learned more about societal determinants of health through the grant. “My eyes have been opened to the many disparities faced by people living in rural communities, as well as the distinct challenges faced by minority populations,” she said.

The grant provides financial support to underrepresented minorities, persons from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, and veterans who demonstrate an interest in community-based health promotion and primary care practice. Students who participate in the program earn both the Master of Public Health and Master of Medical Science degrees and must commit to practicing in a rural or underrepresented community.

Sheena Brown-Walker, Ph.D., MSCR, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, said she applied for the grant on behalf of the College of Health Professions because she and her colleagues recognized the need to recruit and educate PA students who understand how to serve minorities.

“I think the faculty and everyone else in the College is aware that the landscape of the U.S. is changing,” she said. “The healthcare providers are not matching what is seen in the population, and it is thought that this is actually contributing to certain healthcare disparities for certain populations. As a college, I think we are working to make sure everyone has access to health care regardless of what you look like, where you live or where you come from.”

The Department of Physical Therapy in the College of Health Professions also is working to recruit and retain minority students through a minority mentor program sponsored by the Physical Therapy Association of Georgia. Katherine Sylvester, CLA ’07, is the cultural diversity chair for PTAG and works to match physical therapy students across Georgia with practicing physical therapists.

Sylvester started the program because she noticed that minority physical therapy students were dropping out of their programs more often than their white counterparts. She believes providing mentors to minority students gives them someone to relate to and a sense of community that might not exist in their programs since minorities generally make up a small percentage of physical therapy students. “The educational piece is there. They know exactly what to do from a classroom perspective,” she said. “But in terms of having somebody they can relate to, reach out to, and just know that ‘Hey, someone who looks like me has done this, so I can do it.’ I just think that was the piece that was missing.”

Mentors are required to reach out to their students at least twice a month to encourage the students and make sure they have the support they need to complete their degrees. Sylvester, who practices physical therapy at Navicent Health in Macon, said Mercer’s physical therapy

“It is important for pharmacists to understand the beliefs, attitudes, practices and customs of diverse cultural groups in order to enhance communication about therapy, accommodate cultural practices into treatment plans and, ultimately, improve health outcomes.”

— Dr. Candace Barnett
College of Pharmacy

“It is important for pharmacists to understand the beliefs, attitudes, practices and customs of diverse cultural groups in order to enhance communication about therapy, accommodate cultural practices into treatment plans and, ultimately, improve health outcomes,” said Candace Barnett, Ph.D., executive associate dean of the College of Pharmacy.

For this reason, the College requires both cultural competency coursework as well as 20 to 30 community service hours annually. For example, Mercer’s American Pharmacists Association Academy of Student Pharmacists chapter, in conjunction with Emory’s Master of Public Health program, provided health screenings for more than 90 patients at the Mexican Consulate in Atlanta for three days last fall.

Additionally, Mercer’s chapter of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association and the Fulton County Partnership to Improve Community Health offered health screenings and promoted healthy lifestyles at Atlanta-area African American churches.

Dr. Barnett created the College’s cultural competency curriculum. The program incorporates disease state, drug therapy, customs and language considerations into the coursework. Throughout their time at Mercer, student pharmacists are taught to recognize communication barriers, cultural practices and health discrepancies that might impact the way a patient takes and/or reacts to a drug.

According to data collected by the College, the cultural competency curriculum is working. Of last year’s graduating class, 96.3 percent of its students agreed their pharmacy practice experiences allowed them to have direct interaction with diverse patient populations, and 98.2 percent agreed the program prepared them to recognize and address cultural disparities in access to and delivery of health care.

Ava Afshar, PHARM ’16, a pharmacy practice resident at Emory University Hospital, said the curriculum was invaluable. “It challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and learn about new cultures,” she said. “I was able to better understand how a person’s culture can influence their health beliefs. I have been able to take the skills I acquired through the curriculum and apply it to my current practice to better serve an ethnically and culturally diverse patient population.”

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

In August of last year, the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing welcomed its inaugural class of Dedicated to Diversity (D2D) scholars, made possible by a nearly $350,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The grant is a collaborative effort within the Mercer Health Sciences Center. Huey Chen, Ph.D., professor and director of the Center for Evaluation and Applied Research in the College of Health Professions, is leading D2D evaluation efforts.

The program provides nursing education opportunities, support and mentoring for racial and ethnic minorities who are underrepresented among registered nurses. The 20 scholars in the D2D program receive academic and social support as well as stipends and scholarships.

The grant stems from a desire to increase diversity within the nursing field. The National Advisory Counsel on Nurse Education and Practice released a report in 2000 that expressed a need to increase diversity in the nursing workforce to eliminate healthcare disparities among minority populations and meet the changing healthcare landscape of the nation.

Helen Mwaura, a D2D scholar, said she appreciates the financial support as well as the mentoring she has received through the program. “Mercer has gone above and beyond,” she said. “They have professionals come to talk to us as mentors. We can ask their opinion and learn from them. It’s not just about the money, which is great, but just giving us the opportunity to do a bit more, to engage with other people in the nursing field and have that extra support helps us a lot.”

The College of Nursing is one of the most diverse units in the Health Sciences Center with nearly half of its student body represented by minorities.

“We have embraced diversity for many years and has purposefully recruited a diverse student body because we know that diversity is good for education and health care.”

— Dr. Lanell Bellury

“Looking ahead, Dr. Matthews expects diversity to remain a priority at Mercer and in the healthcare profession as a whole. “I hope all healthcare practitioners continue to embrace diversity among the teams they work in and among their patients,” he said. “Embracing diversity makes all of us better practitioners and gives us a better functioning and more accessible healthcare system.”
Nick Morrow, a fourth-year M.D. student, is passionate about the mission of the Mercer School of Medicine. “I chose Mercer for one reason: the mission. The mission to provide primary care physicians to people in rural Georgia reflects where I came from and the life I want to live. I am the type of person who needs to believe in something before I will sign up for it, and I believe in this school,” Morrow said.

Morrow, a native of Cartersville, is the first in his family to graduate from college. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Berry College before enrolling at the medical school. “The way they grew up, college wasn’t something that you did,” he said. “To me, it’s what you do, but to them it’s a really big deal to have someone go this far professionally in the family. Of course, I’m proud of it. I’m glad I did it, but it’s a bigger badge of honor to them.”

Morrow didn’t take a direct route to the white coat. After watching the twin towers of the World Trade Center fall on 9/11 — his freshman year at Berry — Morrow made the decision to enlist in the Army. “One thing I could not stomach was watching the news every night and seeing file after file of people my age getting onto airplanes to go defend our country,” he said. “To me it was the calling of my generation and college could wait.”

Morrow was a Black Hawk helicopter crew chief and door gunner for six-and-a-half years; he served two tours in Iraq. Once he returned home, he knew he wanted to complete his degree. “I think a lot of soldiers, especially the ones who were in the fight, have a moment after they get out where they think, ‘Oh Lord, what do I do now?’ I had that moment, and it was tough. But I always had a dream of finishing my degree. So that became my new purpose in life.”

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– Nick Morrow

If he has one piece of advice to fellow service members returning from overseas: “Just put one foot in front of the other and don’t stop,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you don’t really understand exactly where you need to be or want to be. Have a general idea of what you want to become, and you just need to start doing it. You can’t take too much of a break between the military and what you want to do next.”

Once he returned home, Morrow studied animal science at Berry in hopes of owning a cattle farm and possibly being a diesel mechanic, but soon he discovered his aptitude for the sciences and eventually decided to pursue medicine — initially veterinary medicine before finally settling on human medicine. After graduating from medical school, Morrow plans to pursue a residency in internal or family medicine with a focus on geriatric medicine. He hopes to practice in Cartersville where he grew up.

“I like taking care of older people,” he said. “I think they’re a lot more resilient and tougher than the younger generation. They’re really appreciative, and they don’t have the sense of entitlement that I’ve run into with some of the people around my age. It’s just a pleasure to take care of them.”

Morrow and his wife, Jesse, welcomed their first child, Sutton, in November of last year. Jesse graduated from Mercer Law School last spring and passed the Georgia State Bar Exam last year, making 2016 an exciting year for the growing family.

Morrow hopes to instill in his son the same sense of purpose and work ethic that has led him first to serve his country as a soldier in the U.S. Army and, soon, rural Georgia as a physician. “I will tell him to find something he is good at and do the best that he can at that job,” Morrow said. “I don’t care if he’s blue-collar or white-collar … as long as he does his best.”
**College of Nursing Ph.D. Student Sarah Watts Selected for National Research Award**

Sarah O. Watts, a Ph.D. student in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, received the 2016 Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS)/National League for Nursing (NLN) Doctoral Dissertation Award. This award is made annually to one doctoral nursing student in the country.

Watts was selected based on her dissertation research proposal, titled “Learning Experiences of Senior-Level, Pre-licensure Nursing Students: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.”

SNRS and NLN presented Watts with $5,000 to support completion of her dissertation. Additionally, she received a one-year student membership to the NLN.

Watts received the award at the 2016 NLN Education Summit in Orlando, Florida, last September.

SNRS and NLN have a strong and mutual interest in promoting nursing education research conducted by doctoral nursing students. Together, they strive to increase the quality and quantities of nursing education-focused research, as well as support the advancement of the science of nursing education.

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**College of Pharmacy Students, Organizations Recognized Nationally**

Several College of Pharmacy students and organizations were recognized nationally during the past year for their contributions to the field of pharmacy.

At the Student National Pharmaceutical Association’s (SNPhA) national conference in Atlanta, four Mercer pharmacy students were awarded scholarships.

In addition, the college’s Gamma Psi chapter was recognized as the No. 1 collegiate chapter of 2016 by the national Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity. The fraternity was judged on participation in Kappa Psi regional and national events and in other pharmacy associations, academics (75 percent of the chapter’s members maintained a GPA of 3.0 or higher) and community outreach.

Mercer’s chapter, for example, hosts three annual blood drives on campus and participates in monthly health screenings with CVS pharmacies.

Overall, Mercer’s Doctor of Pharmacy students are active in 17 regional and national pharmacy organizations.

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**Physical Therapy Team Second in Pittsburgh-Marquette Challenge**

The Department of Physical Therapy in the College of Health Professions finished second out of 150 PT programs competing in the 2015-2016 Pittsburgh-Marquette Challenge.

The challenge is an annual fundraising effort coordinated and carried out by physical therapist and physical therapist assistant students across the country to support new investigators in the field of physical therapy research.

Through various fundraising activities, Mercer raised $41,061 for the Foundation for Physical Therapy in only the program’s second year participating. Altogether, the competition raised $354,320 in support of physical therapy research.

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**Student News**

Dr. Sharon Dunn presents the second-place award to Doctor of Physical Therapy students Sarah Hicks, Andrew Ricks and Ray Lynch.
Members of the Class of 2017 received the award from Dr. Sharon Dunn, president of the American Physical Therapy Association, at the NEXT Conference and Exposition in Nashville, Tennessee, last June.

▲ Columbus Medical Students Support MyTeam Triumph

Several students on the School of Medicine campus in Columbus have established a local chapter of MyTeam Triumph, an athletic ride-along program that enables youth and adults with disabilities to participate in triathlons, 10Ks, 5Ks, marathons or half-marathons.

MyTeam Triumph—Wings of Columbus, the local chapter of the national nonprofit organization, was founded last fall by Mercer medical students. The chapter strives to provide a safe and enjoyable experience in endurance sports to individuals who live with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Traumatic Brain Injury, Down syndrome, autism and other conditions that limit mobility.

One student in particular, Kristen Kettelhut, spearheaded the effort to found the new chapter. Additional founding members and executive board members include Matt Kahrmann, Kirby Chisholm, Spencer Anderson, Benny Screws, Christina Smith and Park Zheng.

“MyTeam Triumph brings the community together with specialized equipment necessary to allow these individuals the opportunity to experience the energy of packet pickup, the exhilaration of the starting line, the chaos of the race and the thrill of crossing the finish line,” said Kettelhut, who serves as executive director of the Columbus chapter. “The best part of all is that we do this at no cost to the captains.”

Kettelhut is one of a number of Mercer students who are active in the medical school volunteer leadership program, Distinction in Service to the Community, in which participants are responsible for creating, implementing, and potentially sustaining a service leadership project in their local community.

“We medical students are always looking for ways to connect with the community around us. The Columbus campus is a relatively new campus for the School of Medicine, but we have been welcomed with open arms. This program provides us with a means to give back to a welcoming community and connect with local organizations and community stakeholders for growing our program,” said Kettelhut.

Ron Robb, CEO and founder of MyTeam Triumph, visited Columbus last November to bring the chapter wheelchairs for use in the recent Soldier Marathon 5K.

The chapter is currently fundraising and seeking grant and corporate sponsorship opportunities to purchase its own set of Americans with Disabilities Act-approved Axiom Racing wheelchairs. For more information, contact kettelhut_kl@med.mercer.edu.
“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” While most are familiar with this proverb, not many can say they feel as satisfied or as passionately about their career as College of Health Professions alumnus Daniel Tari, PT, DPT.

A 2015 graduate of the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program who also completed Mercer’s residency in orthopaedic physical therapy in 2016, Dr. Tari already has made great strides in his professional career, joining Dr. Judy Rossi as a partner at Canton Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation.

Before he began following his chosen career path, Dr. Tari was a dedicated student-athlete who learned early on the important role physical therapists play. “Throughout my adolescent and college hockey career, I spent a lot time in physical therapy dealing with concussions and hip and shoulder injuries,” he said. “I always admired my physical therapists, and I appreciated the impact they had on my life and my athletic career. I wanted to be a part of a rewarding and evolving healthcare profession.”

In 2012, Dr. Tari received his Bachelor of Science in exercise and health science from Kennesaw State University, where he played ice hockey for the Owls. Following graduation, he was accepted into Mercer’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program.

During his time at Mercer, he was a lab assistant and part of a research group that wrote a peer-reviewed published abstract on “A qualitative and quantitative description of the medial plantar nerve: A pilot study.” He presented his group’s research poster at the American Academy of Clinical Anatomists annual conference in Orlando, in 2014. That fall, he was awarded the Georgia Physical Therapy Education and Research Foundation Scholarship. He also was elected the Simons Society representative for his class and helped organize events and fundraisers throughout the PT program. After receiving the department’s Merit Award along with his doctoral degree, Dr. Tari was accepted into the Mercer Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency program.

Dr. Tari’s clinical interests and specialties include orthopaedics, sports rehabilitation, dry needling and trigger point release, spinal manipulation, soft tissue mobilization, postoperative treatment, movement analysis, kinesiology taping and injury prevention and wellness.

He is a member of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and the Physical Therapy Association of Georgia. In the summer of 2017, he will be taking on his first Mercer DPT student as an APTA credentialed clinical instructor. He also will be sitting for the Orthopaedic Clinical Specialist examination in 2017.

He and his wife, Jessica, live in Canton with their two dogs, and they are expecting a baby girl this March.

So much of Dr. Tari’s success is due to his genuine love for his work. “I want to be a part of a rewarding and evolving healthcare profession,” he said. “It’s rewarding to wake up every day and know that you are going to impact someone’s life. I don’t only have an impact on my patients but also on their family members, my community and my students. When you are passionate about your career, it’s easy to go to work every day.”

Alumnus Spotlight

Recent Doctor of Physical Therapy Graduate Already Making an Impact in His Field

BY SLAYTEN CARTER

“It’s rewarding to wake up every day and know that you are going to impact someone’s life. I don’t only have an impact on my patients but also on their family members, my community and my students. When you are passionate about your career, it’s easy to go to work every day.”

– Dr. Daniel Tari, CHP ’15

the young professional’s ambition is evident in his many goals. Dr. Tari already has played a crucial role in the rebranding and expansion of Canton Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation. After a few more years of clinical work, he plans to complete Mercer’s Fellowship in Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy with the hope of eventually working part-time in the clinic and teaching in a physical therapy program.

“I am grateful for my Mercer DPT and residency education, mentors and colleagues. I would not be excelling as a young clinician without their guidance and support,” he said. “The learning experience at Mercer was unique and unforgettable, and the University prepared me to be a passionate, intuitive physical therapist.”
Degree Programs

School of Medicine
Doctor of Medicine (Macon, Savannah, Columbus)
Graduate Degree Programs
Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences (Macon, Savannah)
Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (Macon)
Master of Family Therapy (Macon, Atlanta)
Post-Master’s Certificate Program in Marriage and Family Therapy (Macon, Atlanta)
For more information, visit medicine.mercer.edu/programs

College of Pharmacy
Doctor of Pharmacy
Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmaceutical Sciences
Pharm.D./Ph.D. combined degree
Pharm.D./MBA combined degree
Pharm.D./MPH combined degree
For more information, visit pharmacy.mercer.edu/programs

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Prelicensure and RN/BSN)
Master of Science in Nursing
Doctor of Nursing Practice
Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing
For more information, visit nursing.mercer.edu/academics

College of Health Professions
Physical Therapy
Doctor of Physical Therapy (Atlanta)
DPT/MPH combined degree (Atlanta)
DPT/MBA combined degree (Atlanta)
Physician Assistant
Master of Medical Science (Atlanta)
MMSc/MPH combined degree (Atlanta)
Public Health
Bachelor of Science in Public Health (Macon)
Master of Public Health (Atlanta, Online)
DPT/MPH combined degree (Atlanta)
MMSc/MPH combined degree (Atlanta)
Pharm.D./MPH combined degree (Atlanta)
Clinical Medical Psychology
Doctor of Psychology (Atlanta)
For more information, visit cph.mercer.edu/academics-departments

Teaching Hospitals
The Medical Center, Navicent Health (Macon)
Memorial University Medical Center (Savannah)
Midtown Medical Center (Columbus)
St. Francis Hospital (Columbus)
Affiliated Teaching Hospitals
Atlanta Medical Center
Floyd Medical Center (Rome)
HCA Coliseum Medical Center (Macon)
Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital (Albany)
2015-16 DEGREES AWARDED

177
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

175
School of Medicine

150
College of Pharmacy

116
College of Health Professions

Health Sciences Enrollment 2006-2016
School of Medicine
College of Pharmacy
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing
College of Health Professions

Health Sciences Fall 2016 Enrollment*
As of November 3, 2016
* Dual degree students counted in both programs
Scientist on Call
College of Pharmacy Assistant Professor Dr. Jennifer Knaack is interviewed by global news agency Agence France-Presse on her work with Amnesty International to determine if a series of rocket attacks last year in Sudan were acts of chemical warfare. – p. 20