CONHI RECEIVES SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING FROM FOUNDATIONS

In recognition of the College’s rising stature as a center of excellence in the preparation of the next generation of health workers, several area organizations have recently contributed to the scholarship fund.

- The Good Samaritan Foundation is dedicated to boosting the number of highly trained nurses in Texas. The foundation has awarded $60,000 for four $15,000 scholarships to students pursuing MSN degrees with a focus on gerontology. The four scholarship recipients are Jose Sanchez, Preethy Oommen, Sarah Daemi, and Tambra Guinn.
- The Communities Foundation of Texas awarded a $20,000 grant that will be used for scholarships and fellowships within the College of Nursing and Health Innovation.
- The board of BSW Garland Health Care Auxiliary voted to establish a $25,000 endowed scholarship for the College.

If you’d like to join these generous donors and help educate more health care workers, please contact Kristen Ames-Box at Kristen.box@uta.edu.

ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT

KINESIOLOGY STUDENT TAKES OLYMPIC GOLD

As a child, Abby Dunkin played basketball and earned a second-degree black belt. She was a member of the track team at Canyon High School in New Braunfels, Texas, where she won gold in the 100 meters, 400 meters, and shot put, a record that still stands. She accomplished these feats in spite of the fact that she had been battling chronic pain since she was 13. The pain worsened over time and at 17 she lost the use of her legs.

But Dunkin, a junior majoring in kinesiology, hasn’t allowed this challenge to impede her athleticism. She took up wheelchair basketball, distinguished herself, and attracted the attention of a UTA coach. She is now a key member of UTA’s wheelchair basketball team and was part of the team that won the 2016 national collegiate championship.

Dunkin is also a member of the U.S. wheelchair basketball team and won gold in the 2015 Para Pan-American Games and 2016 Paralympics. The National Wheelchair Basketball Association recently selected Dunkin for the 2017 women’s wheelchair basketball national team.

After graduation, Dunkin hopes to work in adaptive sports and do a variety of things on behalf of people with disabilities, including increasing disability awareness, helping youth, and working with wounded war veterans in their transition to civilian life.

DOCTORAL STUDENT RECEIVES GRANT FOR RESEARCH

Jordan Patik, a Ph.D. student in the College’s Department of Kinesiology, recently received a Student Research Development grant from the Texas chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine. The $1,500 award will go toward Patik’s education. He is the first student in the College’s doctoral kinesiology program to receive a grant. The degree—which was launched in fall 2016 in response to rising demand for health care scientists and faculty—is interdisciplinary in nature and blends elements of kinesiology and nursing curriculums.

Patik is pursuing his doctoral work under the supervision of Associate Professor Matthew Brothers in the College’s Integrative Vascular Physiology Laboratory. His research interests include impaired cerebral and peripheral vascular functions in populations with elevated risks for cardiovascular and neurocognitive diseases.

The title of Patik’s grant is “The Effect of Oxidative Stress on Peripheral and Cerebral Vascular Function in African-Americans.”
CONHI PROFESSOR LANDS $308,000 GRANT TO STUDY HEART DISEASE

Mark Haykowsky, the College’s Moritz Chair of Gerontology Nursing Research, has received a three-year, $308,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to study the mechanisms and management of exercise intolerance in older heart failure patients with preserved ejection fraction.

Heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) is the fastest-growing type of heart failure and is found mostly in older individuals. The mortality rate for these patients is high, and the cardinal feature in elderly HFpEF patients is severe intolerance. Evidence-based drug therapies that improve survival in heart failure with reduced ejection fraction do not improve survival in HFpEF patients.

Dr. Haykowsky and a team of CONHI researchers including Paul Fadel, Michael Nelson, and Kathy Daniels will study HFpEF patients who are at least 60 years old. They will be entered into a randomized, single trial of exercise training with the goal of improving physical activity.

Haykowsky is one of several faculty members at the College who is working to address heart disease ailments. Dr. Nelson, an assistant professor, is studying the root causes of a frequently misdiagnosed heart condition that affects blood vessels in women’s hearts. Associate Professor Matthew Brothers studies vascular function in populations with high risks of cardiovascular disease. And Dr. Fadel, a professor and the College’s associate dean for research, is a respected expert in neural cardiovascular control in health and disease.

NURSING HONOR SOCIETY TO HOST RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The Delta Theta chapter of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing will host a research symposium on April 22 at UTA’s E.H. Hereford University Center. Symposium objectives will include interpreting the influences of research findings on chronic disease outcomes, while the themes for podium and poster presentations will center on cardiovascular disease, cancer, and neuroscience.

The symposium will feature three main speakers:

Kaye Herth, a respected international scholar on the topic of hope and depression at Minnesota State University in Mankato. Herth has received more than $2 million in research funding.

Janet Pierce, a professor in the University of Kansas School of Nursing and adjunct faculty member in the School of Medicine’s Department of Integrative and Molecular Physiology. Her research interests include mechanisms for reducing cellular damage in traumatic brain injury.

Mari Tietze, a professor at Texas Woman’s University’s College of Nursing who teaches informatics courses focused on collaborative practice. She is a former director of nursing informatics for the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation.

The symposium is open to the public. Admission is $50 for members and $75 for non-members. The first 800 UTA students with a Mav ID will get in for free. This is a great opportunity to learn about the research projects of faculty in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation, strengthen your understanding of translational research, and network with peers in research and education. For more information about the symposium, contact Sandra Laird, assistant professor of nursing, at slaird@uta.edu.

NOTED CARDIOLOGIST TO HEADLINE MORITZ SPEAKER SERIES

Aron Baggish, a Harvard Medical School professor and world-renowned sports cardiologist, will be the keynote speaker at the second annual Moritz Speaker Series on Thursday, April 6. His will discuss “Cardiovascular Health and Human Performance: Insights from the Boston Marathon.” The event, which will be held on the UTA campus, will begin at 4 p.m. and last for an hour. The exact location on campus will be announced in the coming weeks.

Dr. Baggish is the director of Massachusetts General Hospital’s Cardiovascular Performance Program, the nation’s first program designed to provide cardiovascular care for athletes. He is also the medical director of the Boston Marathon.

A fellow of the American College of Cardiology and the American College of Sports Medicine, Baggish’s work has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine. He is also a cardiologist for several leading sports organizations, including the New England Patriots, the Boston Bruins, U.S. Rowing, and U.S. Soccer.

The Moritz Speaker Series is made possible through a $1 million gift from the Moritz family to the College. The gift also established the College’s first endowed faculty chair, currently held by Mark Haykowsky, a respected researcher in exercise physiology and rehabilitation medicine.

The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served after.

DEAN BAVIER JOINS CHILDREN’S MEDICAL CENTER OF DALLAS BOARD

CONHI Dean Anne Bavier was recently appointed to the board of Children’s Medical Center of Dallas, the seventh-largest pediatric center in the United States and the only academically affiliated pediatric hospital in the DFW Metroplex. Children’s Medical Center has been serving the area since 1913.
The College of Nursing and Health Innovation is one of several area organizations co-sponsoring “Love & Wisdom in a Time of Stress,” a March 28 lecture and discussion that will outline creative and research-driven strategies for battling stress. The event will feature two highly regarded experts on stress, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Elissa Epel.

Dr. Kabat-Zinn, the founding executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is regarded as a pioneer in the field of mindfulness. He is also the founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program, which has been credited with helping 22,000 people in nearly 40 years.

Dr. Epel is a professor of psychiatry at the University of California–San Francisco and author of the best-selling book, The Telomere Effect: A Revolutionary Approach to Living Younger, Healthier, Longer. The event will be held at Southern Methodist University’s McFarlin Auditorium. Tickets start at $25 and are available at momentousinstitute.org.

PROFESSOR’S STUDY EXPLORES ROLE OF DIET AND EXERCISE IN LESSENING DAMAGE FROM MALARIA

Marco Beotto, the College’s George W. and Hazel M. Jay Professor, has co-authored an article demonstrating that the right amount of diet and exercise can help lessen damage to heart and skeletal muscles caused by malaria.

The article, which was published in Malaria Journal, was co-written by Mauro Marrelli, who was a visiting professor at the College early in 2016. Dr. Marrelli, an internationally renowned entomologist, parasitologist, and molecular biologist, currently is a professor of public health at the University of São Paulo in Brazil.

Each year, malaria afflicts more than 300 million people and kills more than 400,000 in countries around the world, according to the World Health Organization.

Dr. Beotto says most studies on fighting malaria focus on the mosquito-borne parasite that causes the illness while ignoring the impact of the disease on skeletal muscles and the heart. For their paper, he and Marrelli reviewed all the literature related to malaria and the effects it has on muscles and the heart.

The study builds on previous work by the duo that showed that malaria infection causes muscle degradation. The degradation is particularly evident in muscles responsible for contraction.

Beotto and Marrelli plan to continue their studies with new genetic markers in their labs and submit a joint grant proposal to expand the investigation.

LECTURE TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

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CONXH: AN IMPORTANT PART OF UTA’S WAR ON CANCER

UTA is emerging as a leading integrated cancer research center. In all, 25 University faculty from across campus are engaged in the battle against cancer. In the last year, they have received more than $6 million in grant funding.

Several faculty members of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation are playing key roles in this war on cancer.

Zui Pan, an esophageal cancer biomarker researcher, joined the College faculty in 2016 from The Ohio State University College of Medicine. She has received nearly $2 million in grants from high-profile groups including the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute to develop new methods for early detection and prognosis in addition to therapeutic drugs for esophageal cancer.

Mark Haykowsky, the College’s Moritz Chair of Gerontology Research, came to UTA in 2015 from the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, one of the world’s preeminent rehabilitation medicine programs. One of his main areas of research is cardioncology, particularly the role that exercise training plays in preventing or mitigating anti-cancer therapy-mediated cardiovascular dysfunction.

In 2016, Dr. Haykowsky launched UTA’s FitSteps program, which helps cancer patients increase endurance while undergoing treatment. The program, a partnership with the Cancer Foundation for Life, is structured and tailored to each individual.

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Would you like to help the College educate the next generation of health care leaders?

Email kristen.box@uta.edu.
Scores of College administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni gathered at College Park Center on Saturday, February 11, for the second annual Health Professionals Day. The event, which took place during the UTA women’s and men’s basketball doubleheader, is an opportunity to showcase CONHI pride while also supporting UTA Athletics. It featured a health fair, with students and faculty manning several booths promoting strategies for healthy living, along with a pre-game reception.