

**PROVOST  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2020–2021**

**UT  
TYLER**



# A Letter From the Provost

Dear faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends:

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the many accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students from the 2020–21 academic year. Our team worked so hard throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain our focus on student success without ever compromising student learning outcomes. In January 2021, we celebrated our merger with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler, after receiving approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Our merger elevated the status of the university into the prestigious Carnegie R2 classification for doctoral universities with high research activity.

Our faculty received several recognitions, including five STAR and Rising STAR (Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention) awards from UT System. Also, our faculty in the School of Community and Rural Health served as the Smith County Local Health Authority. Our faculty in School of Education received grant funding from the Central American Regional Security Initiative in support of their educational outreach to Belize and Latin America and for hosting the Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation Conference.

This year, we launched several new academic programs, including the EdD – Doctor of Education in School Improvement, MS in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Practice, MS in Nursing Informatics, Quality and Safety and the Bachelor of Social Work. Our Health Science Center is developing a new Doctor of Medicine (MD) program, which has already been approved by the UT System Board of Regents.

Culminating two years of relentless efforts, our College of Arts and Sciences launched UT Tyler Radio 99.7 KVUT – a community service of The University of Texas at Tyler, broadcasting, streaming and publishing news, information, and entertainment programming 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The launch of KVUT comes 50 years after Governor Preston Smith signed the bill approving Texas State College, which then became Texas Eastern University in 1975 and The University of Texas at Tyler in 1979. It is interesting to note that the launch also coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Public Radio.

This report also provides shining examples of our students' accomplishments in every college and program; from our nursing and pharmacy students receiving recognitions by their peers and the community for their efforts with COVID testing and vaccination, to the outstanding performance of our steel bridge student team at the Houston Engineering Center advancing to the national competition for the first time ever and ranking in top 20 in the nation. We are also proud of our student athletes claiming both the men's and women's Lone Star Conference Academic Excellence Awards, just as the university was officially named a full member of Division II by the national committee of NCAA.

This coming year, we will be focusing on our strategic planning process, our decennial reaffirmation, our semi centennial anniversary, our planned School of Medicine, and our Carnegie R2 classification, as once again we aspire to serve our true role as the flagship institution in East Texas.



**AMIR MIRMIRAN**  
*Provost and Sam Lindsey Chair Professor*



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# College of Arts & Sciences



## A Message from the Dean

### DR. NEIL GRAY

*Professor of Chemistry & Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences*

While 2020–21 was a difficult year because of the pandemic, it was one of the best years in the history of our college because of our fantastic faculty and students. I am very proud of how they stepped up to the plate this year to continue teaching and learning excellence, outstanding scholarship and community service. We had a great year with some historical accomplishments. I am grateful to work with the best colleagues of my career.

There is no mystery behind the reason every major in every university is required to take a general education curriculum filled to the brim with courses from the Arts and Sciences. The importance of the humanities, fine arts and sciences are often underestimated. When we think about the ideas, discoveries and knowledge that move our world forward, the Arts and Sciences are always present. From the discoveries in science that makes our lives better, to the creation of art and music that charms our soul, to the literature that strengthens our minds and sharpens our understanding of the cultures that came before us, the College of Arts and Sciences is the foundation of all learning.

The diversity of the contributions our faculty make to understanding and improving the world around us is inspiring. Our faculty and students work on projects ranging from new ways to save endangered species, to building virus-like particles for the treatment of cancer, to analyzing important works of literature,

to understanding culture and the societies that develop them, to creating beautiful and meaningful works of art and musical performance and more.

Our goal is to ensure that every UT Tyler student has a strong and diverse skill set that will prepare them for the unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. Several new and very energetic colleagues were added to the faculty roster, while others received well-deserved awards in teaching and research. College faculty and staff continue to receive ROTA recognition across several disciplines, publish in top-tier professional journals, deliver presentations at national and international conferences, encourage selected students to collaborate with faculty in research activity and continue studies at excellent professional schools, and to help build a better East Texas for everyone.







## UT Tyler Public Radio, 99.7 KVUT Launched

After two years of hard work, the College of Arts and Sciences launched the first public radio station in East Texas. UT Tyler Public Radio soft launched in April 2021 and officially launched in June 2021. There will be a more formal launch ceremony in August 2021. The station broadcasts content from National Public Radio, American Public Media, Associated Press and others. The station also plays jazz throughout the day. The station is producing its own local news and plans to add original content produced by our faculty and staff over the upcoming year.

UT Tyler Radio 99.7 KVUT leadership includes professional journalists with decades of experience providing audiences with the news and information they need to make informed decisions.

**Lori Allen (top left)**, General Manager, comes to UT Tyler Radio after a 30-year career in broadcasting that has taken her on a tour from East Texas to Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, Tucson, Phoenix and back to East Texas. Most recently, she worked as the news director at Tyler's CBS affiliate. During her tenure there, she hired more than 20 on-air reporters, producers and web/social media producers. She also helped coordinate efforts that resulted in the station's first two Edward R. Murrow regional awards.

**Jeff Johnson (top center)**, Director of Operations, has been using audio, video, images and text to help people make sense of the world around them and make better decisions for their lives. Working at the network level and in national-syndication, Jeff has won seven awards from the Associated Press Broadcasters' Association and served

with teams that have won four national awards for radio station of the year from broadcast industry associations. Jeff's work has been featured in the New-York-Times, Wall-Street-Journal and on Fox News.

**Mike Landess (top right)**, News Director, is a seasoned broadcast anchor, reporter, producer, writer and editor whose career began in Tyler radio while he was a high school senior. He's been honored with nearly two dozen National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Emmys—five of which were for "Best Anchor" in Washington D.C., Atlanta and Denver. He's also received six Edward R. Murrow awards and is in the Denver Press Club Hall of Fame and the Broadcast Pioneers of Colorado Hall of Fame.

To learn more about UT Tyler Public Radio, Visit: [utpublicradio.org](http://utpublicradio.org).

## Major Initiatives: The Dallas Morning News / UT Tyler Poll

### Center for Opinion Research

The planned Center for Opinion Research (COR) at The University of Texas at Tyler has had a great second year, thanks to the hard work of the faculty champions **Dr. Mark Owens (top)**, **Dr. Ken Wink (middle)** and **Dr. Kenneth Bryant (bottom)**. These professors bring a tremendous mix of talents to this effort and are developing what will be a force in the polling world to help continue the development of UT Tyler's reputation as a leader in community engagement.

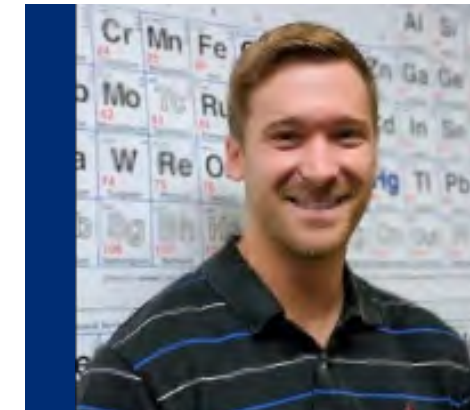
This year, the COR involved over 100 students in polling activities and continued its partnership with the Dallas Morning News.

The University of Texas at Tyler collaborated with the Dallas Morning News for a series of polls to measure Texas voter preferences on candidates and issues leading up to the 2020 November general election. The partnership involved five polls conducted by the UT Tyler COR. These polls have generated tremendous state, national and international attention.

The COR also conducted multiple polls regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020–21, the COR completed multiple polls with the Dallas Morning News on COVID in partnership with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and other statewide polls and surveys. It has been a very productive and important year for the COR.



## Program and Faculty Spotlight



**Dr. Jordan Beaver**  
Bachelor of Science in Chemistry–  
Fermentation Science Emphasis

As reported on KLTV News, the brewing and winemaking industry is quickly growing in East Texas. To help fill the need for more well-trained brewers and scientists, the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in the College of Arts and Sciences created East Texas' first fermentation science program. The program is developing well under the leadership of Dr. Jordan Beaver (pictured above).

Dr. Beaver has forged partnerships with local breweries and wine makers like ETX Brewery, True Vine Brewery and Kiepersol Winery and Vineyard to help develop the next generation of brew masters and winemakers in East Texas. He has also partnered with the Discovery Science Place to create and deliver several adult education series, including the Cheers & Beers Adult Learning Series. He has also offered multiple continuing education courses in fermentation science at UT Tyler's Longview University Center.

In 2020–21, Dr. Beaver developed a new course, CHEM 1380 Introduction to Fermentation Science, for the UT Tyler Core Curriculum and began working on the development of a certificate in brewing science.

## Student Success Spotlights

### Debate Team



**Ayush Kumar and Mason Remaley**

This year they were the 11th ranked partnership in the nation. They made the final round at the national championships and previously defeated the current national champions in a tournament at Rice University. We are very proud of the excellent success they have had in debate over the last few years.



**Hunter Parish**

Hunter is a rising sophomore and a rising star majoring in communication. He was a standout freshman this year on the UT Tyler Debate Team. Hunter won the JV division at two tournaments this year (The University of Minnesota, McKendree University Hunsaker Invitational) and performed extremely well throughout the season. We are very proud of his success this year.

### 2020 Archer Fellows

The College of Arts and Sciences had three Archer Fellows in 2020–21, two from the Department of Political Science and History and one from the Department of Social Sciences.



**David Harrison**, political science major, was selected to fellow with Farragut Partners, Washington D.C.'s top public relations firm.



**David Guarneros**, political science major, was selected to fellow with the Gala Hispanic theater at the National Center for Latino Performing Arts in the nation's capital.



**Katelyn Hicken**, public administration major, was selected to fellow with the Lone Star Project, a federal political action committee.



## Patriot Talon

The Patriot Talon received five awards at the 2021 Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Convention. We are extremely proud of our incredible editors, reporters and contributors. They are major players in building the college's reputation.



**Zoe McGhee** of Brownsboro – first place in feature writing.



**Chandler Gibson** of Dallas – second place in audio newscast and honorable mention in podcast competition.



**Karen Mendoza** of Mount Pleasant – second place in feature photo.



**Dove Lott** of Houston – third place in illustration.

## Pre-Med Academy

Three UT Tyler Pre-Med Academy students have been selected to participate in the Joint Admission Medical Program (JAMP), which was created by the Texas Legislature to support and encourage highly qualified, economically disadvantaged Texas students who are pursuing a degree in medicine. This is the first time three students from UT Tyler have been selected in a single cohort for JAMP. This success is in part due to the new Pre-Med Academy at UT Tyler.



**Connor Crowe** – Jacksonville, Texas, Biology major and Presidential Fellow

**Wyatt Schaefer** – Marietta, Texas, Biochemistry major and Honors Student

**Bethany Woolman** – Pasadena, Texas, Music major and Presidential Fellow

## Student Spotlight – Chemistry



**Claire McGuire**, a May 2021 chemistry graduate, has been awarded a \$138,000 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship to pursue a doctoral degree. The award provides an annual stipend of \$34,000 per year for three years and \$12,000 per year for three years to be applied toward tuition and fees. The purpose of the NSF program is to help ensure the quality, vitality and diversity of the nation's scientific and engineering workforce. The NSF GRFP typically recognizes outstanding graduate students pursuing full-time, research-based master's and doctoral degrees in STEM education.

## Alumni Success Spotlight – Art

UT Tyler art alumni **Addie Moore** (left) of Tyler and **Jessica Sanders** (right) of Hawkins co-founded the community-based group, ETX Creatives. Their mission? To promote the East Texas arts. The group is a community effort dedicated to enhancing and promoting the arts in East Texas and the primary brainchild of Moore, an artist and past art teacher at Chapel Hill High School. Sanders is pursuing a career as a working artist and recently set up a home studio to start the process of finding gallery representation. They are both part of the group's leadership team, which helps establish the growing regional art community with nearly 400 other creatives.



## Research & Creative Activity

The faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences are extraordinary scholars, creators, teachers and mentors. Their student focus is evident in everything they do, including scholarly and creative work. The ability of our students to participate in research and present, or publish the results alongside their faculty mentor, is important. During the last year, the faculty published 81 articles in peer-review journals, 12 books, 26 book chapters, 50 creative works and 73 professional presentations. In addition, faculty in the college had over \$2 million in active research grants.

Our faculty interests are diverse, as they are working on projects involving endangered species, virus-like particles, ancient Mayan cultures, music composition, topology, nanoparticles, painting, sculpture, public policy, polling science and more.





# Soules College of Business



## A Message from the Dean

### DR. KRIST SWIMBERGHE

*Interim Dean, Chair, Associate Professor of Marketing*

The academic year 2020–2021 is a year many of us will not soon forget. While the COVID-19 pandemic presented us with many challenges, it also provided us with opportunities to show resilience and persistence. “Adapt and overcome” became an everyday mantra for students, faculty, staff and administrators. Video conference technologies such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams facilitated classes and meetings. PPE became an acronym all of us became intimately familiar with as we sought to provide a degree of normalcy in offering selected face-to-face classes and meetings. Finally, this past year gave us an opportunity to show grace and pull together in support of colleagues and students who struggled.

Yet even in the throes of adversity the Soules College of Business faculty, staff and students worked diligently...and with amazing results. This annual report introduces the reader to the Soules College of Business faculty and staff who recently joined our team. It highlights the achievements of three of the Soules College of Business auxiliaries: the Hibbs Institute for Business and Economic Research, the Longview Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the East Texas Entrepreneurship Center (ETEC). Faculty, staff, student and alumni honors and award recipients are recognized. Student organizations continued engaging their members in their respective academic and professional areas and conducted many of their activities virtually. Guest speakers shared their knowledge and advice, students competed, prizes were won and honors received. Of note is the creation of a new student organization, Minorities in Business.

This annual report also highlights faculty research and scholarship in all five of the Soules College of Business departments: Accounting, Finance and Business Law; Computer Science; Human Resource Development; Management and Marketing; and Technology. While at first one would assume lower productivity during these challenging times, the Soules College of Business faculty continued their path of excellence. Faculty successfully pursued grants, published novel research in high quality outlets and continued to present their projects virtually to their peers, thus advancing their own reputation as well as the reputation of the Soules College of Business and The University of Texas at Tyler. Finally, the Soules College of Business faculty and staff welcomed a new cohort of healthcare executives to the Executive Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Management (EMBA-HCM).

I am honored to serve and lead the Soules College of Business as the interim dean. I look forward to the future, and I am excited about the opportunities that the merger of UT Tyler and the UT Health Science Center bring with it. I am confident that Soules College of Business faculty, staff and students will play an important role in moving the University of Texas at Tyler forward. I believe that our best days are yet to come!





## New Faculty

**Mr. David Marks**



Joined the accounting department in fall 2020. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing from the State University of New York College at Brockport and his Master of Professional Accounting from The University of Texas at Arlington. David is currently licensed as a Certified Public Accountant (not in public practice), spent five years on the KPMG audit staff in Dallas and 23 years in various accounting, operations and operations analysis positions at JCPenney Direct Marketing Services/Transamerica in Plano. His teaching interests are financial accounting, managerial accounting and accounting information systems.

**Dr. Dennis Jones**



Joined the technology department in fall 2020 as an assistant professor. Dr. Jones is an experienced professional with 25+ years of Industrial Engineering and Manufacturing Engineering experience. He is familiar with all aspects of the manufacturing process. Dr. Jones was employed for several years by the General Motors Corporation and the John Deere Company. Dr. Jones has worked with

several business/industry partners through University consulting and private consulting. Dr. Jones has several years of teaching experience both at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the areas of industrial engineering, systems engineering, project management, technology, business, computer science, human factors engineering, ergonomics, safety and technology implementation/management. His teaching and research interests include, but are not limited to, Industrial and Systems Engineering, Industrial Technology and Management, Advanced Manufacturing and Manufacturing Processes, Project Management, Occupational Safety Management, Total Quality Management, Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma.

**Dr. Yonjoo Cho**



Joined the human resource development department in fall 2020 as an associate professor. Dr. Cho is also the editor-in-chief of Human Resource Development Review. Previously, she was an associate professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University (2008–2020). Before joining academia, she worked in profit, non-profit and academic sectors in South Korea. Her latest position was MBA director/visiting professor of the KAIST Business School. Dr. Cho's research interests include action learning in organizations, international HRD, and women in leadership. She has published three books including: Trends and Issues in Action Learning Practice: Lessons from South Korea (Cho & Bong, 2013) with Routledge and Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership: A Cross-Cultural Analysis (Cho et al, 2017) and Korean Women in Leadership (Cho & McLean, 2018) with Palgrave Macmillan.

## New Staff Members



**MacKenzie Bernardino**  
Undergraduate Academic Advisor



**Rebecca Kling**  
Undergraduate Academic Advisor



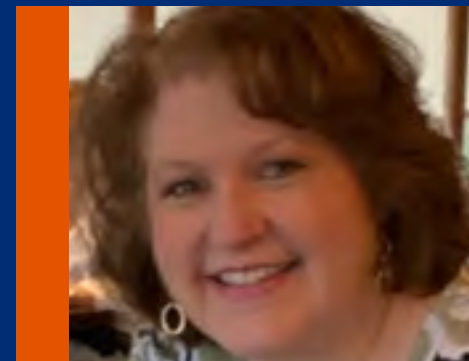
**Sheldon Sager**  
Undergraduate Academic Advisor



**Zachary Bourne**  
Graduate Program Coordinator



**Lauren Hendley**  
Graduate Academic Advisor



**Rachel Dingler**  
Administrative Associate  
Management and Marketing Department

## East Texas Entrepreneurship Center (ETEC)

Open to all UT Tyler students, faculty, staff and residents in the East Texas region, ETEC helps people create companies. Our motto is: "Ideate, Validate and Cultivate!" During the 2020–2021 academic year, ETEC successfully applied for and received an Economic Development Agency (EDA) CARES Act grant, which brought on board two additional staff: Mr. Dane Clarke, associate director, and Mr. Andy Alvarado, coordinator. ETEC also added Mr. Brandon Reynolds, director of competitions and mentoring. In addition, Dr. Kerri Camp and ETEC staff applied for an additional EDA (Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship) grant. ETEC will launch three business competitions beginning with the Idea Challenge in October 2021, followed by the Business Model Competition in February 2022, and concluding with the Business Plan Competition in late spring 2022.



**Jeff Howlett**  
Executive Director, East Texas  
Entrepreneurship Center

## Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research

The Hibbs Institute helps businesses, regional economic development councils and local governments expand business activity in greater East Texas. Also, the Institute provides professional economic research and analysis for organizations, companies, and investors considering locating, expanding, or investing in East Texas. One of the initiatives the Hibbs Institute successfully initiated this year was to invite several faculty fellows to contribute.

Dr. Marilyn Young contributed a Hibbs brief which discussed veteran entrepreneurs in East Texas. Dr. Manuel Reyes and the Hibbs Institute are working towards consolidating the relationship with Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon, one of the most recognized universities in Mexico in the field of economics. Finally, Dr. Reyes was awarded an internal grant to study salaries and wage disparities among gender, race and ethnicity in East Texas.

## Longview Small Business Development Center

May 1, 2021, marked the second year of operation for The UT Tyler-Longview Small Business Development Center (SBDC) led by center director Day Shellmire. In its first two years of operation, the SBDC counseled more than 530 small business clients while providing over 4,200 hours of one-on-one counseling. These efforts helped start over 60 new businesses, created over 300 new jobs and helped secure more than \$22 million in small business loans and owner equity. As an SBA Resource Partner, the center's business advisers helped small businesses apply for CARES Act loans and grant funding during the COVID-19 economic disaster. In 2020, the SBA, through the CARES Act, appropriated over \$300,000 in additional funding to the SBDC for COVID-related small business recovery efforts. This enabled the director to hire three additional business advisers, open five satellite offices in its six-county service area, conduct targeted training webinars, form a recovery team of experts in the areas of bookkeeping, digital and social media marketing and government contracting and management training, and sponsor continuing education courses.



**Day Shellmire**  
Director, Longview Small Business  
Development Center



## Faculty, Staff, Students & Alumni Honors

Dr. Heshium Lawrence, interim associate dean and associate professor for the technology department, was the recipient of the prestigious Epsilon Pi Tau's William E. Warner Professional Practice Award for Region 4.

### 2020–2021 Outstanding Student Award Recipients

#### Accounting, Finance and Business Law

- Outstanding Undergrad Accounting Student: Malcolm Banks of Bossier City, Louisiana
- Outstanding Master of Accountancy Student: Zoila Mojarro of Lindale
- TXCPA Excellence Award: Robert Taylor of Tyler
- Outstanding Undergrad Finance Student: Rebekah Neiman of Wills Point

#### Computer Science, Computer Information Systems and Information Technology

- Outstanding Undergrad Computer Science Student: Amanda Joy Peterson of Jewett
- Outstanding Undergrad Computer Information Systems Student: Alix Marie Owens of Tyler
- Outstanding Undergrad Information Technology Student: Jason O'Brien of Hallsville
- Outstanding Graduate MS Computer Science Student: Keith Wolcott of Gladewater

#### Human Resource Development

- Outstanding Ph.D. HRD Student: Joanna Norman of Katy
- Outstanding Undergrad HRD Student: Brayden Max Lee of Overton
- Outstanding MS HRD Student: Kayla Danielle Vaughn of Portland

#### Technology

- Outstanding Undergrad Industrial Technology Student: Aaron Wheeler of Garden City, Kansas
- Outstanding Graduate Industrial Management Student: Mitchell Trocino of Austin

#### Management and Marketing

- Outstanding Undergrad Marketing Student: Sarah Williams of Midlothian
- Outstanding Undergrad Management Student: Lance Mayhugh of Grand Saline
- Traditional MBA Outstanding Student: Monica Kinzie of Pilot Point
- AP MBA Outstanding Student: Jordan Kiser of Houston

Two HRD PhD alum received awards for their dissertations. Jennifer Duplessis received the Esworthy Malcolm S. Knowles Dissertation of the Year Award from the Academy of Human Resource Development. Kristin Scott received the Leo and Margaret Goodman-Malamuth Dissertation Award from the American Association of University Administrators.

## Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards

The Soules College of Business annually recognizes faculty members who have made significant and impactful contributions in the areas of teaching, research and service. This year due to the pandemic, these awards have been postponed until the fall 2021 semester.

### Student Scholarships

In September 2020, the Texas Retailers Foundation added \$10,000 to our existing TREF scholarship that was originally established with \$25,000. As part of the September 2020 gift from TREF, they also provided \$12,000 for the Category Management program for a total in 2020 of \$22,000.

The Kerri and Danny Camp Marketing Scholarship is now fully funded at \$15,000.

The Texas Bank and Trust—Jerry Woolverton Memorial Investment Fund, was established in honor and memory of Jerry Woolverton

with a \$25,000 gift to the college. This fund will allow student members of the Financial Management Association (FMA) to experience analyzing stocks and investing real money, participating in funded activities of the FMA including trips to Wall Street and other financial centers, networking and educational interactions with business leaders, investing challenges, and attendance at the FMA Annual Meeting and/or the Student Leadership Conference, marketable skills of value to employers, experience working with software and databases housed in the Soules College Financial Analytics Laboratory and Trading Floor, including Eikon, Computstat, DataStream and QuickBooks.

A total of \$25,500 was awarded to 11 students through the Soules Scholars. Students who received the awards were:

William Andrews  
Riordan Brown  
Aaron Collier  
Hyatt Hines  
Kevin Huynh  
Cullen Malone  
Ethan McCarthy  
Courtlyn Shubert  
Connor Worsham

Returning student scholarships were awarded for a total of \$38,800. This included \$30,800 at the undergraduate level and \$8,000 at the graduate level.

## Student Engagement

### Financial Management Association – Stock Market Challenge

The stock market challenge is a way for students to compete in the real-time market with use of counterfeit currency. Students are able to trade just like they would on a real platform and keep track of different holdings. It's a great way for students to test their trading skills before entering into the "real market." The challenge is equipped with various search tools, screeners and performance markets that help students make educated decisions when choosing sound investments. The winners of the Fall 2020 Stock Market Challenge were first place: Chrystal Carr, second place: Jonathan

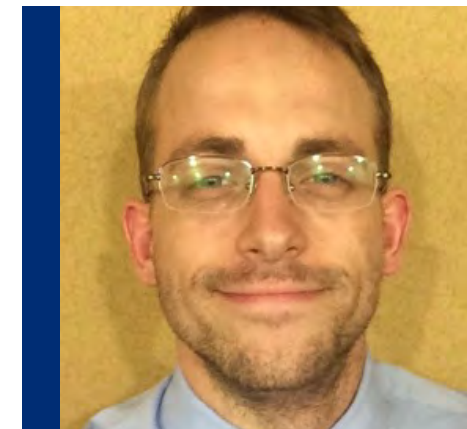
Whiting, third place: Ben Buchanan, fourth place: Elijah Focht, and fifth place: Angel Sanchez.

## Student Society of Human Resource Development

The Student Society of Human Resource Development (SSHRD) was launched this year supporting HRD students across all three degrees. The SSHRD has designed a fantastic summer speaker series. Sheron Williams, director of human resources at the City of Shreveport, Louisiana, will present "Career Transition to HRD: A Journey from Law to Leadership." Greg Duckworth, director of HR and talent acquisition at Redwood Software, will present "Mind Control for Dummies." Stephanie Findlay, vice president of learning and development at ABM, will present "Measuring Challenge and Success in Corporate L&D Strategy."

### Beta Alpha Psi

Kyle Shamburger, a senior accounting major representing UT Tyler's Mu Kappa chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, was a member of the winning team for the Project Run With It consulting project for Cultured Kids, Inc. at the Beta Alpha Psi Annual Meeting. Kyle is the first UT Tyler student to participate on the winning team in this annual consulting competition. Beta Alpha Psi is the international honor organization for financial information students and professionals and has been in existence for over 100 years. Only universities accredited by AACSB or EQUIS can have BAP chapters. There are now 333 chapters and over 300,000 members around the world. Kyle was also selected to serve as an alumni representative



for both the Southwest and Missouri Valley Regions for the 2021–2022 academic year. He will be representing a total of 55 chapters.

### Future Business Leaders of America

The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA-PBL) student organization hosted numerous online events during the academic year. Various executive level guest speakers engaged our student group through presentations, open forums, Q&A sessions, etc. Yaziri Orrostieta, chief executive officer at WorkHub, is a UT Tyler alumna who presented about Entrepreneurship and Networking. Roy Martinez, president of Swan Transportation Service, also a UT Tyler alumnus, engaged our students on the topic of Dealing with Extreme and Unexpected Change. Bryan Pannagl, chief financial officer at CHRISTUS Highland Medical Center, delivered a dynamic presentation on Finance in Business — a Healthcare Executive's Perspective.

## Student Success

### Bell Textron, Inc. Internships and Career Opportunities

Kerrie Anne Ambort-Clark worked with Bell Textron, Inc. executives, an American aerospace manufacturer headquartered in Fort Worth, to connect college leadership and undergraduate and graduate students to advance student opportunities in the Soules College of Business. A special promotional video was adapted for our student population and Bell Textron, Inc. executives came to campus to host the networking event, engaging Soules College of Business accounting and finance majors for internships and career opportunities.

### Women in Computing: Female Undergraduate Success Initiative

As an initiative to further sustain retention rates among female computing majors and contribute towards our partnership in the Academic Alliance of the National Center for Women & Information Technology, the Department of Computer Science continued its Women in Computing student success initiative. A success coach was employed to focus on female computing majors at all levels

in their undergraduate studies. Engagement between students and the success coach were conducted via Zoom beyond the normal class day schedule. During these sessions activities included programming assignment assistance, test preparation, post-test reviews and other focused content-related topics. Fifty-nine participants joined a special Canvas course so that involvement could be tracked, discussion groups created and additional resources provided.

### Human Resource Development PhD Student Advisor Team

The PhD Student Advisor Team was launched this year to support the unique needs of HRD PhD students. Among its many initiatives including mentoring and lunch and learns, the group raised \$3,600 in crowd source funding providing support for more than 15 HRD PhD student to attend the virtual Academy of Human Resource Development conference. The HRD department will hold its first writing retreat to support HRD PhD students, candidates and alumni. The retreat covers a 48-hour time of writing along with fun activities like axe throwing.

### Soules Ambassadors

The Soules Ambassadors participated in bi-weekly meetings with Dave Anderson, the author of Becoming a Leader of Character. Six principles discussed were courage, humility, integrity, selflessness, duty and positivity. Each student received a copy of Mr. Anderson's book along with access to his online, self-paced videos and exercises. The Soules Ambassadors held a forum for students in the Soules College of Business. This event was held face-to-face as well as through Zoom. Individuals in attendance were able to ask questions of college faculty and address their comments and concerns of several subjects.

### American Marketing Association

The American Marketing Association at UT Tyler hosted nine business professionals to help provide guidance and enhance professional development this year for UT Tyler students. Guests included leaders from Brookshire's, Trane, the Tyler Hispanic Business Alliance and more. New leadership teams both in faculty and students are poised to lead the chapter into the future.



## Community Engagement

### Minorities in Business

Minorities in Business was officially established in fall 2020 to provide leadership opportunities to minority students majoring in business, to cultivate a supportive community for minorities and to promote the various business professions. MIB invited various minority speakers to share their journey and provide advice to our members. These speakers included Will Pugh, CPA, president, Mentoring Brother 2 Brother; Patrice Wither-Stephens, First United Bank; Nancy Rangel, president of Tyler Hispanic Business Alliance; and Dimeta Smith, owner of Dimeta Smith, CPA, LLC. In March 2021, MIB partnered with Beta Alpha Psi to host local high school students interested in business professions. The day was memorable as our members shared valuable advice to students from Tyler Legacy, Tyler High and Early College high schools and concluded with lunch in the UT Tyler Met and a tour of campus.

## Research and Scholarship

### Accounting, Finance and Business Law Department

The Department of Accounting, Finance and Business Law had more than 20 publications this year. These publications were in journals such as the Journal of Business Finance and Accounting, Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Corporate Finance, Oil, Gas and Energy Quarterly, Journal of Accounting

and Finance, Journal of Applied Business and Economics, Federation of Business Disciplines Journal, Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance, North American Journal of Economics and Finance, and Review of Financial Economics.

### Computer Science

During the 2020–2021 academic year, the Department of Computer Science faculty published seven journal articles, three conference proceedings (and associated presentations), one journal reviewer and one presentation. The faculty also had two community presentations. Three Department of Computer Science faculty members received or submitted proposals for eight (internal and external) grants. In total, the four accepted awards exceeded \$247,701.

### Human Resource Development Department

The human resource development faculty contributed 35 scholarly outputs this year including 14 peer-reviewed journal articles and five book chapters. Among the 14 articles, three were A+. The HRD faculty also had five conference proceedings and 11 other scholarly outputs. In addition, department faculty received \$60,000 in grant funding. Dr. Nimon was awarded a National Science Foundation grant in collaboration with UT Dallas and the University of North Texas. Drs. McWhorter and Roberts received a Presidential Interdisciplinary internal grant in collaboration with Mr. Alger and Dr. Delello.

### Management and Marketing Department

The Management and Marketing department was productive during this challenging year. Several faculty saw the challenges

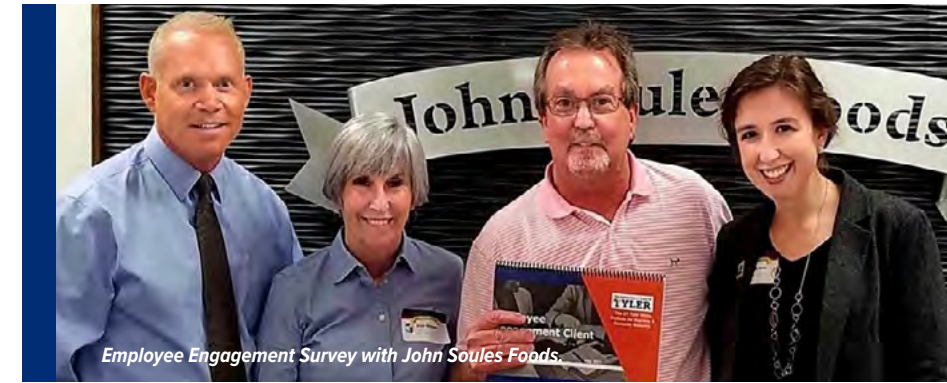
that the COVID pandemic presented as a unique opportunity. This was exemplified by Dr. Caldas' co-authored publication in the Journal of Applied Psychology and Dr. Gopalakrishna-Remani's recording and publishing of a series of interviews with local civic and business leaders discussing servant leadership on YouTube. Journal outlets in which faculty published include the Journal of Business Research, the Journal of Consumer Marketing, the Journal of Organizational Behavior and more. Several faculty including Dr. Morgan and Dr. Wooldridge received internal grants. In addition, several management colleagues such as Dr. Young, Dr. Cater and Dr. Al-Shammari had papers accepted at the Academy of Management annual conference and will be presenting them virtually.

### Technology

The Department of Technology's faculty published two books, two papers and made three refereed national conference presentations this academic year. Dr. Ali was awarded an internal grant to assist with an external grant totaling over \$100,000 in micro- and nano-particle toxicity. Dr. Miller earned two more robotics certifications, so he can now certify students in programming Motoman and Universal Robots. Ms. Griffin became a Certified Reliability Leader, allowing her to certify her students with various maintenance certifications.

With the support of the Hibbs Institute, Dr. Nimon and HRD PhD student Katie Stone conducted an Employee Engagement Survey with John Soules Foods. In May, they presented to a room full of top management (30+ people), and the results were spectacular! John Soules Foods has invited UT Tyler to replicate our presentation with the management at their Gainesville Florida facility later this year.

Kerrie Anne Ambort-Clark, executive director EMBA-HCM Program and lecturer in management, presented to the UT Health Family Medicine Residency Program connecting this physician group to the executive education opportunities available to them related to the business side of healthcare. Additionally, she delivered a presentation to nurse manager



leadership at CHRISTUS Trinity Mother Francis Health System on empathy and the patient experience.



**Kerrie Anne Ambort-Clark,** executive director EMBA-HCM Program and lecturer in management

## Executive MBA Healthcare Management Program (EMBA-HCM)

In fall 2020, the Executive MBA Healthcare Management 2019 Cohort graduated. During the course of the program and upon graduation, a majority of these now EMBA-HCM alumni earned promotions from senior project manager, program director, to senior analyst, chief of staff and beyond.

In spring 2021, the EMBA-HCM program welcomed our third cohort of 20 highly skilled healthcare professionals from across the state of Texas. This impressive group of professionals hold executive titles ranging from medical director, program

Business, we are proud to play a role in educating the next generation of executive healthcare leadership.

## Human Resource Development PhD Program

Dave Silberman, Andy Krouse, Janice Chretien and Rob Carpenter successfully defended their dissertations. Rob Carpenter successfully defended the first multi-paper format dissertation in the Soules College of Business.

director and physician to senior business development director.

Through executive healthcare education initiatives in the Soules College of



EMBA-HCM Graduates.



EMBA-HCM.



Human Resource Development PhD Program Graduates.



Minorities in Business.



# College of Education & Psychology



## Student Success

### Mentor Center

The Mentor Center continues to provide assistance to students who are struggling. The academic measure is often the one that gets the student into the Center, but while there, the students get targeted referrals to other areas of support. The Mentor Center has a role in retention, too. Students who have not enrolled in classes receive a phone call to check on them.

### Honor Society

The Department of Psychology and Counseling, led by Ramona Grad and Erin West, founded the Chi Sigma Iota Honor Society. This honor society recognizes and celebrates excellence in academic and professional counseling.

### Teaching Awards

Our instructors play a vital role in ensuring student success. We are proud of the CEP Teaching Award winners, Staci Zolkoski and Lauren Kirby, and Robert Stevens for being awarded Outstanding Higher Education Faculty by the Texas Council of Social Studies.

### The University Academies

The University Academy (UA) Lab Schools have had another great year, showing high achievement among both students and faculty. The achievement is evident from the following:

- 74% of UA graduates continue their studies at UT Tyler.
- UA students won, for the second year in a row, the Idea Challenge.
- UA student scores a near perfect score on his SAT exam (1570).

The achievement of the students leads to strong community support. Parents and community members came together to purchase playground equipment. In addition, the development board in Palestine raised money to put up a brick façade in front of the UA entrance and provided funds to build an all-weather athletic court.

## Student Engagement

### Doctoral Programs

The College of Education and Psychology has two new doctoral programs that are engaging students with professional experiences needed to be a leader in their respective fields. The PhD in Clinical Psychology just finished its second year, and the EdD in School Improvement finished its first year.

### APSI

The Advanced Placement Summer Institute had 137 teachers both within the U.S. and internationally get certified to teach Advanced Placement courses on their high school campuses. These teachers work to create high achieving students within their school districts.



## Hooding Ceremony

This was the first year to have the College's Hooding Ceremony take place separate from the general commencement. There was a great turnout for this recognition of our students receiving Master's degrees.

## CMHC

Our Clinical Mental Health Counseling program placed clinical students on the Whitehouse ISD campuses to support the counseling needs for students. This unique partnership has been beneficial in engaging our clinicians in counseling skills, and it has provided the district with greater capacity for addressing student needs.

## Principal Preparation Grant

Dr. Gary Miller coordinated the Principal Preparation grant that provided full-time principal residency for students in Kennedale and Westwood. The UT Tyler Educational Leadership program is one of only thirteen schools in Texas that may accept students from districts that use this grant.

## Panola College MOU

The School of Education was part of a MOU that put UT Tyler's Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies classes on the Panola campus; thus, allowing a local student to complete their program of study without leaving the area. The partnership is designed to increase the teacher pipeline for rural schools in the area.

## Research and Scholarship

### STARs

Michael Barnett, Director of the Memory Assessment and Research Center, was awarded \$50,000 in STARs retention funding to support his research. This award was used to purchase virtual reality equipment needed for his research.

### Research Awards

Chris Thomas and Michael Barnett were recognized as the College of Education and Psychology's Researchers of the Year.

## CARSI

Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz was awarded a Central American Regional Security Initiative grant in the amount of \$242,000. The purpose of the grant is to assist the country of Belize with their pre-service teacher evaluation and training of field supervisors. This grant is in an assistance of a MOU that had previously been signed with the Belize Ministry of Education.

## Wallace Foundation Self-Study

The Texas Education Agency facilitated a self-study of a select number of principal preparation programs in Texas. UT Tyler's Educational Leadership program, under the leadership of Dr. Gary Miller, was one of four invited. The self-study looked at everything from admission to graduation, evaluating the processes used to make great principals.

## University Academy Grants

The faculty and staff in the UA are active in external funding of initiatives, as evidenced by the following grants awards:

- Lonestar STEM Pilot Grant YR1
- Lonestar STEM Pilot Grant YR2
- Math Innovation Zones Y1
- Math Innovation Zones Y2
- Blended Learning Year 1
- Blended Learning Year 2
- Cares Act – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) I
- Cares Act – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III
- Every Student Succeeds Act
  - Title I, Part A Improving Basic Programs
  - Title IV, Part A Subpart 1
  - Title II, Part A – Supporting Effective Instruction
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B Formula (IDEA-B)
- School Safety and Security Grant

## Community Engagement

### Veteran's Mental Health

Adam McGuire is leading the way in addressing veteran's mental health needs. His work as the Clinical Psychologist and Research Investigator at the VA Center of Excellence

for Research on Returning War Veterans is providing important support for veteran's with PTSD and moral injury.

## Born to Read

The Literacy Center, led by Kouider Mokhtari, have provided support and training for parents wanting to get a head start on literacy for their young children. The program is designed for expectant mothers and those with children under three, providing important tools for children's literacy achievement.

## COBEC

The College of Education and Psychology, led by Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz, hosted the Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation Conference. This conference gets teachers and scholars from both the United States and Belize together to discuss areas of mutual interest and support. Presenters from the College of Education and Psychology included Erin West, Annamary Consalvo, Jessica Holm, Julie Delello, Staci Zolkoski, and Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz.

## TACS Conference

The College of Education and Psychology hosted the Texas Association of Community Schools Conference for the 34th year. The conference provides legislative updates and other school information, and this year it was one of the first face-to-face conferences as we returned to normal from Covid.

## Overton Summer Camp

The Literacy and Ingenuity Centers partnered with Overton ISD to develop summer camps in literacy and STEM. The purpose was to help close gaps caused by Covid.

## Service Awards

Engaging the community often requires a dedication to service. CEP is proud of its Service Award winners, Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz and Erin West.

## Staff Awards

The staff are the backbone of our college, and they dedicate their time to ensuring our students are successful. The CEP Staff Award winners were Kristie Allen and Lisa Dempsey. CEP Special Assistant to the Dean, Sydni Blundell, won the university-wide Passion Award.

## Cooperative Teachers Credit Union (CTCU)

CTCU donated \$14,000 to the East Texas Center for School Based Research and Instruction in order to help pay for professional development and outreach efforts for our local schools. The funds helped provide numerous sessions, including those to support instruction, incentive pay for teachers, and socio-emotional learning.

## Temple Foundation

The Temple Foundation donated the School of Education \$100,000 to help with getting a teacher preparation program started on the Panola campus. The foundation provided the donation to assist with the development of high quality teachers in rural schools.

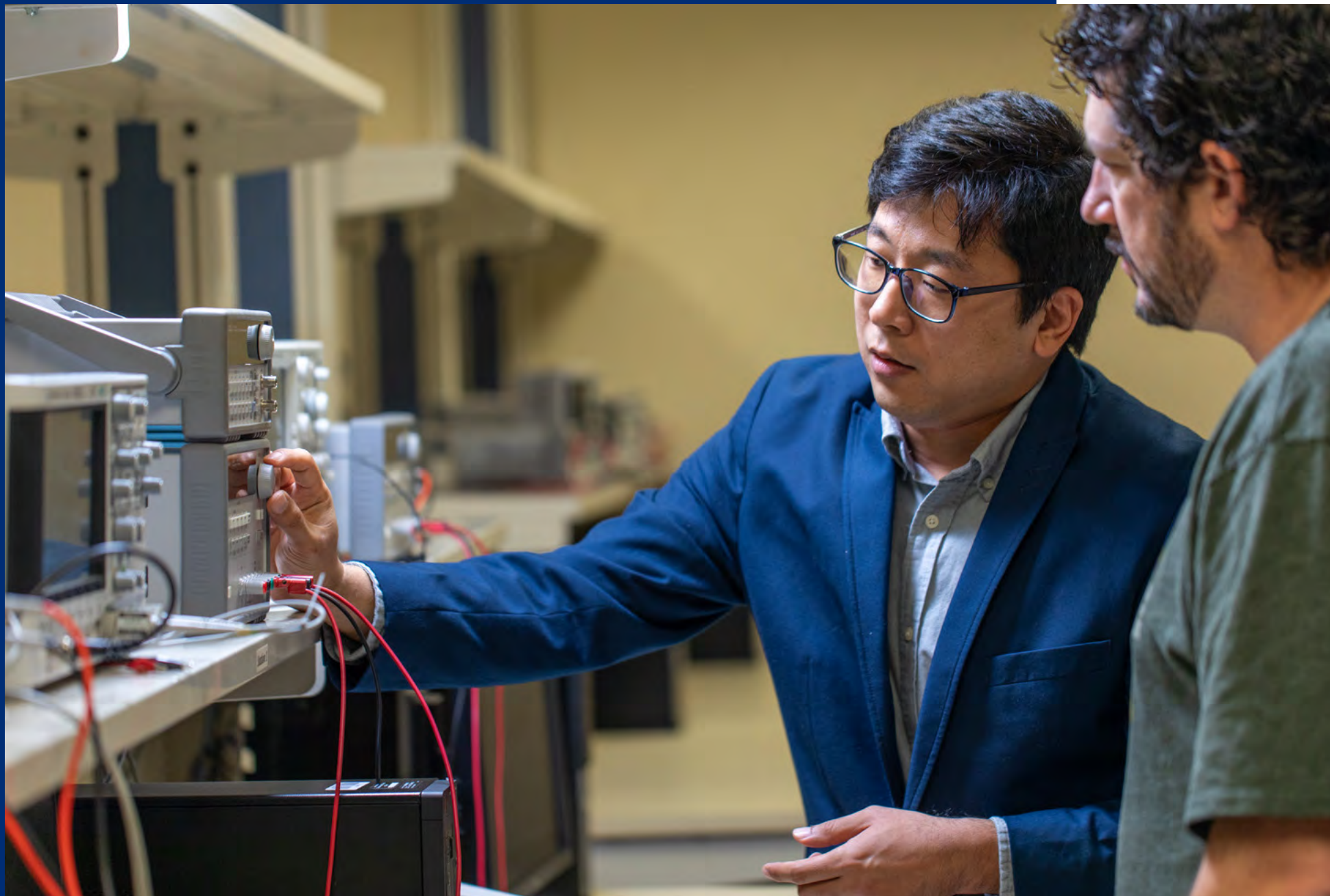
## Henderson ISD

Henderson ISD signed an MOU with UT Tyler to allow its faculty to earn Master's degrees in either Educational Leadership or Curriculum & Instruction while paying through payroll deduction. This pathway makes the cost of getting a degree less financially impactful.





# College of Engineering



## Introduction

Established more than two decades ago, The University of Texas at Tyler College of Engineering has grown to nearly 1,000 students. The college offers degree programs in chemical engineering (which will graduate its first class in 2022), civil engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and construction management. With two campuses — the main Tyler campus and the Houston Engineering Center (HEC) — the college is rather unique. Between the two, the College of Engineering (COE) provides students an ecosystem that includes both a more research-focused campus and a more industry-connected campus.

The UT Tyler College of Engineering, in partnership with the Houston Community College, established the Houston Engineering Center (HEC) to provide students in Houston a unique pathway to attain an ABET accredited, four-year engineering degree. HEC is a minority-serving engineering campus with a substantial number of first-generation adult learners. The Tyler campus could be considered as an emerging Hispanic-serving institution by the standards established by Excellencia in Education (EDEXCELENCIA.ORG).

Our efforts to serve underrepresented populations have been recently recognized through the American Society for Engineering Education's Diversity Recognition Program. By receiving Bronze Level Recognition (the highest level awarded within the cycle),

COE was noted as being among the nation's leaders in inclusive excellence.

## Student Achievements

Student engagement and belonging are an integral part of COE's overall approach toward ensuring that our graduates are prepared to succeed and thrive in careers across the engineering and construction management spectrum, and student organizations anchored in each of our disciplines form a big part of this effort. This past year, many of our foundational student organizations and student groups were recognized by national level societies and external organizations as being truly exceptional.

### IEEE Corona Chapter

Immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the UT Tyler IEEE Corona Chapter was awarded the Outstanding Student Chapter in the Dallas Section of IEEE. The student branch activities included the following Power Hour (peer tutoring program for EE students), Outreach to local schools, Lunch Meetings with Invited Speakers from industry, a Game Night, and the IEEE R5 Robotics Competition, amongst many others. Their adviser, Dr. Mukul Shirvaikar, has noted that, "Through their hard work and dedication our students have truly exemplified the IEEE motto of 'Advancing Technology for Humanity.' We hope that their interactions with K-12 students will inspire the next generation of engineers."



## HEC Electrical Engineering Senior Design

A UT Tyler Houston Engineering Center senior design team was recognized at the 2021 Southwest Region (including institutions from TX, NM and AZ) Excellence in Senior Design Showcase, placing first in the “Making a Difference” category. The team of electrical engineering majors, now all May 2021 graduates, developed a point-of-care device for rapid and real-time detection of inflammatory protein biomarkers.

Team members recognized were captain Zeeshan Shaikh, Luis Trevino, Armstrong Otieno, Claude Larrieux and Miguel Gomez Gonzalez. Tanzila Noushin, a UT Tyler graduate student at the Tyler campus, also assisted the team with related data and experiments.

“Imagine, what would the world be like today if we had such a device to diagnose COVID-19 in just five seconds at the bedside or at home before any symptoms even appear,” said Dr. Shawana Tabassum, UT Tyler assistant professor and faculty adviser. “The world would have been different than what it is today, and that’s exactly where this project will hopefully lead us.”

During the showcase, collegiate teams create a poster about their project and present a pitch to a diverse audience in three minutes or less. The goal was to in part, “Save the human race ... All in a senior design project! Your project takes into consideration impact on public health, safety, and welfare, as well as global, cultural, social, environmental and economic factors.”

Shaikh is now an electronics engineer for the federal government. He said he appreciated the opportunity to participate in the showcase and collaborate with his classmates while connecting with business leaders and professional engineers in various industry sectors.

“Winning this award confirmed my feeling that we all were part of something special,” Shaikh said. “As a result of our efforts, we accomplished something that compared favorably with the best offerings from other universities. We worked hard all year, and

it was the perfect way to end my time at UT Tyler.”

## ASCE Student Chapter

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently recognized UT Tyler’s ASCE student chapter with a 2021 Distinguished Chapter Award for Region 6, which includes all of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Mexico. This is the eighth time since 2009 that the ASCE chapter earned this distinction. Last year, UT Tyler was also recognized internationally as one of four Ridgway Award Finalists – the Ridgway Award is the highest honor bestowed by ASCE on Student Chapters.

This achievement results from the countless hours of hard work put in by the student leadership, according to chapter co-adviser Dr. Michael Gangone.

“I am so proud of our ASCE student chapter,” said Gangone, a UT Tyler associate professor of civil engineering. “They worked extremely hard last year – and during an unprecedented pandemic – to create the same student experience that continues to benefit our civil engineering community here at UT Tyler. Our ASCE student chapter is truly the heartbeat of our student experience.”

Chapter events include resume workshops, technical speakers, field trips and networking socials with industry professionals, as well as social events and outreach activities. After spring break of 2020, the chapter had to cancel a full semester of planned events that put them behind their normal schedule. Because the group quickly transitioned to a hybrid style chapter in the fall 2020 semester with both in-person and online activities, they were able to make up for most of the events they had missed the previous semester.

Leading those efforts was past chapter president and May 2021 graduate Luisa Cardona Suarez of Longview, who learned how important it is to be a strong leader when “everything is falling apart.”

“I cannot stress how much I learned by leading the team of officers during the pandemic,” said Cardona Suarez. “This achievement means a lot to me because it shows that perseverance combined with hard work and true desire to

excel does pay off. I’m very proud of the team for never giving up.”

## Construction Management

### Sigma Lambda Chi Chapter

UT Tyler’s new “Gamma III” student chapter of the Sigma Lambda Chi international construction management honor society was recognized by its international organization with a Gold Award for their community service senior capstone project – building a “tiny home” in a partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Smith County.

The International Sigma Lambda Chi (SLC) Honor Society is the single, worldwide honor society that supports, recognizes and rewards excellence in construction management and construction engineering. Every year, SLC reviews community service projects performed by chapters and selects a handful for recognition at the bronze, silver and gold level. “Gold” is the highest recognition a chapter can earn.

“This recognition sends a powerful message about our students and faculty involvement in the construction management program here at UT Tyler,” said Dr. Torey Nalbone, Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management chair. “To be recognized just after their first year of operations as a student chapter means they are all doing the right things and putting a face on UT Tyler and our program out in the community.”

UT Tyler instructor Joe Boylan is the chapter’s faculty sponsor and has served the University for four years. He said helping prepare the next generation of superior construction leaders and construction engineers at UT Tyler is a “rewarding experience.”

Haley Nemitz served as the student chapter’s inaugural president and was among seven chosen students who worked on the award-winning project.

“Haley demonstrated great grit and determination to achieve success, and she accomplished that in a fun, people-caring manner,” Boylan said.

“UT Tyler gave me a great education to prepare me for the work I want to do, and they also gave me great connections – from fellow students to professors to working professionals,” added Nemitz, who also interned with Habitat during her time at UT Tyler.

### AISC Steel Bridge Team

A team of civil and mechanical engineering students at the UT Tyler Houston Engineering Center earned top honors at the 2021 American Institute of Steel Construction Regional Steel Bridge Competition.

UT Tyler also placed first in aesthetics and construction economy and second in all other categories – construction speed, stiffness and structural efficiency.

The contest involves collegiate teams overseeing the design and fabrication of a 20-foot-long bridge to support up to 2,500 pounds. With its entry “Gamma,” the UT Tyler HEC team outperformed UT San Antonio and UT Arlington for first place and advanced to nationals for the first time ever, where they placed 16<sup>th</sup> of 25 teams.

Dr. Torey Nalbone, the chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering congratulated the team for their efforts: “To each one of you CONGRATULATIONS for representing The University of Texas at Tyler and the College of Engineering at such a high level across the nation!!!”

## Scholarship and Research

In this year’s report, we’re taking the time to highlight our newest faculty and their achievements.

### Dr. Aaditya Kanal

A first-year faculty member, Khanal was awarded a grant from the American Chemical Society (ACS) to provide research opportunities for students. The two-year, \$55,000 Undergraduate New Investigator grant from Petroleum Research Fund (PRF) will primarily provide several students with a mentored, hands-on research opportunity at UT Tyler, focused on studying the flow

behavior of hydrocarbons in nanoconfined pores. The flow behavior of gases confined in nanopores cannot be adequately modeled by using traditional continuum models and needs to be modeled at a molecular level. Khanal intends to use a molecular model based on kinetic theory gases to study the flow of methane in complex subsurface porous media characterized by the presence of pores of different sizes, geometry, and surface properties. The research will be instrumental in modeling the flow of methane in shale reservoirs accurately.

### Dr. Jounsup Park

Dr. Jounsup Park, assistant professor of electrical engineering, was recognized for outstanding research by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Technical Committee for Multimedia for his continued work to enhance multimedia and 360-degree video technology.

Park, who joined UT Tyler last fall, earned a Best Paper Award at the recent IEEE International Symposium on Multimedia for his paper titled, “SEAWARE: Semantic Aware View Prediction System for 360° Video Streaming.”

He is working to enhance 360-degree videos in the area of virtual reality in hopes that the technology will improve multimedia experiences for users.

Current investigations involve analyzing objects moving in those types of videos that could draw the viewer’s attention and lead their behavior. The proposed system, Park said, can deliver high-quality 360-degree video over the Internet, even if the connection is poor, by predicting future scene that the viewers will watch. The proposed system is tested with various video contents. Videos the team studied ranged from a monster movie involving a chase scene to a surfer moving through ocean waves.

“The 360-degree videos will be the next major multimedia service,” Park said. “YouTube, Netflix, Hulu, Disney+ and many other video streaming service providers are preparing 360-degree video services that can provide immersive experiences to the viewers. Understanding viewing behavior is becoming more important to provide high-quality multimedia services.”

Park’s distinguished track record in research and technology development makes him a key asset for the electrical engineering department and a major contributor to help build and grow the college’s research enterprise, according to professor and department chair Dr. Hassan El-Kishky.

“Dr. Park’s academic excellence is evident through his passion and enthusiasm for research and teaching, and his recent Best Paper Award is another testimonial to the quality of his widely recognized research in the area of AR/VR and multimedia networking,” El-Kishky said.

### Dr. Shawanna Tabassum

Dr. Tabassum, an assistant professor of electrical engineering, has been recognized as an early-career researcher who has developed a device to improve infant healthcare in underdeveloped regions. Recognized for her work on neonatal health disparity in underserved areas across the globe, Tabassum is the Falling Walls Science Foundation Breakthroughs of the Year 2020 Emerging Talent. Her work was one of 940 entries in the science category from 111 countries.

The Falling Walls Foundation is a global hub connecting science, business and society. It was established with support of the German Ministry of Education and Research and the Berlin Center for Education, Science and Research.

Tabassum has pioneered a device that allows the measurement of biomarker levels of newborns and infants in least developed countries. The impact of this device will be immediate in preventing fatal delays in diagnosis and treatment, said Jury Chair Claudie Haignere of the European Space Agency in Paris.

Similar to a glucometer, Tabassum’s device uses a drop of blood and a test strip to determine within 10 minutes what illnesses or conditions may be present in an infant. “The strip is really the center of where my innovation lies,” said Tabassum. “The strip is inserted into a reader that tells us whether a protein is present in the body. For example, if an infant has jaundice, the strip will not only reveal that he has jaundice, but also the



level of jaundice.” The strip also indicates biomarkers for the presence and level of sepsis or infection. The technology behind this device has been patented.

After the birth of her son who was preterm with hypoglycemia, Tabassum reflected on how fortunate it was that she could afford proper healthcare. She also began to think of mothers in less developed areas of her native country, Bangladesh, as well as others around the world who do not have access to advanced healthcare.

“I thought, why wouldn’t I use my research to do something good for those communities,” she said. “I was prompted to do this kind of work not only for people who are privileged, but also for those who don’t have any privileges at all.”

## Community Engagement

This year, we’d like to highlight some of the ways that the students at our Houston Engineering Center are interfacing with the greater Houston community.

### Collaboration with Independent School District

Under the leadership of new HEC Director Dr. Andres Garcia, the student organizations based at HEC have organized and held the Alief ISD’s district-wide Popsicle Bridge Competition for several years, pausing only in 2020 due to COVID-19. The HEC SHPE chapter collaborates with other HEC student organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) student chapters to coordinate more than 100 engineering student volunteers. They host grade school students from more than 25 elementary, middle and high schools. More than 1,000 K-12 students compete every year. The Board of Trustees of the Alief ISD recognized the UT Tyler College of Engineering with a certificate for outstanding contributions to the school district. UT Tyler and Alief ISD created this event from the ground up. The intention was to create an activity that engages all students at the school level, and simultaneously get all HEC students to engage in outreach activities without limits.

The school students learn to build a bridge, follow competition rules, and most importantly, they experience a sense of belonging by participating in an event where students from all grades compete. HEC students learn to give back to the community, having a chance to accumulate service hours and be part of a team.

### Collaboration with NASA

Students from the UT Tyler Houston Engineering Center will assist NASA with its “Artemis III” Moon Mission – an effort to send humans back to the moon by 2024 – after taking home top honors from the Texas Space Grant Consortium’s (TSGC) annual Design Challenge.

UT Tyler’s Team Vanguard received “Top Design” and “Best Poster” honors, as well as second place in “Best Peer Review.” Vanguard members are Monica Louise Monconduit of New Orleans, Louisiana, Zach Butterfras of Deer Park, Amin Marashi of Iran, Michael Mira of Sugar Land and team captain Antonio Mejia Jr. of Galveston. All graduated from UT Tyler in May 2021.

The Design Challenge is a unique academic experience offering undergraduate students the opportunity to propose, design and fabricate a novel solution toward solving real innovative research problems of importance to NASA and its future space missions. The team is developing a mechanical subsystem for the new spacesuits to be used in the Artemis III Moon Mission.

“Artemis III is the Apollo 8 event in history for our generation, and we are ecstatic at the prospects of being part of this achievement and moment,” said Aws Al-Shalash, HEC lecturer and team adviser. “The overall experience provides student team members with an opportunity to engage in scientific research, hands-on design, space-related career opportunities, communication skills and educational outreach.”

Each student was awarded a scholarship in the amount of \$1,000. They competed against 20 other collegiate teams from all over Texas, besting UT Austin and Texas A&M University, among others. UT Tyler HEC mechanical engineering students have been consistently

participating for the last four years in this NASA competition.

“Our senior design course runs in parallel to the competition, facilitating a seamless interaction of TSGC tag-up deliverables and UT Tyler senior design weekly assignments,” said Dr. Andres Garcia, HEC director. “We see a tremendous benefit in this type of cross-curriculum external competition for our students, promoting innovation, quality and self-esteem on all team members.”

Mira, who transferred to the HEC after graduating from Houston Community College, is excited about this “out of this world” opportunity, noting that participating in events like this one has helped him with both technical and soft skills required to be a successful mechanical engineer.

“UT Tyler has pushed me to my limits and beyond,” Mira said. “I feel I have the capabilities to adapt to any circumstance to achieve success. I have participated in team research, design and manufacturing of top tier mechanisms, and now I get to be a part of something really special by helping NASA.”

Mejia agreed, crediting UT Tyler for enhancing his leadership skills that will help him in his future career in industrial management.

“UT Tyler is already influencing my career in the chemicals industry by challenging my project-management, presentation and team leadership skills, especially when it applies to learning to work with diverse personalities and adjust to multiple communication styles,” he said.

## Laboratory Modernization

This past year, four different laboratory spaces were modernized with the contributions of local companies who are invested in the success of UT Tyler engineering students.

### Chemical Engineering Laboratories

The Jasper Department of Chemical Engineering at The University of Texas at Tyler was established in the fall of 2019, becoming the first chemical engineering program within

a 175-mile radius of Dallas. The program was established with a gift from Jasper Ventures, which highlights its strong connection with the East Texas oil industry, and points to a promising future as it develops with a practice-based, student-focused approach to education.

Two laboratory spaces in Ratliff Building North have undergone full renovation. The extensive list of upgrades includes chemically resistant floors, newly painted walls; new lighting, expanded electrical and ventilation systems; cabinets and casework; camera and TV monitor; an advanced manifold system for supply and control of gases; and a 16-foot, walk-in hood that will safely house advanced chemical engineering equipment, such as a distillation column and high-pressure chemical reactors. The spaces will be populated with more than 20 laboratory apparatuses for teaching in all areas of chemical engineering; including fluid mechanics; heat and mass transfer; catalysis and reaction engineering and unit operations. This will make the teaching laboratory at UT Tyler one of the most comprehensive in the nation. In addition, the lab will feature world-class equipment for research in areas such as energy, fuels and biochemical engineering. Research projects include the conversion of kelp into gasoline and diesel, with support from the Sea Grant Washington, and the use of carbon dioxide for extraction of petroleum.

### Conaway Homes Construction Management Design & Fabrication Lab

The UT Tyler College of Engineering has renamed its lab in the construction management program the Conaway Homes Construction Management Design and Fabrication Lab. The new name is part of a recent collaboration with COE and Conaway’s Home Group Ltd. to support the industry as well as student success.

As Brent Conaway says, “We got behind COE’s construction management program because we need more qualified people in our industry, and plus, UT Tyler is in our backyard. The home building industry has evolved from a single jack-of-all-trades approach into very professional groups who manage thorough sophisticated systems.”

The newly refurbished laboratory space has been tailored to meet the need when educating professionals of practicing practical application of acquired skills. The creation of the Conaway Homes Construction Management Design & Fabrication Lab and its Endowment provided by Conway Homes allows the department to finally have a facility and budget to support the education goals of the professional construction management students in our CM major and minor programs.

### John Bailey Thermal Fluids Sciences Laboratory

UT Tyler alumnus John J. Bailey came from humble beginnings, growing up in the small East Texas town of Golden, a 45-minute drive north of Tyler. Now, as the furnace engineering manager in Trane Technologies’ Residential HVAC & Supply Business Unit, he sees the benefit of providing high-quality products to customers.

He is also thankful that UT Tyler gave him the skills he needed to be successful in the workplace and impact his community. Based on his personal experience and working in industry with engineers from other “top-tier” engineering schools, Bailey says UT Tyler offers the same – if not a better – experience for engineering students compared to the competition.

“The smaller class size especially offers an advantage that the bigger schools just can’t offer,” he said. “I like to joke with Dr. (Javier) Kyruos (college dean) that UT Tyler is the “corvette” of engineering schools in the US. The corvette sports car is known as the best deal in super cars when comparing horsepower to dollars, and likewise, I believe the UT Tyler College of Engineering is, “value to dollars,” the best deal out there.”

Bailey gives back to the College of Engineering in various ways, including donating to building enhancements, sponsoring senior design projects and serving as a member of the COE Advisory Board. He calls naming the college’s Thermal Fluid Mechanical Engineering Laboratory one of his proudest achievements.

“As a former refrigeration engineer and now a leader of a combustion engineering group, naming the thermal fluid lab is very gratifying,” Bailey said. “Before school, I didn’t

realize that you use the thermal-fluid sciences when designing refrigeration and heating systems, and that is the field of engineering that I enjoy the most. I am hopeful that other young engineers can discover the field of study that truly ignites their passion in this tremendous facility.”



# College of Nursing & Health Sciences



## A Message from the Dean

### DR. BARBARA HAAS

*Interim Dean of the College of Nursing & Health Sciences*

The 2020–2021 academic year was certainly unlike any other in recent history. Along with the rest of the world, academia adjusted to life during a pandemic. Changes in educational practices, service, research and community activities became the norm. In addition to the changes mandated by the pandemic, the university and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences underwent additional major changes that impacted our day-to-day operations and our future. At the end of 2020, Dean Yong “Tai” Wang left the university to accept a position in New York. In January, the merger between The University of Texas at Tyler and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler was announced. As we navigate the new university structure and continuing challenges associated with COVID-19, I am honored and humbled to serve as the interim dean of our college.

The mission of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences is to prepare graduates to advance health and wellness in diverse populations for a variety of complex, dynamic environments. We accomplish this mission through the work of two departments: Health and Kinesiology, which includes degrees in health sciences, wellness, kinesiology, occupational therapy, and communication

sciences and disorders, and the School of Nursing. With an enrollment of 2,888 students in fall 2020, and 98 dedicated faculty, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

Despite this year of rapid and significant changes, our outstanding faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners continued to excel. As we emerge from the pandemic and reflect upon this last year, I am grateful for the opportunity to share their achievements and thank them for their dedication and perseverance.





## Student Success

Thank you to the faculty, who created new means of delivering content and continued to demand excellence across all programs. Thank you to the students, who met the challenges associated with online learning. Thank you to our alumni, who continue to represent us so well. Several of the newer programs within the college are highlighted below as examples of the extra effort faculty took to ensure these latest programs excelled.

### Master of Occupational Therapy

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) awarded the MOT program at UT Tyler full accreditation for a period of seven years beginning spring 2021. Seven years is the maximum period of accreditation awarded to OT programs. The ACOTE site visit noted six program strengths, no weaknesses and no areas of non-compliance. The entire visit was conducted virtually with hundreds of pages of documents and numerous videos submitted for review. Thank you and congratulations to Dr. Diane Brown, Program Director, and all the MOT faculty and staff! Though challenged by the paucity of clinical experiences, 11 students graduated on time in December 2020, and the remaining nine from the inaugural class graduated in May 2021.

### Communication Sciences and



### Disorders (CSD)

Dr. Ahmed Abdelal, PhD, CCC-SLP, joined the faculty in fall 2020 as associate professor in Health and Kinesiology, and director of the Communication Science and Disorders BS program. Dr. Abdelal comes to UT Tyler from Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, MA, where he previously served as interim chair of the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)

graduate program and director of the Center for Educational Neuroscience Applications. During his first year at UT Tyler, Dr. Abdelal has overhauled and revised the Communication Science and Disorders BS program curriculum, bringing it in line with recommendations from the American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) to prepare our graduates for certification as SLP Assistants or entry into SLP Master's programs. Dr. Abdelal is currently preparing a proposal for a new master's program in Speech-Language Pathology at UT Tyler. The CSD program also celebrated its first four graduates in fall 2020.

### Master of Science in Nursing Informatics, Quality, and Safety (MSN-IQS)

The Master of Science in Nursing programs continue to be ranked among the top 25 in the nation by U.S. News and World Report. Two new programs joined existing MSN programs in Administration, Education and Family Nurse Practitioner. The new MSN-IQS degree program launched in fall 2020, under the direction of Dr. Cheryl Parker. The new program prepares nurses as informatics nurse specialists who serve as the essential link among health care information systems, health care providers and consumers. This program also celebrated its first four graduates this past year!

### Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)

A high demand PMHNP program also launched in fall 2020, under the direction of Dr. Sandra Petersen. As an indication of the excellent planning of this program, the PMHNP was ranked as No. 8 in Online PMHNP programs by the NurseJournal organization. Initially planned as a fall-only admission, the program was overwhelmed with applicants for both the MSN degree program and the post-master's certificate program requiring a change to admit twice a year in fall and spring. The graduates of this program will fill a critical need in treating mental illness. We look forward to celebrating the first 11 post-master's certificate students, who will complete the program in summer 2021.

### Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Faculty worked exceedingly hard to meet the demand for more BSN prepared nurses

through two new initiatives this past academic year: implementation of a year-round BSN program and a new concurrent ADN-BSN program, in which associate degree nursing students also attend baccalaureate classes, earning the ADN and the BSN at the same time. Four graduates attending the ADN program at Tyler Junior College simultaneously earned their BSN in May 2021. The first graduates of the new year-round program graduated in fall 2020. These graduates completed most of their program through virtual classes, and in large part, because of the perseverance and commitment of the faculty and staff. Lab supplies were mailed to students and instruction was accomplished over Zoom. Students learned many skills such as intravenous preparation and injections in a virtual world! Virtual case studies honed critical thinking skills. Students eventually had the opportunity to put those skills into practice as clinical sites gradually began allowing students back into their facilities. Despite the unusual nursing school experience, the fall 2020 class far exceeded the national average in passing the NCLEX national licensure exam.

Licensure/ Certification Pass Rates (at time of publication)

Program	Pass Rate	Note
BSN	124/131 (94%)	Fall 2020; National Average 87%
FNP	57/57 (100%)	Includes 2020 & Spring 2021
MOT	14/14 (100%)	Six not yet reported

### Celebrating Success

The pandemic may have prohibited large gatherings indoors, but through the efforts of creative faculty and staff, we converted multiple recognition ceremonies to the online environment. We continued to celebrate the success of our students through virtual ceremonies, including White Coat, Blessing of the Hands, Pinning and Graduate Hooding.

## Student Engagement

### Patriot Wellness initiative

In spring 2021, the Department of Health and Kinesiology (H&K) launched a new program designed to improve the physical, social, and

psychological wellness of students in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The Patriot Wellness program involves current H&K students who are studying various aspects of wellness in their respective academic programs to plan and organize student-centered wellness events and disseminate educational material to fellow students in the college. COVID-19 limited the type of activities performed but by late spring, students were able to gather outdoors for a final event that involved canoeing on Harvey Lake on campus. Other Highlights

- Population Health faculty and students were able to reinstate the Poverty Simulation in early summer after canceling previous events due to COVID. Numerous faculty and staff volunteered to provide students the opportunity to learn about living in poverty in a simulated and interactive manner. Thank you to all who participated either through planning or volunteering!
- Students and faculty were active members of interprofessional teams that provided screening, referrals, and care at the Clinic Under the Bridge, serving the homeless in our community.
- The new Fit Steps for Life (FSFL) center opened in the Harrington Patriot Center. With attendance temporarily prohibited due to COVID, the staff are eager to welcome participants back this fall. The FSFL program is a free and customized exercise program to any individual with a chronic illness. Ashley Dalby, H&K faculty, oversees the program. Students will have



opportunities to gain real world experience working with participants.

- A new Pre-Nursing Club was launched just prior to COVID. The new organization is open to any student interested in a career in nursing. Faculty advisers, Bethany Rudolph and Brian Opella, look forward to the fall when students return to campus.
- A new Wilderness Medicine student organization was established in spring 2021. Under the direction of Dr. Glenn Barnes, associate professor of nursing, the club is open to students from any discipline who are interested in learning about survival and providing care in a non-traditional and often extreme environment. The organization held a weekend retreat in late spring, and participants were able to practice skills such as building debris shelters and starting fires without matches or lighters.

## Community Engagement

Even though COVID-19 severely restricted student clinical experiences and internships, it also provided unique experiences for faculty, staff and students to become part of the solution by both getting and giving vaccines.

- As early as December 2020 and over the semester and holiday break, nursing faculty and students were volunteering to administer COVID vaccines at UT Health North and Christus Good Shepherd Medical Center (CGSMC).

- Dr. Glenn Barnes, associate professor of nursing, was an integral member of the Northeast Texas Health Department (NET-Health) team that planned and organized the mass immunization clinics held at Harvey Hall Convention Center in Tyler.
- Family Nurse Practitioner students helped man the health district's COVID call center and performed contact tracing for persons testing positive.
- Over 100 students and faculty from the Longview campus participated in the CGSMC mega-clinic at the Gregg County fairgrounds. Over a single weekend, volunteers administered nearly 7,000 vaccines!
- Throughout the spring, faculty, staff and students contributed 11,650 hours assisting and giving vaccines at locations across East Texas!!
- Recognizing the immense contribution of our healthcare providers during COVID-19, School of Nursing faculty and students partnered with the Office of Community Engagement to acknowledge their contribution to our community. Titled "24 Hours of Thanks," students and faculty provided goodie bags and hand-written thank you notes to hundreds of healthcare workers in Tyler, Palestine and Longview over a 24-hour period.
- Throughout the pandemic, the INTUNE Mobile Clinic, funded by Dr. Carol Rizer's \$2.8 million grant, continued to support the education of Advance Practice Nurses. Students and faculty worked on the mobile unit to provide COVID testing along with their usual care to provide healthcare to underserved in rural East Texas.
- The Nurses Christian Fellowship (NCF) Student Organization created and delivered valentines for children in hospitals and senior citizens in assisted living residences in the East Texas region. KVNE radio station sponsors the event each year, and this was the fifth year NCF has participated. Faculty advisers, Vicki Jowell and Kara Marrs, along with NCF President and Level 4 student, Katelyn Cole, organized the activity on campus. Over 125 cards were delivered to one



of the several drop off locations in Tyler. The students and faculty helped provide encouragement to those who were unable to have visitors due to COVID restrictions.

- In recognition of 2020 as “Year of the Nurse,” the college launched a new “Honor a Nurse” Campaign. Donors contributed over \$10,000 to create an endowment for a new nursing student scholarship.

### Research and Scholarship

The pandemic had a negative impact on faculty research this past year as data collection, travel and presentations were either canceled or delayed. Faculty continued to work within the confines imposed by COVID-19 and look forward re-engaging with their research and professional colleagues in person during the months ahead.

### Institute for Integrated Healthcare (IIH)

As part of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences the Institute for Integrated Healthcare (IIH), under the direction of Dr. X. Neil Dong, professor of health and kinesiology, is tasked with forging partnerships within and between colleges and external entities to enhance scholarly endeavors of CNHS faculty. This past year, the IIH provided funding to faculty from CNHS and the Fisch College of Pharmacy to support:

- School of Nursing faculty, Drs. Melinda Hermanns and Beth Mastel-Smith, their study titled, Caregivers and Person’s with Parkinson’s Disease Stigma Experience: A Multiple Case Study.
- Health and Kinesiology faculty, Dr. Bill Sorensen, for his research project, Addressing Prenatal Substance use in Mothers: A Mixed-methods Study in Northeast Texas.
- Dr. Takova Wallace-Gay, from the Fisch College of Pharmacy and chair of the UT Tyler Interprofessional Education (IPE) Committee, to help with the interprofessional clinic, Under the Bridge. This project had a positive impact for student success by allowing learners and clinicians from medicine, pharmacy, nursing, occupational therapy and dental hygiene to collaborate on patient care

needs, identify one another’s roles on the interprofessional team, and practice communication across professions for the greater good of patients.

- Several potential projects with external constituents are also being planned.

### Faculty Scholarship and Honors

Faculty continued to publish and present in peer-reviewed journals and conferences, even though the conferences were held virtually. A summary of faculty activity is below.

2  
Book Chapters

38  
Journal Articles

23  
Poster Presentations

39  
Presentations

- Five School of Nursing faculty (Dr. Julie George, Dr. Colleen Marzilli, Dixie Rose, Anna Hanson, and Carrie Judd) successfully completed the Association of College and University educators (ACUE) Effective Teaching Practices program provided by UT System. The prestigious and rigorous 25-module course provided faculty with evidence-based strategies to implement in the classroom.
- Dr. Belinda Deal was invited to participate in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the academic setting.
- Dr. Glenn Barnes has been invited to present on prolonged Field Care to Yale University’s Wilderness Medicine group in August.
- Dr. Colleen Marzilli was elected to the Texas Nurses Association Board of Directors as Secretary.
- Dr. Marzilli and Anita Lowe facilitated the TNA Virtual Legislative Panel – Public Health Region 4/5N in the spring. Senator

Bryan Hughes and Representative Gary Vandiver discussed concerns for our local area and plans for the legislative focus for 2021.

- Dr. Cheryl Parker was named the recipient of the 2021 HIMSS-ANI Nursing Informatics Leadership Award. The award recognizes the significant contributions of a nursing informatics leader in optimizing health engagements and care outcomes through information and technology. The recipient is jointly selected by the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Board of Directors and the Governing Director of the Alliance for Nursing Informatics (ANI).

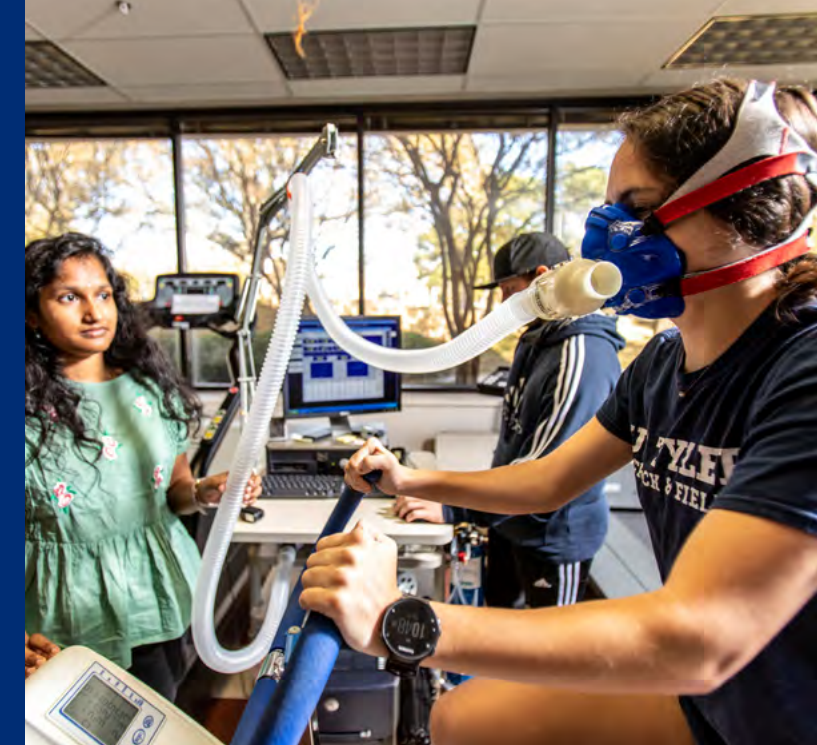
### Student Scholarship and Honors

Several PhD in Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) current and former students published works in various peer-reviewed journals. One of those manuscripts was timely considering the pandemic. PhD student Jodi Bullard’s manuscript, COVID-19: Planning and Post-Pandemic Partnerships, was published in National Association of School Nurses’ journal, School Nurse. The article, which was co-authored by Drs. Barbara McAlister and Jenifer Chilton, was the featured cover story for the journal.

- Dr. Sherron Franks-Meeks, PhD in Nursing alumna, was reappointed by Governor Abbott to the Council of Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke.
- Dr. Cheryl Garmon, DNP alumna, was honored as a Woman Who Turned the Tables at the annual Women in Tyler luncheon this past spring.
- DNP graduate, Dr. Chiquasha Davis, was named one of the 2020 End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) award winners. Dr. Davis uses ELNEC modules to prepare nursing students to give end-of-life care to all types of patients. These skills were highlighted during the pandemic when so many were dying without family present.

## Looking Forward

As we conclude the 2020–2021 academic year, our hope is that the pandemic subsides, and we can return to classrooms, clinical settings, and once again enjoy community and celebrations in person. Regardless of the future, this past year has highlighted the resilience of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences faculty, staff and students. With confidence and optimism, we will continue to advance health and wellness in diverse populations across our region, the nation and the globe.





# Ben & Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy



## A Message from the Dean

### DR. LANE J. BRUNNER

*Dean of the Ben & Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy*

The Fisch College of Pharmacy celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021 during The University of Texas at Tyler's commencement ceremony in spring 2021. The event was special as we welcomed back the Class of 2020 to formally celebrate their graduation from the Fisch College of Pharmacy in the spring of 2020. The Conferral of the Doctoral Hood Ceremony was well-attended as we recognized both classes of graduates for their academic achievements.

In fall 2020, the Fisch College of Pharmacy enrolled its sixth class of students into their first professional year of the curriculum. The matriculated Class of 2024 was the first to begin all online due to the pandemic. Except for some laboratory courses and experiential placements, students engaged in team-based learning remotely and began their four-year journey to becoming pharmacists.

This academic year was quite different for our faculty, students and staff. Like many universities worldwide, we did much of our teaching using technology to reach our students as remote learners. While our traditional courses were taught remotely, students still joined us on campus for certain laboratories that require face-to-face interactions. Our experiential education

continued, and we are proud of our student pharmacists who were out in the community caring for their patients and ensuring their safety.

In March 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic began to spread quickly, the President declared a national emergency, and it set in motion a remarkable public health response in East Texas. The students, faculty and staff of the Fisch College of Pharmacy responded immediately to assist the Northeast Texas Public Health District, regional hospitals and community pharmacies across the state. As the new academic year began, we are proud of our student pharmacists and faculty practitioners who continued their crucial work in the community. Soon, the vaccines became available, and students and faculty became integral to the immunization effort in Texas.





## Pharmacy Innovation in Learning Laboratory

The Fisch College of Pharmacy was excited to partner with the Brookshire Grocery Company and host Brookshire's novel Pharmacy Innovation in Learning Laboratory in W.T. Brookshire Hall. The PILL is located in the BGC Model Pharmacy and is staffed by two, full-time Brookshire's pharmacists and adjunct clinical faculty members, Drs. Michelle Beall and Chris Felton. Drs. Beall and Felton supervise student pharmacists as they advance their medication therapy management skills. One of the primary objectives of the PILL is to provide intense training on motivational interviewing and patient-centered care. Using a layered learning model, student pharmacists in all stages of their education and training work with each other to improve patient outcomes. Some of the key benefits from the PILL thus far have been a greatly improved understanding of clinical pharmacy practice in a non-traditional setting, and a deeper understanding of the cognitive skills practicing pharmacists provide to vulnerable patient populations.

## New Faculty

The Fisch College of Pharmacy welcomed three new faculty members during the 2020–2021 academic year; two into the clinical sciences department and one into the pharmaceutical sciences and health outcomes department.

**Dr. Shannon Rice** joined us after completing her geriatric pharmacy specialty residency at the Mountain Area Health Education Center in Asheville, NC. A graduate of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Hodge School of Pharmacy, Dr. Rice is board certified as a clinical pharmacist practitioner and former chief resident at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center in Temple, Texas. Dr. Rice's scholarship centers on advancing geriatric care through clinical outcomes research evaluating geriatric syndromes and pharmacotherapy interventions. Additional research interests include polypharmacy, prescribing cascades, and anticholinergic cognitive burden on the elderly. As an educator, Dr. Rice studies geriatric curricula across Doctor of Pharmacy programs.

**Dr. Elizabeth Yett** joined the clinical sciences department after finishing her specialty residency in ambulatory care pharmacy at the University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy under the supervision of Dr. Joshua Fleming. Dr. Yett's research and scholarship interests include health literacy in the underserved patient populations comparing those who solely speak Spanish, exclusively English, or are bilingual in Spanish and English. She is also interested in student perceptions of health literacy in delivering patient care with these different patient groups. Additionally, Dr. Yett intends on pursuing the incorporation of questions surrounding digital health practices into patient care experiences and advocate this approach as a standard of care, as digital health therapeutics continue to grow and expand.

**Dr. Santosh Aryal** joined the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Health Outcomes following a national search for a faculty member to complement the research and scholarship efforts in the Fisch College of Pharmacy. Dr. Aryal joined the College from the Nanotechnology Innovation Center of Kansas State, in Manhattan, Kansas. Dr. Aryal earned his doctoral degree in bionanosystem Engineering from the Chonbuk National University in South Korea. Following post-doctoral research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he joined the chemistry department at Kansas State University. Dr. Aryal's research focuses on engineering drug delivery devices that specifically interact or collaborate with the immune system to deliver drugs to the intended site in a targeted fashion, thereby minimizing the off-target effect. Dr. Aryal's research is supported by the National Institute of Health and National Science Foundation. Dr. Aryal is also the recipient of the University of Texas System STARs award.

## Research and Scholarship

The Fisch College of Pharmacy continues to engage student pharmacists, undergraduate students and graduate students in research and scholarship. During this academic year, 35 student pharmacists and two undergraduate students were represented on the 48

published research papers and 34 local, regional, and national poster and podium presentations. The faculty also completed three book chapters this academic year.

**Dr. David Pearson**, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences and health outcomes, was appointed the director of research for the Fisch College of Pharmacy. Previously, Dr. Pearson served as the assistant dean of research affairs in the College of Pharmacy at California Northstate University for two years and then the following year as the interim vice president for research at the university level. Dr. Pearson will take a significant role in advancing the research and scholarship mission of the Fisch College of Pharmacy and help build interdisciplinary research opportunities with members of the UT Tyler community.

**Dr. May Abdelaziz** was awarded a two-year exploratory research grant by the National Institute of Allergy and Infection Disease. Dr. Abdelaziz's award represents the first grant from the National Institutes of Health awarded to a Fisch College of Pharmacy faculty member. The project focuses on studying an enzyme called VraS that initiates the microbial defense systems against antibiotics and turns common bacteria into superbugs. Resistant bacterial strains isolated from infected patients contained VraS mutated forms. This grant will study these mutations to understand how they affect the enzyme, activate this defense system, and drive antibiotic resistance. Understanding these bacterial systems will allow us to design better antibiotics to target these mutated strains and treat these stubborn infections.

**Dr. Osama Shoair** received the prestigious American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy New Investigator Award for his proposal, Prevalence and Healthcare Costs of Psychotropic Polypharmacy Among Dementia Patients. Dr. Shoair's research will examine the prevalence of dementia patients prescribed multiple drugs to treat the behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia. The findings will provide valuable information to clinicians, healthcare organizations and policymakers about specific sources of higher healthcare use, and target opportunities for cost savings using large, nationally representative, real-world data. The study will

also provide directions for future research evaluating the impact of targeted psychotropic deprescribing interventions on reducing healthcare costs and improving outcomes in patients with dementia.

**Dr. Joseph Glavy** stepped into the principal investigator role to lead the grant, Developing Modular Repressors as In Vivo Biosensors in Various Organisms, funded by the National Science Foundation. This project aims to establish principles for creating modular biosensors by using a module swapping strategy on transcriptional repressors and generating a set of biosensors as tools for rewiring cellular response pathways.

**Drs. Osama Shoair and Winter Smith** were awarded a grant for the scholarship of teaching and learning entitled, Comparison of Students' Performance Using Online vs. Face-to-Face Team-Based Learning, from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. Results from the grant will provide insights on the flexibility of team-based learning to deliver didactic pharmacy courses online while maintaining students' competency and the quality of their learning experience. In addition, the work will examine which specific course activities and Bloom's levels of learning would be impacted when delivering didactic pharmacy courses using online team-based learning.

**Dr. Takova Wallace-Gay**, along with **Dr. Leticia Moczygemba** of the UT Austin College of Pharmacy and Cymphoni Campbell of the Texas Department of State Health Services, were awarded a grant, Learning Collaborative: Pharmacist Medication Adherence Services, from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors. The work aims to develop a medication adherence and medication therapy management template and use the data from the project to engage payers and community pharmacies.

**Dr. Michael Veronin**, and **Dr. Robert Schumaker** of the computer science department, are seeking a patent related to adverse drug event analysis, specifically to a pharmacovigilance system to predict drug reaction severity. Created from historical patient data in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Adverse Event Reporting System database, the system is designed to

compute the severity of adverse reactions using machine learning techniques, which may extract existing and proposed patient medications from electronic health records and predict a patient's risk severity score from existing and proposed prescription medication.

## Awards and Recognition

**Anna Sheraz**, a student pharmacist in the Class of 2022 working under the direction of Dr. Ayman Hamouda, presented her work in the Neuroscience Section at the 124th annual meeting of the Texas Academy of Science. Ms. Shiraz shared her research, "The Use of Concatemer Subunit Constructs to Study the Pharmacology of  $\alpha 4$ - and  $\alpha 4^*$ -containing Neuronal Nicotinic Acetylcholine Receptors," and received the award for the best oral presentation in neuroscience for the conference.

**Elanzou Enoh**, a student pharmacist conducting research with Dr. May Abdelaziz, was the American Chemical Society Bridge Travel Award recipient in the spring.

Students **Sarah Thompson** (pharmacy) and **Abdullah Alkarboly** (nursing) were featured in The Tyler Loop for their work with Drs. Ayman Hamouda and Brittany Parmentier. The research group investigated the cannabinoid content of commercial CBD products commonly used by students at UT Tyler. The students presented their research at the 6th Annual Lyceum Student Research Showcase in the spring.

The Fisch College of Pharmacy's **Epsilon Sigma Chapter of the Rho Chi Honor Society** held the new chapter installation and inauguration of the first members into the prestigious national pharmacy honor society. Twenty-three graduates were honored during a remote ceremony at the start of the academic year.

The **FCOP Student National Pharmaceutical Association Chapter** received a national service award recognizing the chapter's work in legislative, membership and immigration matters. Our 64-member Chapter was ranked second in the region and 17th in the nation (top 15%). Student pharmacists Shelby Domingue,

Julissa Gonzalez and David Foote were placed third in the National Scrapbook Competition. The Chapter was active in the community, continuing work with the Interprofessional Clinic Under the Bridge, Step out for Diabetes walk for the American Diabetes Association, Hurricane Laura Relief Fundraiser, the Affordable Insulin petition promotional event, and several COVID vaccination clinics in rural East Texas.

**Dr. May Abdelaziz** was recognized by the Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Alumni Relations as a "10 under 10" Award recipient. Dr. Abdelaziz was one of a small number of alumni who have made substantial contributions to their field during their first decade after graduating from the Virginia Commonwealth University. Recipients are selected based on their professional success, community contributions, or commitment to maintaining a lifelong relationship with their alma mater.

**Dr. Jessica Wooster** published her first textbook, Transitions of Care in Pharmacy Casebook. Several Fisch College of Pharmacy faculty members contributed to the book through authored cases, including Drs. Rebecca Dunn, Winter Smith, Cindy Yang, Takova Wallace-Gay, Brittany Parmentier, Rachel Brattelli and Justin Reinert.

**Dr. Jeremy Ashley** was named the Robert L. Hays Outstanding Consultant Pharmacist by the Texas Pharmacy Association. Dr. Ashley was recognized for his exceptional work as a consulting pharmacist as a practitioner, and for his work precepting student pharmacists in this dynamic specialty practice.

The Texas Pharmacy Association recognized **Dr. Charlotte Weller** as the 2021 Bowl of Hygiea recipient. This award annually recognizes one pharmacist who continually has demonstrated professional excellence and made significant public service contributions to the community. This is the second consecutive year a Fisch College of Pharmacy faculty member has received this high honor from the Texas Pharmacy Association.

The **Fisch College of Pharmacy** was the 22nd annual recipient of the W.T. "Doc" Ballard Award for Excellence in Public Health from the



Northeast Texas Public Health District (NET Health). The annual award honors individuals or organizations for exemplifying the concept of public health distinguished by dedication to the goal of protecting and promoting the health of the community. This was the first time an organization has received the award.

## Friend and Fund Development

During the academic year, the Fisch College of Pharmacy established several new endowed Chairs, Professorships and Fellowships from the endowment funds used to help establish the College. The Chairs included the Ben and Maytee Fisch Distinguished Chair in Pharmacy and the Ben and Maytee Fisch Chair in Pharmacy. The Maytee Fisch Professorship in Pharmacy was also established.

The Ben and Maytee Fisch Foundation chose to recognize individuals who were integral to establishing the new Fisch College of Pharmacy by naming fellowships and scholarships in their honor. In order to assist students as they advance in academic pharmacy, the Fred Smith Fellowship in Pharmacy and the Ben Fisch Fellowship in Pharmacy were initiated. With a focus on research support, the Dawn Franks Pharmacy Student Research Endowment was started. The Lane Brunner Scholarship in Pharmacy was also established.





# School of Community & Rural Health



## A Message from the Dean

**DR. GERALD (JERRY) R. LEDLOW,  
PH.D., MHA, FACHE**

*Dean, School of Community & Rural Health*

Academic year 2020–21 has been challenging yet very successful for the School of Community and Rural Health (SCRH). As a school that is four years old (founded September 1, 2016), the team members of faculty and staff have significantly contributed to growth, increased quantity and quality in the areas of teaching/instruction, student recruitment, semester credit hour production, research, scholarship, health operations and community service/engagement. Traditionally, academic units evaluate a “three-legged stool,” but the SCRH has a “fourth leg” of operations, which provides a unique and advantageous blend or “fabric” for student and research success with regard to experiential, contemporary and ecologically valid teamwork. Among academic graduate programs, the Master of Public Health (MPH) launched in January 2017, has a solid group of 30 students currently enrolled. The Master of Health Administration (MHA), launched in August 2019, has a group of 55 students, both in Tyler and Richardson/Dallas, Texas. The graduate certificate in Public Health (PHC) to be launched in August 2021, currently has one student poised for matriculation. Two Occupational Medicine physician residents graduated in June 2021 from the SCRH residency program.

In addition, the SCRH team has been working with Dr. Sue Cox (Planning Dean) and the proposed School of Medicine to build and launch an 18-month longitudinal graduate didactic curriculum that will be developed into a proposed graduate certificate titled, “Population Health System Science,” that will be launched with the School of Medicine’s inaugural cohort in summer 2023. The SCRH has faculty and staff in three locations: Austin, Richardson/Dallas and Tyler (over 85% reside and work in Tyler).

Lastly, the SCRH leads the DSRIP 1115 Waiver Anchor function for RHP-1 in the Dean’s Office and operates various programs in collaboration with multiple healthcare hospitals and clinics for this program within the Center for Population Health, Analytics and Quality Advancement. For summary in the past academic year, the SCRH has:

1. Taught (30) MPH, (55) MHA and (one) PHC students with a total of 549 semester credit hours produced across all programs:
2. Earned a total of \$17,111,345.78 in external funding this past year attributed to the school according to the Office of Sponsored Programs (HCSC \$572,000 for the DHA program added) with



approximately \$18,000,000 pending in the next three years (multi-year grants and submissions pending);

- Hired several team members for a total of 35 faculty (some part-time and adjunct at approximately 25 FTEs) and 91 staff (126 total; includes all operational team members in clinics under the DSRIP 1115 Waiver and student workers/GAs as well) in the school;
- Led and managed the RHP-1 Anchor function worth a value of \$110,442,546 (DY 9) with \$95,006,366 forecasted for DY 10 next year for the DSRIP 1115 Waiver (through Texas' HHSC);
- The SCRH team contributed to the knowledge base with approximately 97 publications (various contributions) and 36 professional presentations in the past academic year (to include a presentation for the National EPA Award for Asthma); and
- The SCRH team has worked diligently to integrate with the new organization (the expanded University of Texas at Tyler), especially as it relates to academic self-governance, student support services, policies and conversion to the Canvas LMS. In addition, the team's work to support the development of the proposed School of Medicine has been significant with building an integrated 18-month longitudinal curriculum resulting in a population health system science graduate certificate (to be submitted through the curricular process for approval) that all medical students will earn as part of their didactic program.

This report is presented to highlight accomplishments and activities in the school over the past academic year; every project is not presented for purpose of brevity, however providing the "flavor" of our work in the school by our team was the intent. The school is not a typical academic unit as the school team actively engages and works with a 10 hospital and 53 clinic health system (UTHET) and other health systems in the area (such as with the COVID-19 dashboard from March 25, 2020, to present), Graduate Medical Education (medical residents programs), community agencies (such as NET Health, East Texas Food Bank, Tyler Circle of Care and many others),

Academic units within The University of Texas at Tyler, other academic entities such as Texas College, UT Dallas, UT Health Science Center at Houston, UT Rio Grande Valley, Rice University, UT San Antonio and others, Texas State agencies (such as HHSC, DSHS and Child Protective Services) and the University of Texas System Office, namely the Center for Population Health, where several of our faculty reside and work. The SCRH team is greatly appreciative of the leadership support of the university in our effort to improve the health of East Texas and beyond.



## MAJOR INITIATIVES

### Northeast Texas Health Status Report 2021

The Health Status of Northeast Texas 2016 report provided value to the Northeast community and has been utilized in supporting numerous grants and efforts by the UTHSCT. The current task is underway to update this report that will provide an updated reference for stakeholders working to promote the health of Texans in this area and address geographic health disparities in Texas. The Northeast Texas Health Status Report 2021 will update the measures of community health included in the 2016 report and have additional measures on topics of importance to stakeholders, including social determinants of health (SDOH) and mental health. The School of Community and Rural Health's Community Health Department also supplement the written report with an interactive digital tool that would allow experts and community members to customize data and maps for their

locality and preferred indicators. As in 2016, data will be presented by race/ethnicity to facilitate an understanding of racial disparities within the region.

### Center for Population Health, Analytics and Quality Advancement

The Center for Population Health, Analytics and Quality Advancement's (CPHAQA) mission is to be the intersection between academic, clinical operations and community collaborations to improve population health starting in East Texas and beyond. As such, CPHAQA delivers a menu of Lifestyle Change programs to include Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), Hypertension Workshops, Hypertension Tracking/Support, Active Living After Cancer, Your Diabetes, Your Heart and Tobacco Cessation. The DPP program received CDC certification in January 2021. These programs are delivered through collaborations with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), MD Anderson, and the TAMU Center for Population Health and Aging. These programs have been delivered to 950 participants collectively in the time period of 2020-2021, with more than 1,700 referrals to the tobacco cessation program and more than 600 healthcare workers trained in tobacco cessation. Through these programs, CPHAQA facilitated the UT Health North Campus' recognition as a participant in the American Heart Association's Target BP Program.

CPHAQA is also the site of a DSHS certified Community Health Worker (CHW) Training and maintenance of certification. Since its inception, 91 CHWs have graduated, and 43 credit hours of CEUs have been delivered. In spring 2021, Tyler ISD joined as a recipient of the CHW Training and graduated nine high seniors as certified CHWs. As a host site of the Northeast Texas region's AHEC (Area Health Education Center), the Northeast Texas Primary HealthCare Symposium was delivered in collaboration with the Alzheimer Association of NE Texas in November 2020, with AHEC's additional participation in the School Nurse and Pre-Health Conferences, and collaboration with the UT Tyler Pre-Med Academy. Additionally, there were 31 participants in the AHEC Scholars' program.

CPAHQA oversees UTHSCT's 1115 Waiver DSRIP (Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment)

Program, which enhances care delivered in a focus of 10 quality of care measure bundles such as preventive screening, chronic disease, maternal safety, behavioral health, supportive care and dental care. For 2020, CPHAQA facilitated a 100% achievement in all 43 measures, providing \$26.5 million in revenue to UT Health East Texas. Tremendous work continues as the 1115 Waiver DSRIP program transitions to Directed Payment Programs (DPP). In addition, the transition to the Epic Health records and operating system from Meditech is ongoing and impacts all data flows and reports (and audits) associated with these programs.

### A Call to Action: COVID-19 Response

During these unprecedented times, while continuing to maintain clinical, teaching and research responsibilities, SCRH department faculty, staff and students within the MPH program responded to public health crises because of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. This effort began as faculty in the SCRH serve as the Smith County Local Health Authority, namely Dr. Jeff Levin and after October 2020, Dr. Paul McGaha, in which medical expertise of the School was continuously provided to elected and appointed local and regional officials through the Joint Emergency Operations Center and Commissioner's Court. In addition, UTHSCT invested in an ultra-low temperature freezer to enable the storage of the first COVID-19 vaccine available (Pfizer). Local vaccination activities began in late December 2020. Smith County was fortunate to have two locations deemed "HUBs" for vaccine delivery and administration: UTHSCT and NET Health. Many community health employees were re-deployed to assist with the UTHSCT HUB site. Over 52,000 doses were administered. A Community Health Departmental physician served as the medical director for the NET Health HUB site at Harvey Hall Convention Center. Over 69,000 doses were given there. The administration of vaccines helped control the epidemic allowing a relaxation of masking and distancing guidelines. Additionally, through the National COVID Cohort Collaborative (N3C), an NIH-funded activity where collaborators contribute and use COVID-19 data to answer critical research questions, data was sent from the UTHSCT vaccination site. Dr. Paul McGaha was appointed as a subject-matter expert for

the COVID-19 Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel (EVAP) to develop Texas vaccine allocation strategies as recommendations to the Texas Commissioner of Health.

As new cases of COVID-19 were diagnosed in and around the Smith County area, the Smith County Emergency Management Team needed a way to track and report the emergence of cases. The Center for Population Health and Quality Analytics (CPHQA), under Dr. Michele Bosworth's leadership, developed a COVID-19 dashboard to include the utilization of hospital resources to address the COVID-19 healthcare crisis, prevalence of diagnosis and disposition of cases. The UT Health North Campus COVID-19 dashboard was also developed that contained drill down data into more campus-specific COVID-related indicators to include respiratory center visits, employee COVID-19 exposures, quarantines, positive cases and PHLET lab testing volumes.

Subsequently, the Radical Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx.) program, funded through NIH, was launched to address underserved populations (UP) specifically, hence the name RADx-UP. The School is collaborating with the other investigators and regional teams to meet the primary aims of the study, including 1) identifying disparities and dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 testing and infections in the East Texas region; 2) identifying personal, organizational, community, and structural factors contributing to the SARS CoV2-testing disparity; and 3) implementing a multilevel intervention that increases access to testing in identified high-risk neighborhoods. Our outreach team of four Community Health Workers under the direction of Dr. Michele Crum, a community health department faculty member, provides educational outreach in communities on the risks of COVID-19, improves access to community testing and promotes the benefits of vaccination against COVID-19.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Healthy Families Initiative

Given the racial/ethnic disparities in infant mortality and the high prevalence of associated maternal risk factors in Texas, there is a growing need to move evidence-

informed research to practice and policy. The Healthy Families Initiative, housed in the Department of Community Health, was launched in fall 2016 by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) with the overall goal of understanding multilevel contextual factors influencing pregnancy outcomes in populations experiencing low access to state-funded prenatal care and poor maternal and infant health outcomes. The four-year initiative was a unique partnership between a state agency, academic institutions and two communities (Smith and Hidalgo counties). HHSC provided flexible funding to support the identification, development, implementation, adaptation and evaluation of evidence-informed practices to address community-identified gaps around pregnancy outcomes. Activities supported through the Healthy Families initiative include development and/or expansion of group pediatric care, nurse home visitors, community health workers, health equity training and a mobile reproductive health clinic. Following the successful implementation at both Healthy Families project sites, HHSC provided one year of funding to support the expansion of the mobile reproductive and prenatal healthcare model developed in the Hidalgo County project site in partnership with UT Rio Grande Valley. In the first six months of the expansion, the mobile model has served over 700 women, providing a range of pregnancy-related and contraception services as well as referral into community resources and linkage to public healthcare coverage options (e.g., Medicaid, Healthy Texas Women, CHIP-Perinatal). The mobile healthcare model will receive an additional year of funding beginning September 2021, based on the success of this model.

### Community-Academic Partnership for Substance Abuse in East Texas (CAPSA-East Texas)

Substance abuse in Northeast Texas is pervasive across the 23 rural counties of Public Health Region (PHR) 4. The region suffers from higher rates of alcohol use and overall prescription drug use than other regions of the state. PHR 4 reports an opioid use rate of 20 percent, higher than the state rate of 17 percent. Research on substance use disorder (SUD) in the region is nonexistent, and few data are available regarding evidence-based



interventions to treat SUD. The Community-Academic Partnership for Substance Abuse in East Texas (CAPSA-ET) is a project under primary investigator Dr. Yordi Tiruneh. Dr. Tiruneh is working to build a sustainable research infrastructure (consortium) to address substance use disorder (SUD) in East Texas through community engagement and capacity building of various stakeholder groups. With the lead community partner, the East Texas Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ETCADA), CAPSA-ET engages several community stakeholders in a series of planned activities to network and get involved in governing activities such as the CAPSA steering committee; participating in conferences, research trainings, focus group discussions, stakeholders' socials, community forums and other CAPSA online platforms. CAPSA-ET also identifies research needs and develops a stakeholder engaged research agenda for SUD in East Texas to capture relevant data and spawn SUD research that can be meaningfully translated into community initiatives and interventions to improve SUD prevention, treatment and recovery services.

## NEW PROGRAMS

### Doctor of Health Administration

The UT System Board of Regents (full board) approved the Doctor of Health Administration in Population Health Leadership and Analytics (DHA) program with authority for us to “plan and move forward” on November 18, 2020. Students will enter as a cohort each August and complete a required two–three day, on-campus orientation. The curriculum consists of 12, four-credit-hour online courses, six one-credit-hour, face-to-face seminars, and one, six-hour dissertation. The model and curriculum were jointly developed by the school and the Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC; BCBS umbrella corporation of five states to include BCBSTX).

Delivery of courses will span three years (second year – didactic; third year – dissertation) during fall, spring and summer semesters. Two, four-credit-hour courses will be delivered 100% online each semester, followed by a one-credit-hour seminar delivered face-to-face. After successfully concluding the didactic courses and an oral comprehensive examination, students

will register for a six-hour dissertation. It is expected that the completion of the dissertation will take approximately one year.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has been notified, and the intent is to finalize for submission to the UT System Board of Regents a formal Proposal for a New Doctoral Program during the next academic year (2021–2022). If approved, the program is expected to matriculate students in August 2024, once the required resources are committed to the program.

### Public Health Certificate

In spring 2021, the Curriculum, Instruction and Technology (CIT) Committee approved the graduate certificate in Public Health. With the first students slated to begin in August 2021, this certificate will provide busy working individuals and others interested in public health who may not have the time or resources to complete the MPH program access to education in the core principles of public health. The Public Health certificate will complement the training for physicians in UT Health East Texas' residency programs and offer students the ability to gain the certificate before completing the degree requirements. The Health Science Center's goal is to improve the health outcomes of this region and beyond. Increasing the number of professionals with public health knowledge and tools is one step to improving the health status of Northeast Texans.

## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

### Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CTS)

The goal of the Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CTS) is to facilitate clinical and translational research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT). The UT Health Science Center at Houston is the CTS lead. The other three participating institutions include the UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, UT Rio Grande Valley and Rice University. The aims of the CTS include: 1) To expand informatics support for clinical and translational research; 2) To expand data, information and knowledge resources for clinical and translational

research; and 3) To expand access to early-phase clinical trials. Translational research includes two areas of translation. One is the process of applying discoveries generated during research in the laboratory, and in preclinical studies, to the development of trials and studies in humans. The second area of translation concerns research aimed at enhancing the adoption of best practices in the community. The SCRH was chosen as a partner to expand CCTS reach to rural and minority populations.

### EXTERNAL FUNDING HIGHLIGHT

The Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) awarded a \$1 million grant to the Henderson County Substance and Opioid Control Coalition (Henderson CoSOC) to help combat the opioid and drug abuse crisis facing the community. Henderson CoSOC is a collaboration of four consortium organizations: The UT Health Science Center at Tyler led by Dr. Harrison Ndetan (PI & Project Director) and faculty in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, and Dr. Emmanuel Elueze (Co PI & Chair of the East Texas Opioid and Substance Abuse Control Coalition); UT Health East Texas Athens Hospital led by Dr. Richard David; the East Texas Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ETCADA) led by Ms. Linda Oyer; the Henderson HELP Center led by Ms. Leslie Saunders, and a new collaboration with the East Texas Community Clinic, under the leadership of Mr. Glen Robertson. The coalition has established three task forces, an advisory board, and a data monitoring and evaluation committee to help support its effort.

The coalition's goal is to address the shortage in substance abuse services in Henderson County by enhancing access to substance and opioid use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery services. The Henderson CoSOC funding supports the HOPE Project, which seeks to expand, enhance and sustain access to evidence-based, culturally and linguistically tailored opioid and substance abuse prevention, treatment and recovery services in the community.

This project is one of many projects with external funding in the school. Since 2017, the school has seen tremendous growth in externally funded work (over 100%) in alignment with the school's mission

of improving the health of East Texas and beyond.

## STUDENT SUCCESS

### Upsilon Phi Delta

The Master of Health Administration (MHA) program began in the fall of 2019. The Health Science Center is a member program of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA). On June 8, 2021, 23 MHA students were inducted into the AUPHA's Upsilon Phi Delta Honor Society in a pinning ceremony by Dr. Patricia Royal, the program director and faculty adviser. Upsilon Phi Delta (UPD) Honor Society is dedicated to recognizing and rewarding academic excellence in the study of healthcare management and policy. Students eligible for this recognition had completed at least 18 graduate credit hours in the program curriculum with a GPA of 3.75 or above. This induction represents the first members of UPD for the Health Science Center's chapter.

### Americorp VISTA Position

Kenya Alexis-Mongare, an MPH student, has been selected and accepted an Americorp VISTA position with the Smith County Food Security Council for June 2021–June 2022. This experience will serve as her practicum for summer 2021, working on coalition support and direct programming with the summer feeding program and our produce drops. She will then determine a research or program focus she would like to choose for her Capstone I Project this fall. Dr. Valerie Smith will guide Ms. Alexi as her summer preceptor, and Dr. Christine Osuagwu will serve as faculty adviser.

### AMA Student, Resident and Fellow Impact Challenge 2020

Medical residents enrolled in the MPH program provided 15 presentations and submitted four abstracts over the last year. Notably, an abstract submitted by Dr. Alexander Nguyen, Occupation Health resident and an MPH student, was selected for the AMA Health Systems Science Student, Resident and Fellow Impact Challenge 2020. The 2020 AMA Health Systems Science Student and Resident Impact Challenge focused on applying health systems science to impact patients, physicians

and health systems during the pandemic. Medical students and residents across the country were encouraged to submit entries detailing how their experience in learner-led activities or projects with the hopes of being showcased in the 2020 edition of Medical Students and Residents Making an Impact, invitation to present the projects at the AMA's next ChangeMedEd conference in Chicago or receiving \$500. Dr. Nguyen's abstract titled, “Protecting Patients and Health Care Workers During the COVID -19 Pandemic – Integration Decision-making Algorithms into an Online Survey to Automate Return to Work Determinations Following Possible Exposure,” was acknowledged and accepted for this honor. The abstract was published in the American Medical Association's Medical Students, Resident and Fellows Making an Impact, Special COVID-19 Edition.

## FACULTY AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Jeffrey Levin, MD, Provost Emeritus, was awarded the W.T. “Doc” Ballard Award, Northeast Texas Public Health District (NET Health) for 2020. The W.T. “Doc” Ballard Award is given to individuals in Northeast Texas who exemplifies the highest level of public health service to the community. Dr. Levin was awarded the W.T. “Doc” Ballard award previously in 2018.
- Jeffrey Levin, MD, Provost Emeritus, received the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) Excellence in Education or Research in Occupational and Environmental Medicine Award. This award recognizes the lifetime achievement of individuals in the field of occupational and environmental medicine in both areas of education and research. ACOEM is the largest national medical society focusing on the health and safety of workers.
- Cynthia Ball, DO and Dalia Nessim, MD, were inducted to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine as fellows.
- Christine Osuagwu, PhD., MPA, MSN-FNP and Harrison Ndetan, MPH, MD, PhD. were recognized as Outstanding

Student Advisers in the Master of Public Health Program.

- Thomas Maryon, PhD, was recognized as Outstanding Faculty of the Year, School of Community Health, Master of Health Administration Program for 2021
- Karan Singh, PhD, EMISI, FMSSANZ, FSMS, FASA, received 2021 Mark the Spot Award for uncanny ability to lead students to success, 2021 Spark Award-Canvas Climb for Infusing Curriculum and Humor, and 2020 and 2021 Outstanding Faculty of the Years – Master of Public Health Program.
- Gerald Ledlow, PhD, MHA, FACHE was nominated, evaluated by an external committee and inducted into the Kenneth I. Shine Academy for Health Education as a member/scholar in February 2021, as part of the greater University of Texas System Academy.

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

With the emerging worldwide pandemic, the SCRH graduate programs transitioned to fully online instruction. The faculty continued to provide an exceptional educational experience and support students. SCRH faculty trained and received certification for online instruction, thereby becoming Certified Online Instructors. A two-phased approach was instituted to allow all faculty the opportunity to be trained as online instructors and have their respective courses certified for online instruction. In the first phase, the faculty course designer enrolled as a student in the Web Course Design Community Online Course. The course was structured around instructional design principles for quality online instruction regardless of the delivery platform. Over an eight-week period, the faculty worked on how to design their courses for online delivery through completing five modules that involved reading and response, interaction, and the development of a blueprint of the first instructional module for the online course to be developed.

Courses approved for online delivery by UTHSCT undergo a review process seeking evidence of principles of good practice, as outlined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and SACSCOC. Faculty



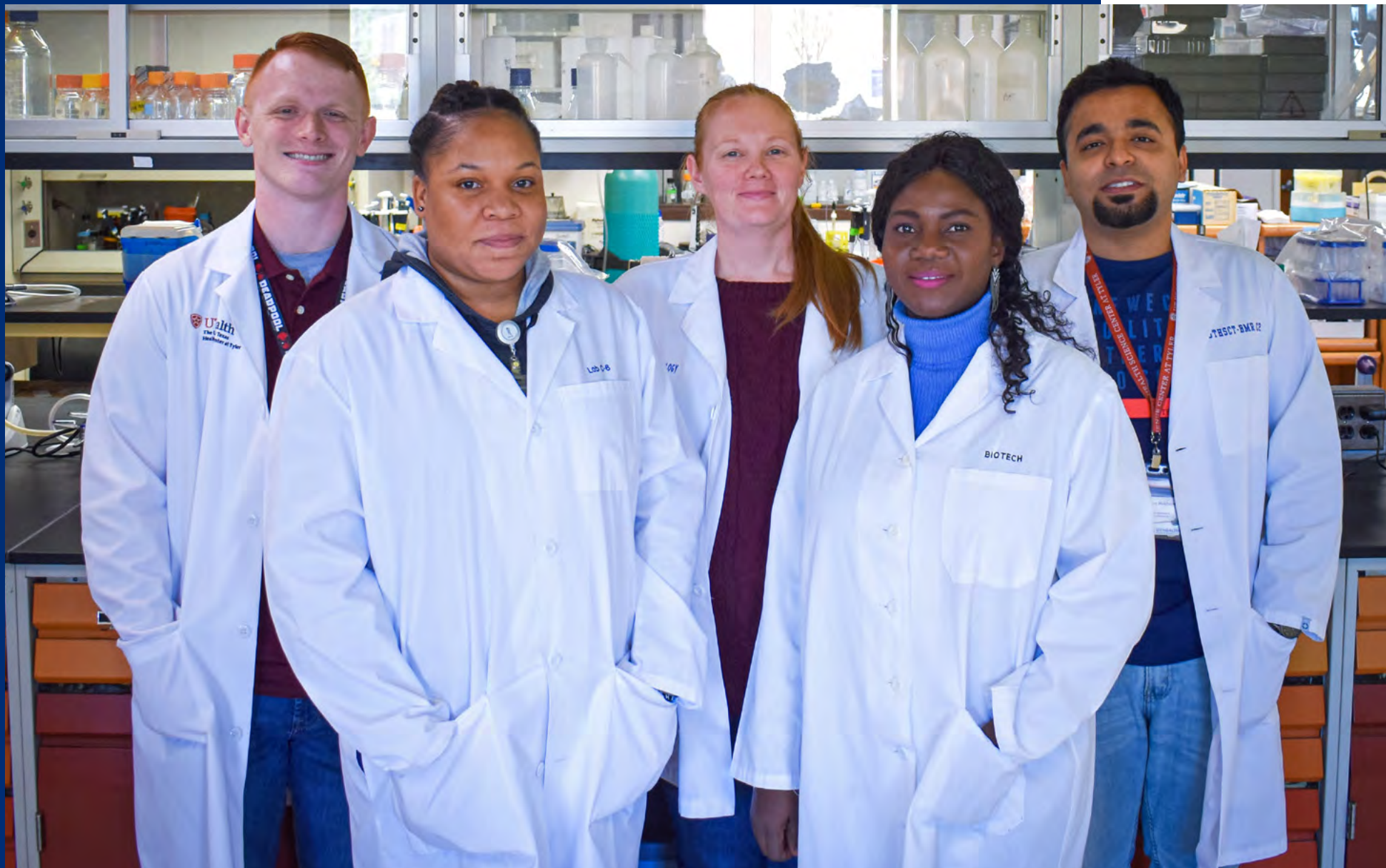
designers work closely with the Center for Education and Technology (CET) support staff to adhere to quality design principles, the Americans with Disabilities Act and copyright laws.

At the conclusion of the certification for online instruction program, the SCRH has 20 faculty certified and 15 courses certified for online delivery.





# School of Medical Biological Sciences



## Introduction

The School of Medical Biological Sciences (SMBS) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler strives to help students achieve excellence in science utilizing creative traditional and non-traditional instructional methods, state-of-the-art technology and innovative research.

The SMBS consists of two departments and 26 faculty members. Our highly-skilled teams of scientists focus on acute, chronic and infectious lung diseases, thoracic malignancies and immunologic problems, while continuing to develop new knowledge and therapies to improve human health. We are also involved in training the next generation of scientists through our highly successful Master of Science in biotechnology graduate program.

The biotechnology program consists of research and teaching faculty with MD and/or PhD degrees performing nationally-recognized and extramurally-funded biomedical research in competitive and relevant fields. All faculty use a variety of biotechnology techniques in their labs to eagerly teach, guide, challenge, and support our students.

As part of the biotechnology program, students are encouraged to present their research alongside their faculty mentors at professional conferences, both nationally and internationally. Students are also included on publications in peer-reviewed journals. In the last year, the faculty published more than 50 peer reviewed articles, many of which included student contributions.

In summary, SMBS faculty and staff work to provide a comprehensive research graduate program, while pursuing excellence in their contributions to medical research.

## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Dr. Steven Idell – Optimization of a Rabbit Retained Hemothorax Model for Evidence-Based Pharmacologic Interventions. Retained hemothorax (RH) is a difficult to treat and often encountered problem for which surgical therapy is usually required. We will generate a new mode of retained hemothorax to address the lack of a model suitable for interventional testing of new pharmacotherapy for RH. The model will be generated using validated performance measures to enable testing of several new agents that may improve outcomes in this condition. (NIH)

-Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CTS) – N3C & All of Us Research Program

-Collaborative Project (NIH/CTSA)

CTSA/Convalescent Plasma Study (NIH/CTSA)  
Dr. Ramakrishna Vankayalapati – Innate immune response of LTBI+HIV+ children. This proposal will identify a novel memory-like NK cell subpopulation mediated mechanisms that regulate immune responses and pinpoint the nature of the defective responses that permit development of active TB in HIV-LTBI+ and HIV+LTBI+ children. These studies will lay the groundwork for strategies to develop novel



anti-tuberculosis vaccines that stimulate strong NK cell mediated immunity in HIV+ and HIV- children with LTBI and reduce development of TB. (NIH)

Dr. Andrey Komissarov – Delivery of PAI-1-targeted intrapleural fibrinolytic therapy for empyema. For four decades, advanced-stage empyema in adults, a disease with high rates of mortality in the elderly, has lacked diagnostic tests to advise clinical decision-making and approved non-surgical interventions. By combining novel companion diagnostic test, FPA, that predicts treatment outcomes with the delivery of low dose PAI-1-targeted fibrinolytic therapy, we will define a personalized, safe and efficient treatment for advanced-stage empyema. (NIH)

Dr. Xia Guo – Deducator of cytokinesis 2 in atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is the primary cause of heart attack, stroke and peripheral arterial disease, which accounts for about 40% of all deaths in the United States. We have identified a gene called dedicator of cytokinesis 2, which plays a key role in endothelial inflammation and macrophage activation/function in atherogenesis. The proposed studies will shed new light on the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis and may ultimately lead to the identification of novel targets for developing therapeutic agents to treat atherosclerosis. (NIH)

Dr. Sreerama Shetty – Development, Formulation and Inhalational Delivery of a New Peptide for ILD. Lung fibrosis is a progressive fatal scarring disorder affecting thousands of U.S. patients annually and currently is incurable. We found that targeting caveolin-1 and tumor suppressor protein, p53 with a novel drug candidate; CSP7, will resolve full-blown lung fibrosis and improve lung function in mice when administered via the airway. The information gained from this project will accelerate the development of this novel and potentially more effective therapeutic candidate for the treatment of idiopathic and other fibrotic lung diseases. (NIH)

-Role of p53 and PAI-1 in Tobacco Smoke-Induced Lung Injury (DOD)

-Development of a Novel Drug Candidate, CSP7, for the treatment of COVID-19 (DOD)

Dr. Shashi Kant – Reinforcing old warriors to treat Mycobacterium kansasii in shorter duration. Among the non-tuberculous mycobacteria (NTM), Mycobacterium kansasii is the second most common cause of pulmonary disease that resembles with tuberculosis in clinical presentation. The current standard treatment regimen is administered for 18-24 months, well beyond the short-course chemotherapy of six months for tuberculosis. Our hypothesis is that the optimal drug exposures for M. kansasii will be different from those established for M. tuberculosis. Using pre-clinical drug development tools to perform rigorous pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamics studies, we aim to optimize the dose of standard drugs – isoniazid, rifampin and ethambutol – to design a M. kansasii specific treatment regimen with the ability to suppress acquired drug resistance. We expect the optimal exposure combination could treat M. kansasii in six months or less. (NIH)

Dr. Maolin Lu – HIV-1 fusion studied by parallel single-molecule FRET and cryo-electron tomography. As the only exposed protein on the surface of HIV-1, envelope (Env) is the primary target for developing HIV-1 vaccines and anti-Env therapeutics. The proposed studies will apply an integrated platform consisting of parallel single-molecule dynamic and static biophysical tools to reveal and characterize the hidden shapes (conformations/ structures) of Env during the HIV-1 entry into host cells with the ultimate goal of identifying anti-Env drug targets and informing vaccine and drug design. (Foundation for Aids Research)

Dr. Kaushik Das – The Role of FVIIa-released endothelial extracellular vesicles in hemophilia therapy. The American Heart Association (AHA)

Dr. Jhansi Magisetty – The role of EPCR-FVIIa in the pathogenesis and treatment of hemophilic arthropathy. (AHA)

Dr. Shilpa Kusampudi – Role of protease from poultry organic dust in induction of lung inflammation. (NIOSH)

Dr. Wesley Kujur – Career in Immunology Fellowship. (American Association of Immunologists)

## FACULTY ACHIEVEMENT

Dr. Sachin Mulik published a first-authored manuscript titled, “Decidual NK cells transfer granulysin to selectively kill bacteria in trophoblasts” in the prestigious journal Cell, which has an impact factor of 38. Dr. Mulik was also selected as the guest editor for Frontiers in Immunology.

Dr. Vijay Rao published a paper titled, “Oxidative Stress Product, 4-Hydroxy-2-Nonenal, Induces the Release of Tissue Factor-Positive Microvesicles From Perivascular Cells Into Circulation” in Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology. His work was also selected as the cover art for the journal. His other paper titled, “Factor VIIa induces extracellular vesicles from the endothelium: a potential mechanism for its hemostatic effect” was published in Blood (impact factor 17). It was also selected to be featured in a podcast, an honor reserved for the top three papers in the journal. These papers were chosen due to their impact in their respective fields. They represent the more than 30 peer-reviewed publications prepared by the SMBS Faculty.

Dr. Shashi Kant, an associate professor in the Department of Pulmonary Immunology, received a Rising STARs award from UT System, which recognizes his outstanding work and provides funds for laboratory operations. His research is focused on infectious disease research and experimental therapeutics, with emphasis on Mycobacterium tuberculosis and nontuberculous mycobacteria, namely M. avium complex (MAC), M. kansasii and M. abscessus.

Dr. Torry Tucker received the 2020 Regent’s Outstanding Teaching Award from UT System. These awards are to recognize teaching excellence in the System universities. Dr. Tucker won this award as recognition for his outstanding instruction in his graduate courses. He was recognized for his mentorship of graduate students as thesis director, thesis chair and service on thesis committees. Dr. Tucker was also selected as a permanent member of the Lung Injury, Repair and Remodeling Study Section for the National Institutes of Health for a six-year appointment.

This study section reviews applications to the NIH that focus on lung development and the responses of lung tissues to injury, repair, fibrosis and barrier function.

Dr. Ramakrishna Vankayalapati, chair and professor of the Department of Pulmonary Immunology, served on five study sections in the past academic year including: LCMI, ZRG1-AARR-B-02, ZAI1-LK-M-M1, ZRG1-IDIB-S-02 and III. He was also invited to speak at an NIH Virtual workshop, “Identifying Initial Host-Mtb Interactions that Determine the Establishment of TB Disease,” sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Members of the SMBS faculty also serve as invited peer reviewers for a wide array of funding entities including the NIH, DOD and American Heart Association. Faculty members also serve on the editorial boards, numerous high impact scientific journals and as peer reviewers in Blood, JCI Insight, the American Journal of Respiratory Critical Care Medicine, American Journal of Respiratory and Cellular Biology, and Life.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Summer Research and Clinical Externship program at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler was cancelled for 2020 and 2021. This summer externship provides high school and undergraduate college students the opportunity to spend four weeks of the summer learning about biomedical research and clinical professions. Founded in the realm of health sciences, the externship provides stimulating exposure to scientific research, as well as insight into a multitude of medical specialties by shadowing doctors, nurses and medical technicians. Within the program, students interact with top-notch scientists, meet with expert physicians, and work with other research and clinical professionals to gain a true insight into all aspects of medicine.

## NEW FACULTY

Dr. Maolin Lu joined the SMBS faculty during June 2021, as a tenure-track assistant professor in the Department of Cellular and Molecular Biology. She came to UTHSC from the laboratory of Dr. Walther Molthes

at Yale University’s School of Medicine. Her work there focused on understanding how conformational changes of the COVID-19 spike protein can affect therapeutic targeting. Dr. Lu has a strong research record in single-molecule imaging of HIV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 surface spikes and has published more than 20 peer-reviewed papers. She first-authored/ corresponding-authored many high-profile articles, some of which were published in high-impact journals including Nature 2019, Cell Host & Microbe 2020, Nat Struct Mol Biol 2020, and J Virol 2020.

## INTERNAL FUNDING FOR PROMISING RESEARCH PROJECTS

The School of Medical and Biological Sciences routinely offers seed grants to support “high risk/ high reward” research projects. These awards are offered biannually and support meritorious and collaborative projects. In the past, these “seed” projects have supported the acquisition of critical preliminary data to support NIH application, which were subsequently funded. This year, three seed grant awards are available and will be awarded in August 2021.

## STUDENT SUCCESS

Soyemi Olamipejo’s abstract titled, “Suppression of T-cell Immune responses by neutrophils in a direct contact manner,” was accepted for poster presentation at the American Association of Immunologists, an international conference recognizing outstanding research projects. The abstract was also published in The Journal of Immunology’s Special Meeting Abstracts Supplement. This acceptance made her eligible for departmental support for travel and hotel expenses for attending this conference.

The Biotechnology Graduate Program in the School of Medical Biological Sciences had five students to participate in the May graduation ceremonies. All graduates of the program have found employment in their field of study.

## VISITING STUDENTS

The School of Medical Biological Sciences established a student exchange agreement with Kangwon National University in 2017. This year, Han-ul Kim, a PhD candidate from Kangwon National University, joined the laboratory of Dr. Mitsuo Ikebe to learn protein expression and isolation techniques using insect and mammalian cell expression systems that have been established in his laboratory. His PhD thesis project is to determine the structure of class III and class IXX myosin molecules using the Cryo-Electron Microscopy technique with resolution of a few angstroms level that can visualize amino acid side chain in 3-D protein structure. Study of class III myosin has received great attention because this gene is responsible for human hearing impairment, phenotype DFNB30. It is important for the structural and functional integrity of stereocilia, which is an actin-based mechanosensing structural unit in the inner ear and plays an important role for auditory function. Class IXX myosin associates with mitochondria and plays a critical role in mitochondrial dynamics and function. During his stay in our laboratory, he was also trained to use various light microscopy techniques including 3-D confocal imaging and super resolution microscopy imaging to study the function of these molecules using cell biological approaches.



# The Office of Research & Scholarship + Office of Sponsored Projects



## Introduction

The Office of Research and Scholarship (ORS) on the UT Tyler academic campus and the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) on the Health Science Center campus assist faculty and staff in achieving their research goals by helping them navigate the increasingly complex and competitive world of external funding sources. In addition, they support and collaborate with several committees on all UT Tyler campuses. The staff provide services from identifying funding sources and preparing proposals to post-award management and compliance.

The ORS and OSP were unified under the leadership of Steven Idell, MD, PhD, senior vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School and Kouider Mokhtari, PhD, associate vice president for research and associate dean of the Graduate School. A director of research will oversee the daily activities of the ORS and OSP. UT Tyler was recently classified by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as R2: Doctoral Universities—High research activity.

The Office of Research and Scholarship launched several new initiatives in AY 20-21. The Research Design and Analysis Lab was established to provide guidance in developing

research designs and methods and conducting data analysis. In collaboration with the Office of Marketing and Communications, *Forward: The Research Magazine* of The University of Texas at Tyler, was successfully published. In addition, the ORS and OSP hosted the East Texas Research Conference virtually that featured presentations on COVID-19 research.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only changed how students attended college and how faculty and staff worked, but it also affected how research could be conducted. The ORS and OSP developed guidelines and a frequently asked questions document to help investigators continue research activities, when possible, during the pandemic. The guidelines were updated as needed to ensure that federal, state and university policies and guidelines were followed.

## Sponsored Research and Programs

The number of grant proposals submitted by the ORS and OSP increased this year over previous years. Grant proposals submitted to external sponsors are provided in the table below.

Number of proposals submitted to external sponsors through June in AY 20-21.



Number of active awards from external sponsors managed by the ORS and OSP

Sponsor	UT Tyler	UTHSCT
National Institutes of Health	10	40
National Science Foundation	17	1
Other Agencies and Institutions of Higher Education	31	21
Private Non-Profit Foundations	23	9
Private For-Profit Organizations	6	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>95</b>

and research expenditures through June in AY 20-21 decreased this year over previous years due to pauses and restrictions on funded research activities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Internal Grants Program

The Internal Grants Program at UT Tyler supports faculty and staff research and

	UT Tyler	UTHSCT
Active Awards	79	200
Research Expenditures	\$857,205	\$19,527,964

programs that advance the university's research productivity, scholarly output and creative endeavors. Grants were awarded through a competitive process held in the spring in six categories. Thirteen applications were submitted to the Internal Grants Program in response to the request for proposals for the 2021-22 academic year. All 13 applications were awarded for a total of \$81,511. Funding will be made available to the awardees beginning September 1, 2021. These awards are expected to pay substantial dividends in coming years by leading to an increase in the number of and success rate of grant proposals submitted to external sponsors.

### Faculty Development Leave Program

The Faculty Development Leave Program provides faculty with opportunities to enhance their research and scholarship portfolio, develop national international collaborations, and reinvigorate their academic career in support of student success and the strategic plan of the university. Awards in the form of release time are granted to tenured faculty through a peer-reviewed, competitive process and approval by the President. A request for applications for faculty development leave was not issued during AY 20-21 due to travel and other restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A request for applications for AY 21-22 will be issued in December 2021.

### STARs and Rising STARs Awards

The ORS and OSP support advancement of research at UT Tyler by assisting in the preparation and submittal of packages seeking UT System funding in the form of STARs and Rising STARs awards to attract talented faculty and scholars and then support their research and scholarship pursuits. Rising STARs awards were given to two UT Tyler faculty in AY 2020-21 totaling \$350,000. STARs awards of \$250,000 each were given to three faculty at UTHSCT totaling \$750,000.

### Student Success

The Office of Research and Scholarship administers the Internal Grants Program that provides research opportunities for students. The ORS also supports faculty efforts to acquire extramural funding for research and programs that enrich student education and success. In AY 2020-21, internally- and externally-funded research and sponsored programs helped support 26 graduate students and 36 undergraduate students attending UT Tyler. The ORS provided two workshops for doctoral students on finding funding using Pivot.

### Research Council

The UT Tyler Research Council, chaired Dr. Joshua Banta, associate professor of biology, provides consultation and guidance on programs and policies pertaining to faculty research. The council has several responsibilities including providing oversight of the institution's research committees, serving as a hearing board for Conflict of Interest

cases involving faculty researchers and reviewing internal grant research proposals and making award recommendations to the associate vice president of research. The Research Council members reviewed the 13 internal grant proposals for 2021-22.

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The UT Tyler Institutional Review Board, chaired by Dr. David Pearson, reviewed 122 new IRB protocols, seven renewals and 67 modifications submitted through June 2021, and closed out 34 protocols. Between September 2020, and June 3 2021, the UTHSCT's two Institutional Review Board committees, chaired by Drs. Emmanuel Elueze and Paul Latta respectively, completed 338 IRB protocols reviews consisting of a mix of new, continuing review, modifications, adverse events, deviations and closures.

### Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, chaired by Dr. Brent Bill, reviewed protocols or annual reports for 13 research protocols in AY 2020-2021. The UTHSCT Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, chaired by Amy Tvinnereim, Ph.D., reviewed 23 new protocols, 6 off-campus protocols, and 27 annual reports.

### Biosafety

The UT Tyler Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), chaired by Dr. Ali Azghani, provides oversight for recombinant DNA research. The primary goal of the committee is to help ensure that all activities involving biohazardous materials are conducted in compliance with federal, state and local regulations and applicable university policies. The UTHSCT IBC, chaired by Ramakrishna Vankayalapati, Ph.D., reviewed 2 rDNA and 14 hazardous chemical protocols through June 2021.

### Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer

The UT Tyler Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer committee (IPAC), chaired by Dr. Amir Mirmiran, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, provides consultation and guidance on intellectual property and technology transfer disclosures. Dr. Yong "Tai" Wang, past dean of the UT Tyler

College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and Dr. Chung Hyun Goh, assistant professor in mechanical engineering, along with two collaborators were granted a patent for creating a new strength training exercise ball to use during Tai Chi. Four patent applications from UT Tyler and two from UTHSCT are pending.

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

### Research Design and Data Analysis Lab

The ORS opened the Research Design and Data Analysis Lab in spring 2021 under the direction of Kim Nimon, Ph.D., with a mission to "support research at The University of Texas at Tyler by providing students, faculty and staff with expert guidance in developing research designs and methods and conducting data analyses that are based on quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method approaches." During its first semester of operation, the lab provided 12 one-hour webinars, a two-day workshop, and 30 hours of consulting with faculty or students.

### Faculty Development Workshops

The Office of Research and Scholarship develops and provides workshops that are free to faculty, staff and students on topics that support the development of well-written funding proposals that meet sponsor priorities. Additional workshops are provided to help awardees manage their grants or contracts in compliance with the university and sponsor requirements. In AY 2020-2021 the Office of Research and Scholarship provided 14 research development workshops on nine topics such as searching for funding sources, the internal grants program, creating biographical sketches, collaborative funding opportunities and intellectual property law. In a new initiative, the ORS provided seven workshops on the same number of topics related to grant management for grant awardees and their administrative assistants during AY 2020-2021, and hosted three faculty-led workshops on human subjects research, animal research, as well as authorship, publication and peer review.

The Research Fellows Program graduated a cohort of nine faculty and one staff who participated in a series of monthly workshops designed to assist them in developing proposals to submit to external sponsors. Several of the participants submitted internal grant proposals, proposals to external sponsors or both. A new cohort of four faculty and one staff are participating in an accelerated summer version of the Research Fellows Program that started in June.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### East Texas Research Conference

The second East Texas Research Conference was hosted virtually on April 15, 2021, with a focus on the Coronavirus Pandemic, Emerging Therapeutics, Health Implications and Challenges. The conference featured a distinguished panel of internationally recognized experts representing medical and behavioral disciplines who reviewed the latest developments and updates related to the coronavirus pandemic. Conference attendees learned about the medical and behavioral consequences of COVID-19 infection, current treatment options, how the vaccinations work, and new strategies being developed by UTHSCT investigators to ensure better outcomes.



# The Graduate School



## A Message from the Dean

### DR. STEVEN IDELL, MD, PH.D.

*Senior Vice President for Research & Dean of the Graduate School*

Greetings,

I hope this report finds our world in a phase of rapid recovery with a focus on hope and healing. Despite the widespread disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UT Tyler Graduate School and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) made significant strides towards realizing the long-term positive impact of advanced study and research on East Texas and beyond. Investigators at The University of Texas at Tyler and its newly aligned Health Science Center joined researchers around the globe to tackle the urgent need for discovery around the “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” pandemic.

Undoubtedly, the global impact of COVID-19, or SARS-CoV-2, has been a watershed moment, calling all to a renewed focus on education, research and healthcare. The Graduate School at The University of Texas at Tyler is a catalyst for engaging faculty researchers, student investigators, and community partners in

projects across disciplines that advance the quality of life through value-added graduate and professional degree programs leading to real-world solutions.

Please review the important overview of the most recent success and exciting expansion taking place in The Graduate School at The University of Texas at Tyler.





# AY 2020–2021 Graduate School Highlights

## UT Tyler Earns R2 Designation from Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

The Graduate School experienced a great deal of change this year, beginning with the unification of The University of Texas at Tyler and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler. This merger catapulted the university into the prestigious Carnegie R2 classification, based on the combined research expenditures and the doctoral degree production, and signifies the central importance of research in the institution's mission to improve educational and healthcare outcomes for East Texas and beyond. The unified institution has a combined research portfolio of \$30 million, and the combined academic programs serve more than 2,500 graduate students.

## Integration of the Office of Research and Scholarship and Graduate School

A result of the unification was the integration of The Graduate School and Office of Research and Scholarship. Steven Idell, MD, PhD, assumed the role of senior vice president for research and dean of the graduate school. Kouider Mokhtari, PhD, was named associate vice president for research and associate dean of the graduate school. Drs. Idell and Mokhtari were joined by a new associate dean of the graduate school and associate vice president of research, Dr. Kent Willis, who will focus on program development and recruiting for the graduate school.

## Health Science Center Programs Added to Graduate School Portfolio, New Programs Under Development

As a result of the recent alignment between The University of Texas at Tyler and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler, the three health-related graduate programs will receive additional capacity

and programmatic support. Existing graduate programs on the Health Science Center campus include a Master of Science (MS) in biotechnology, Master of Public Health (MPH) and Master of Health Administration (MHA), and a graduate certificate in public health focusing on the core disciplines of practice and professional preparation.

In response to market demand, two new certificates in cybersecurity and data analytics have been added to the menu of offerings, as well as a global health certificate. These additions may serve as the precursor to further graduate degree program development to continue expanding advanced degree options to meet the growing market needs locally and across the country.

## A Successful Year of Graduate Student Recruiting and Admissions

Thanks to Graduate Admissions and the information analysis office teams, our recruiting initiatives and streamlined admission processes contributed to another successful year. In fall 2020, we reached a four-year high on applications received, a three-year high on admitted students and a three-year high for enrolled new graduate students.

Increased outreach through collaborations with Education USA Centers and weekly information session webinars with international prospects has led to another bright spot in graduate recruiting and admissions. We've seen an increase in international student admissions and enrollment as we come out of the lockdowns and uncertainty imposed by global COVID restrictions. We saw a 30% increase in international applications (162-213) for fall 2020, and admission numbers to date for fall 2021 show a 42% increase over the prior year (55-78).

To assist with recruiting, admissions and retention, we worked with the information analysis office to create a new dashboard that will give us additional insight into applicant profiles by individual program. The new dashboard allows us to work with programs on developing recruiting plans based on diversity and feeder institutions, creating meaningful predictors of success for admission, and retention initiatives that can be tailored to each program.

## Health Science Center – Enrollment Figures for Academic Year 2020–2021

### A Productive Year for Student Research and Engagement

The university saw an almost 30% increase in doctoral degrees conferred (95-123) over the past year. Scholar Works, our online digital repository of over 3,800 scholarly works, surpassed 100,000 downloads during the past year.

After last year's suspension of Grad School 180 due to COVID-19, we moved the competition to

### Graduate Admissions - Applications & Applicant Profiles

College & Degree Program	Base Measure	College	Degree Program	Degree Level
College of Education & Psychology (College) + E...	Enrolled Ever	College of Education & Psychology	Educational Administration	Graduate

Academic Year of Application	Count	Enrolled Ever	Active	Graduated	% Graduated from Total
2021	104	103	102	2	1.92%
2020	86	86	85	46	51.11%
2019	156	155	1	103	36.44%
2018	121	121	100	100	82.61%
2017	107	107	89	89	83.18%
Total	561	561	436	369	65.78%

Race/Ethnicity	Count	% of Total
White	70	65.42%
Hispanics of any race	23	21.50%
Black or African American	6	5.61%
Two or more races	5	4.67%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.93%
Asian	1	0.93%
Race and Ethnicity unknown	1	0.93%
Total	107	100.00%

Undergraduate Institution	Count
University of Texas at Tyler	25
Texas A & M University	7
Stephen F. Austin State University	5
University of Texas - Pan American	5
Texas A & M University - Commerce	4
University of North Texas	4
University of Texas at Austin	4

Overall Graduated %	Admissions Exam	Average GRE/GMAT/MAT Scores
83.18%	GRE	144 (Quant/MAT) / 149 (Verbal)

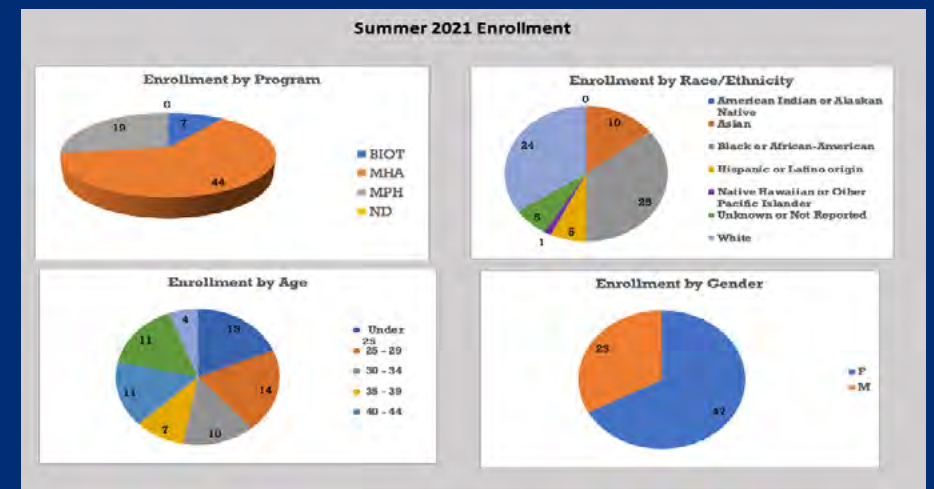
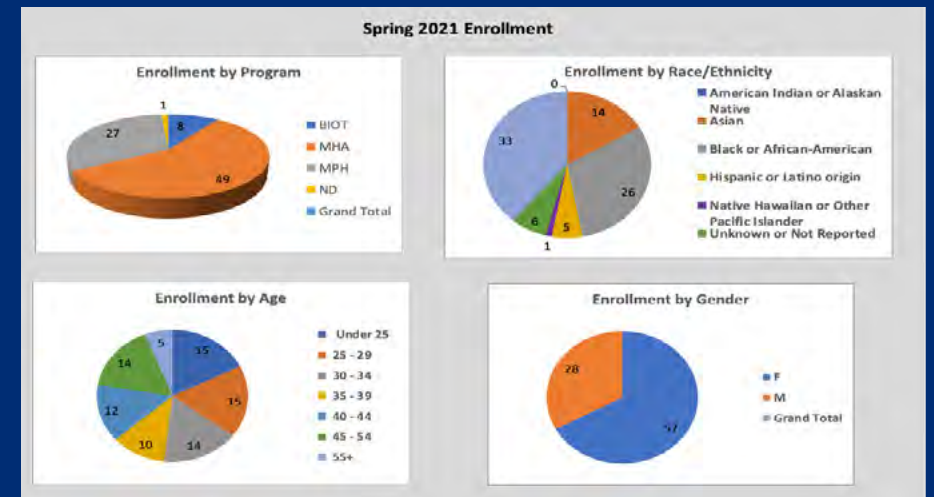
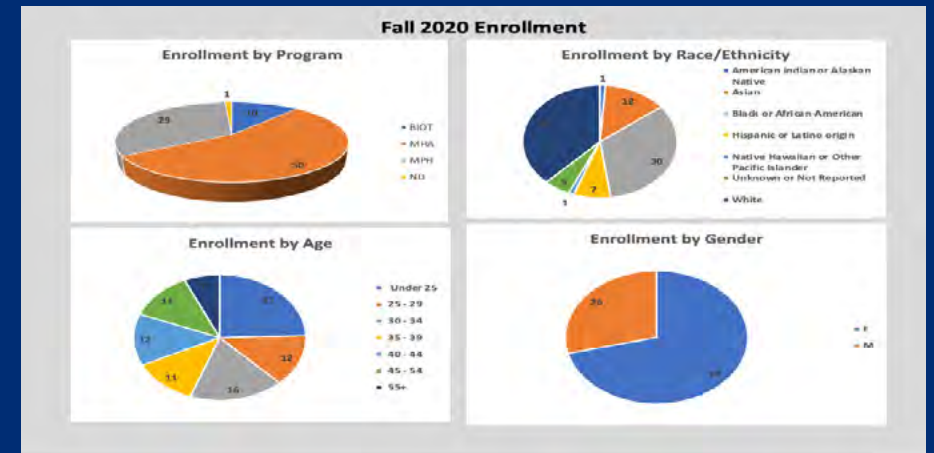
Average Age	Average Composite TOEFL Score	Average Banded IELTS Score
35.95		

Citizenship	Count	% of Total
Native	100	93.46%
Alien Permanent	4	3.74%
Naturalized	3	2.80%
Total	107	100.00%

Admit Category	Count	Average GPA	% of Total
Provisional	88	3.38	82.24%
Full	19	3.42	17.76%
Total	107	3.39	100.00%





an online format with remarkable success. We had 45 participants, and the finalists' videos are showcased in Scholar Works. Voting was held online via YouTube, and we had over 3,000 views, over 300 votes, and over 31 hours of watch time.

Graduate School Orientation was also moved online in response to COVID-19. Whereas the face-to-face orientation attracted between 80 and 100 students each year, the online module has over 1,300 students enrolled. We now provide twice as much information to 13-16 times the number of students, while maintaining high satisfaction ratings across all topics.

## New Doctor of Medicine (MD) Degree Program on the Horizon

The UT System Board of Regents, led by Chairman Kevin P. Eltife, approved a proposal in February 2020, to launch efforts to establish a medical school in Tyler. The new school aims to address the shortage of healthcare professionals in the region. On May 28, 2021, the UT System Board of Regents authorized the Health Science Center at UT Tyler to allocate its resources to attain accreditation for a Doctor of Medicine (MD) program, a step needed to create a new medical school.

Following successful initial application to the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which accredits medical schools in the United States and Canada, UT Tyler is now listed as a candidate school and moving through the curriculum development and program planning process. The goal is to enroll the inaugural class of medical students in summer 2023, at the UT Tyler School of Medicine.

## Council of Graduate Schools External Review Slated for Fall 2021

The much-anticipated site visit and external review of the graduate school by the Council

of Graduate Schools (CGS) has been set for September 2021. The purpose of the visit is to guide us toward best practices for administering graduate education, particularly considering the recent merger and the plans for the medical school.

Based on the information gathered from the site visit, documents and CGS research, the consultation team will provide a report on the status of graduate education in the areas of graduate student recruitment, administration of graduate education, graduate student funding, engagement, communication with the graduate community, and developing a health sciences degree portfolio. The report will also include recommendations for achieving our goals, which will help us align the institution with best practices for administering its graduate mission.





# Undergraduate & Online Education



## Introduction

Undergraduate and Online Education's sphere of influence touches multiple areas in the UT Tyler community. Our work is guided by strategic goals enabling us to collaboratively work to advance the mission and vision of the University, strengthen undergraduate and online education programs and activities, and elevate UT Tyler's reputation.

The following strategic goals guide our work as well as frame our accomplishments. All individuals within Undergraduate and Online Education strive to:

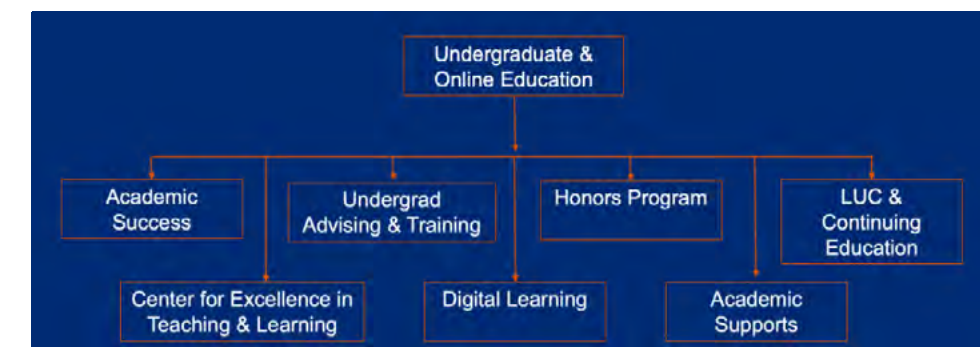
- Advance academic supports for students spanning their careers at UT Tyler.
- Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and instructional staff enabling them to be successful in the various components of their work.
- Launch and sustain outstanding programs, interventions and supports

for undergraduate and online education across UT Tyler.

- Provide data for the improvement and evaluation of programs, interventions, and supports associated with undergraduate and online education.
- Expand the research base for disciplines and components covered by undergraduate and online.
- Enhance the reputation of UT Tyler Academics and Academic Affairs.
- Increase the affinity toward UT Tyler with East Texas communities, businesses and organizations.

Undergraduate and Online Education is comprised of seven units covering many different programs, resources and services for UT Tyler students, faculty and staff.

The following paragraphs provide insight into the major accomplishments for various areas of Undergraduate and Online Education.



*Our sphere of influence touches multiple areas of UT Tyler, East Texas and our state.*



## Honors Program

Despite the challenges of the academic year, the Honors Program stayed focused and flexible in our mission to provide transformative learning experiences for undergraduate students at The University of Texas at Tyler. The Honors Program also oversees the Archer Fellowship, the Freshman Book and nationally competitive scholarships. Collectively, these programs support, challenge and encourage the UT Tyler student body, as well as the faculty and staff, to live the life of the mind. Though the pandemic offered new challenges in connecting with community members, our office was able to take advantage of opportunities for connection via technology.

The 2020–21 academic year saw the Honors Program at 150 students from the five undergraduate colleges at UT Tyler. Though this academic year saw unprecedented challenges to our entire community, our students, staff and faculty rallied to maintain the Honors Program’s high academic standards, with an average GPA of 3.72/4.0.

The following five accomplishments demonstrate our commitment to student success and engagement, as well as our focus on research and academic excellence:

### UT Tyler Honors Students Present at Virtual National, Regional and Local Conferences

The 2020–21 academic year saw an unprecedented disruption to academic discourse at conferences. Despite the challenges faced by travel restrictions, UT Tyler honors students persevered, learned new skills, and continued our tradition of excellent research presentations at the national, regional and local levels.

Seven students presented original research at the National Collegiate Honors Council virtual meeting in October 2020:

- Shannon Allert, Carly Anthony and Natalie Batton: “Relationship of Type of Sex Education on Perceptions of Shame and

Guilt in Young Adults” (faculty mentor: Dr. Jeni Chilton)

- Bethany Collier: “Intersectionality in Progressive-Era Social Movements” (faculty mentor: Dr. Mandy Link)
- Azucena Cortez Pedroza: “The Caffeine Consumption Habits, Sleep Quality, and Perceived Stress of Nursing Students” (faculty mentor: Dr. Christy Gipson)
- Jay Huynh: “Beyond Lectures: The Use of Immersive Story-based Instruction to Enhance Learning Outcomes” (faculty mentor: Dr. David Hull)
- David Newsom: “Consequentialism: The Impervious System” (faculty mentor: Dr. Greg Bock)

On the regional level, 19 students presented at the virtual Great Plains Honors Council conference hosted by Midwestern State University. This group presented on a diverse array of disciplines including civil engineering, history, archaeology, nursing, business and biochemistry.

The group also included two award winners at the conference:

- Kailynn Fong won the John Britt Award for best upper-division poster in professional studies for her project titled, “Associated and Structural Stigma Related to Parkinson’s Disease.” Kailynn’s faculty mentors were Dr. Beth Mastel-Smith and Dr. Melinda Hermanns.
- Katelyn Garza, Katrina Henley and Cameron Long won the John Britt Award for best upper-division poster in social sciences for their project “Hey, Siri, Am I Sexist?: An Examination of Gendered AI Voice Assistants on Perceived Usefulness.” Their faculty mentor was Dr. Amy Hayes.

On the local level, UT Tyler Honors students were well represented among the award winners at the sixth annual Lyceum, the UT Tyler student research showcase.

- A team of honors nursing students (Zoe Santos, Arianna Bowlin, Danitza Castillo, Lacey Hester, Justin Melendez, Beckett Preston, Briseida Ramirez, Carlos Reyes, Alyssa Rojas, and Jarrizze Santos) won first

place in the poster competition for their project, “Exploring Stigma Experienced by People with Parkinson’s Disease, in Literature and Social Media,” with mentorship from Drs. Beth Mastel-Smith and Melinda Hermanns.

- Justin Crowe won second place in the poster competition for his project “Evaluation of the Efficacy of Various Hydrophobic Degrons for PROTAC-Mediated Degradation of the Androgen Receptor” with mentorship from Dr. Jiyong Lee.
- Briana Aguilar won third place in the poster competition for her project “A Comparison of Macroinvertebrate Sampling Methods on a Stream System in Tyler, TX” with mentorship from Drs. Lance and Marsha Williams.
- Daniel DuPreez won second place in the oral presentation competition for his project “Finding a Uniformly Most Reliable Graph” with mentorship from Dr. Christina Graves.

### Lyceum – The UT Tyler Student Research Showcase

The sixth annual Lyceum boasted a total of 132 undergraduate and graduate student research presentations, breaking last year’s record of 90 projects by almost 150%. Students from six colleges participated in the Lyceum Research Showcase, which included poster, oral and creative presentations. Presentations were judged by faculty and staff, and all students were provided feedback to promote additional learning and improvement. Over 90 faculty and staff participated as judges, moderators



and/or volunteers and were integral to the resounding success of this event.

Similar to last year, students who presented posters pre-recorded their videos, which were then posted to Scholar Works ready to be watched around the world. Poster presentations were downloaded from five countries: United States, China, Germany, Iran and Korea. The projects were streamed a total of 5,136 times from April 16–June 1, 2021.

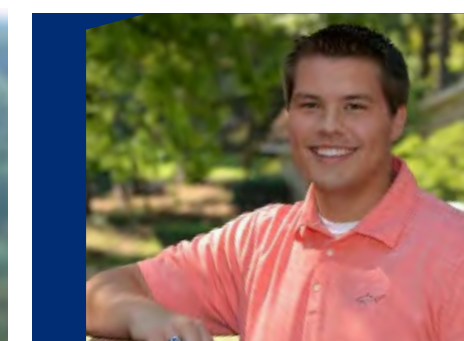
Oral presentations panels were held via Zoom on April 17. Approximately 175 students, faculty, staff and community members joined the conversations and supported students as they presented. The Zoom sessions were recorded and then uploaded to Scholar Works in early June. Topics ranged from COVID-19 compliance and mental health, to political agency of women in Colonial Africa, to the design and optimization of acoustic metamaterial.

A full listing of the 2021 Lyceum Research Showcase can be found on the Honors website.

### Archer Fellowship

Our summer 2021 Graduate Archer Fellow is **Andrew (Andy) Sanders**, who is currently enrolled in the master’s in health sciences degree program. His internship is with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He holds a Master of Arts degree in theology and received his bachelor’s degree in youth and teen studies. His Graduate Archer Fellowship Program experience will be integral to his long-term goal of participating in policy development for those in foster care and those

with substance use disorder. Sanders hopes to complete his thesis and graduate this year.



**Ethan Collins**  
(Economics & Finance)

In fall 2021, we will have three student undergraduate Archer Fellows:



**Samir Karn**  
(Economics & Political Science)



**Josh Menhennett**  
(Marketing)



**Mason Remaley**  
(Political Science)

And in spring 2022, Ethan Collins (Economics & Finance) will be our UT Tyler representative.

In AY 2020–2021, we held our first crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for Archer housing costs in Washington D.C. We successfully raised \$2,500 to help offset costs for our Archer Fellows. Additionally, we are currently exploring additional fundraising opportunities with the Tyler Rotary Club and the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce.

### First-Year Read/Freshman Book

The 2020 First-Year Read was Stephen J. Dubner and Steven Levitt’s *Think Like a Freak*, a 2014 best-seller, which continues the economic analyses begun by the authors of *Freakonomics*. For the first time at UT Tyler, the text was distributed as an e-book, which streamlined the process. Students read the text in preparation for a discussion with faculty during the mock class segment at New Patriot Orientation.

Rather than hosting the authors of this year’s text, we hosted a freshman book lecture with award-winning economics professor Dirk Mateer of the University of Arizona. Dr. Mateer’s talk via Zoom was attended by over 150 students, faculty and staff. Coordination with Kathy Gohmert in the Office of Advancement also allowed us to include more than a dozen community members from the SAGE group for seniors.



## Nationally Competitive Scholarships

In 2020–2021, our office continued progress on nationally competitive scholarship advising, including the nomination of a student for the prestigious Truman Scholarship, the second in UT Tyler's history. Our team of advisers—Katie Stone, Dr. Mark Owens and Dr. Paul Streufert—worked closely with UT Tyler's student nominee, Joshua Menhennett, throughout this complex process. Though Joshua was not chosen as a finalist by the Truman Selection Committee, he gained tremendous insight into his career goals, his plans for graduate school, and his own personal motivations as they relate to his life experiences. Throughout the Truman application process, Joshua developed as a writer, thinker and ambassador for UT Tyler.



Joshua muses over a portrait of President Truman.

## UT Tyler's Presidential Fellows

UT Tyler's three cohorts of Presidential Fellows (Alpha F18, Phoenix F19 and Dynamis F20) enrich our campus through their leadership, research and advocacy. Joshua Menhennett (Alpha) concluded his second year of service as the Student Government Association president. Allison Graham (Phoenix) traveled to Washington, DC in January 2020, with her research mentor, Dr. Cathy Miller, for a healthcare conference. Sloke Shrestha (Alpha), Ayush Kumar (Alpha), Shrijan Bhattarai (Phoenix), Connor Crowe (Phoenix), Bethany Woolman (Phoenix), Zoe Williams (Phoenix) and other Fellows joined their faculty mentors to submit research to prestigious academic journals.

Fellows like Favour Thomas (Alpha), the VP for philanthropy at her Delta Gamma sorority, have raised funds for campus and community projects. UT Tyler Presidential Fellows also work to infuse practical experience with their rigorous academic programs. Dozens of Fellows secured internships with major corporations and research projects in summer 2021, enabling them to elevate their preparation for future endeavors. In spring 2021, some of our first cohort of Presidential Fellows (Alpha) graduated early after three years on campus.

## Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

The Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL) serves UT Tyler faculty and staff through facilitating New Faculty Orientation, planning, scheduling, and implementing faculty development opportunities, and hosting professional learning communities (PLCs). Due to the pandemic, all CETL activities (e.g. New Faculty Orientation, keynote speakers, workshops and collaborative sessions) were offered virtually through Zoom. Sessions were recorded, when appropriate and permission was granted by the speaker, and available to faculty through Canvas.

For the launch of the 2020–2021 academic year, 30 new faculty participated in a two-day series of robust and engaging orientation sessions. CETL also offered 40 professional learning sessions to faculty and instructional staff. These sessions consisted of 28 faculty-led teaching sessions, four staff-led teaching sessions and eight keynote speakers. A total of 640 participants attended these CETL events. Our faculty professional learning communities (PLCs) remained active throughout the pandemic. The CETL sponsored two new professional learning communities (PLCs) in the areas of studying student writing and work-life balance, increasing the total number of PLCs to six. In these engaging and interactive PLCs, faculty and instructional staff collaborate to improve teaching, learning and scholarship. For example, the PLC for Student Research co-sponsored the annual Lyceum, awarding \$1200 in prize money to 12 students, and the PLC for Service Learning published an interdisciplinary case study documenting how

students who give back to their community gain valuable learning experiences in the *Handbook of Research on Adult Learning in Higher Education*.

## Office of Digital Learning

The Office of Digital Learning continues to support and partner with UT Tyler departments and programs to advance digital learning supports for curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular experiences. For the 2020–2021, the office continued to assist faculty working in non-traditional delivery modes through elevating faculty proficiency with Zoom, Canvas, video captioning and other technologies to support student learning. These supports and services were provided to faculty in online formats due to the pandemic, and to support faculty in Longview, Palestine and Houston. Digital Learning hosted professional development sessions covering plagiarism, proctoring, digital learning tools, video captioning, accessibility, instructor presence and engagement as well as hosting an online pedagogy course for 194 instructors to earn their online teaching credentials. To facilitate the partial return to campus in fall 2020, Digital Learning coordinated the development of classroom lecture recording procedures and guides to allow for hybrid delivery of courses with reduced seating capacity. Overall, Digital Learning supported 3,049 Canvas courses during this academic year.

The Office of Digital Learning also completed the transition to UniCheck, UT Tyler's new plagiarism prevention platform to ensure academic integrity access for faculty and students while complying with UT System requirements. The Office of Digital Learning also works with other units to promote professional learning with faculty and staff. For example, the Digital Learning team supported the Division of Student Success and the Office of Compliance in their Freshman Orientation courses and with compliance and cybersecurity modules, respectively. Digital Learning also helped create and implement the COVID Safety and Return to Campus modules for faculty, staff and students.

In addition, Digital Learning developed a new Canvas structure to support UT Health Science Center faculty and students as the Health Science Center joined the academic university. The Digital Learning team also facilitated the technical implementation of the SACSCOC virtual site visit and budget hearings for the UT Tyler Academic Enterprise. The Office of Digital Learning remains ready and able to support digital learning across UT Tyler.

## Academic Success

### Services to Undergraduate Students

To assist undergraduate students in their pursuit of their degrees, Academic Success continued to provide students with academic supports in online and face-to-face settings. Academic Support services responded to the changing demands brought on by the pandemic by offering all services online and face-to-face to accommodate the needs of our students. Through all the changes, our remarkable student employees in the Pass Tutoring Center and the Supplemental Instruction program displayed tremendous flexibility and persistence to continue offering a quality service to their peers. Additionally, the usage rate of Upswing, the 24/7 online tutoring platform, more than tripled from the previous year, with students utilizing over 1,000 hours of Upswing tutoring. UT Tyler undergraduate students continued to have full-service access to quality advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction and digital support toolkits.

In addition, Academic Success collected over 18,700 mid-term grades from faculty on undergraduate students. This information was then shared with the student and their college in an effort to target appropriate interventions for students to help them avoid academic probation, loss of financial aid and delayed graduation.

As we work to inform students and the community about the resources and supports available to them, Undergraduate and Online Education launched a social media campaign this year. With this resource, Academic Success provides an intention approach to using social media for authentic and consistent student engagement. The goal of our social media

outreach is to build community and trust so students will engage in our academic support services and academic success resources. You can follow UT Tyler Academic Success social media at:

Facebook: [uttyleracademicsuccess](https://www.facebook.com/uttyleracademicsuccess)

Instagram: [uttylersuccess](https://www.instagram.com/uttylersuccess)

Twitter: [uttylersuccess](https://twitter.com/uttylersuccess)

In summer 2021, UT Tyler launched EAB-Navigate Student, a mobile app focused on improving the student experience by giving quick access to academic and student engagement resources at UT Tyler. EAB-Navigate Student will now serve as a central communication hub for students, allowing them to quickly and easily communicate and schedule appointments with various campus services like academic advising, the Military and Veterans Success Center and student engagement. Upon downloading EAB-Navigate Student, an intake survey which identifies which programs, services and groups the student would like to learn more about is administered. In the first month since the launch, over 1,242 responses have been collected from an intake survey, allowing the University to easily and quickly identify students who can be connected to resources and services.

### Special Programs

The "I'm First" program was launched in 2020 to address the needs of first-generation college students. Jargon, deadlines, academic preparedness and financial pressures are a few common barriers to academic success. The program provides a community of support through information sharing, advocacy and connections to UT Tyler students, faculty and resources. These relationships foster a sense of belonging within our campus community and promote equity and inclusion.

UT Tyler expanded its partnership with **Finish@UT**, a cross-campus program that allows UT System students to take online courses from UT System institutions when the courses are not offered at their home institution. Through the program, UT Tyler students and those from other UT institutions can finish their degree in a timely fashion. Since our expansion in summer 2020, 31 students have completed 50 courses through UT Tyler, expanding our reach across the state.

Academic Success provides support for former **foster youth** by helping the students navigate the college experience and ask the right questions. We aim to teach the students how to be successful in the classroom and connect them with faculty to develop meaningful, personal and professional relationships that are key to success.

The **Degrees When Due** initiative was launched in partnership with Enrollment Management and Institutional Analysis to target stop-out students from 2015–2020. Through data assessment and targeted communications, the program has eliminated barriers for degree completion and worked to re-engaged students so they can complete their bachelor's degree.

The Division of Undergraduate and Online Education wrote a grant proposal from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). We were awarded a \$112,000 **Reskilling Texas Workers Grant** to help displaced workers who stopped out of college for at least six months, but had completed a majority of their degree. This grant provides a small scholarship enabling students to continue their education and recover financially from COVID-19. The grant supports returning Texas workers enrollment in the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences (BAAS) or the RN to BSN degree programs.

## Continuing Education

In fall 2020, UT Tyler launched its pilot Continuing Education Program. The program's mission is to respond to the region's educational needs by providing resources to the workforce through non-credit professional development courses and lifelong learning opportunities to the community. We are delighted to house the UT Tyler Continuing Education Program at the Longview University Center. Although a new program, great success is happening. For example, UT Tyler partnered with Retire Smart of East Texas to offer estate, retirement and insurance planning education. The monthly workshop draws individuals from all across East Texas.

UT Tyler's Continuing Education program was also involved to help East Texas through the pandemic. In response to the need for



COVID safety and sanitation education, East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) and Workforce Solutions of East Texas partnered with UT Tyler to develop the COVID-19 Safety and Sanitation training course. UT Tyler professors Dr. Fletcher Njororai and Dr. Julie Hebert developed and organized the content. Anna Hanson, nursing clinical instructor, continues to update the course information and teaches the course.

The COVID Safety and Sanitation course contains eight modules covering the disease process and progression, infection control, personal protective equipment, maintaining a healthy work environment, mental health, and wellness, vaccines and challenges post-pandemic. The training is ideal for business owners, employees and individuals interested in working in the cleaning service industry. The instructor-led course is accessible live via Zoom or in person. In addition, an online, self-paced option is available.

Explore UT Tyler's Continuing Education program courses, register to teach a continuing education course, and receive the Continuing Education email list at [uttyler.edu/continuing-education](http://uttyler.edu/continuing-education).

## Community Engagement

Undergraduate and Online Education is active in elevating UT Tyler's academic programs and students as well as the East Texas community. Here are a few ways we are positively impacting our community.

In fall 2020, the UT Tyler Longview University Center was approved as a National ACT Testing Center. As a result, the ACT exam is offered throughout the year to area high school students.

The Longview University Center also received a grant from the Texas Native Plant Society. Grant funds will be used to establish a Monarch Butterfly Garden on the Longview campus for students, faculty, staff and community members to enjoy.

To show appreciation for their courage and commitment during the pandemic, LUC nursing faculty and staff delivered gift

baskets filled with snacks and drinks to local healthcare professionals.



Undergraduate and Online Education hosted our third annual High School Counselors Conference, where high school counselors learned about topics listed below and had the opportunity to network and discuss challenges they were currently facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. High school counselors were able to earn Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits from this event.

- The Effects of Poverty on Learning
- Degree Plans, Course Sequencing, and the Importance of the Core Curriculum
- Preparing Students for College Admission
- Pre-Professional Programs (Pre-Law, Pre-Med and Pre-Pharmacy)

- Employee Burnout and Stress Management Techniques
- Leadership and Decision Making During Challenging Times
- Special Populations: First Gen (I'm First), Honors and Dual Credit

**Undergraduate and Online Education looks forward to serving the students, faculty and staff of UT Tyler in the upcoming academic year.**





# Robert R. Muntz Library



## Mission

The Robert R. Muntz Library supports the University Strategic Plan. The library will excel in collecting and providing access to quality educational and scholarly resources; offering excellent and timely services and events; making available current technologies; and creating an inspiring and welcoming physical environment.

## Vision

We aspire to be the university's intellectual gateway, supporting the discovery, exchange and advancement of ideas.

The library continued to be fully operational during fiscal year 2020-2021, achieving the goals of supporting student success and research and scholarship. The library provides computers, WiFi, printing and web cams for testing and Zooming, in addition, of course to long hours of building access for quiet individual and collaborative study, and in-person and live chat assistance. The wide array of electronic journals, books, and databases are available anywhere in the world there is access to the internet.

Textbook costs for students have skyrocketed, with an increase of over 1000 percent since 1977, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. In order to help address the problem, the library began an initiative to purchase and provide electronic textbooks to students free of charge. Not all textbooks are available for library purchase, but if a title is available, especially with no limits on simultaneous users, and reasonably priced, the library purchased the book electronically for all to use. This project began in Fall 2020 and the library has purchased 334 e-textbook titles at a cost of \$55,000. If every student had used every library e-textbook instead of purchasing their own, over \$230,000 would have been saved in only the first two semesters of the program.

Libraries were well positioned to rapidly adapt during the pandemic. While libraries have been transitioning to digital resources and services for more than two decades, COVID-19 made it clear that even more movement is needed

in that direction, especially in providing help and training to empower library patrons to use the online library independently. For the past year, Muntz has been focused on this effort. The librarians and staff have created dozens of short, targeted videos to help users perform library tasks and use library resources and have added them to the library's YouTube channel. The most popular topics are related to citing sources, citation management and accessing the library from off campus. A project is underway to revamp the library's LibGuides, web pages created for specific disciplines or courses, that make library e-resources easy to find, access and use. And librarians successfully transitioned to offering library workshops via Zoom, realizing an increase in attendance due to the convenience of being able to attend from home or office.

The pandemic resulted in some surprising opportunities. Scholar Works, sponsored by the Graduate School and the university archives department of the library, is the institutional repository for UT Tyler. Faculty and student scholarship is organized there on the web for anyone to access. The platform for this program also allows the hosting of virtual conferences, with video and live viewing of presentations. The archivist put the platform to work and hosted two conferences for scholarly associations that faculty are involved in, in addition to hosting an online version of the Lyceum student research presentation and the East Texas Research Conference.

The physical space remains very important to students as a third space, for study, collaboration and relaxation. Efforts are underway to improve the library facilities. The library received PUF LERR funding (Permanent University Fund Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation) to renovate the library restrooms, which are original to the 1981 building. Work on the first and second floors began in June 2021, and will be complete by the end of August. The third and fourth floors will be done in the summer of 2022. In addition, seven of the individual study rooms were renovated in May 2021, with new desks, fresh carpet, paint and new white boards. The remaining eight will be refreshed next year.



# Watson W. Wise Medical Research Library



## Introduction

The Watson W. Wise Medical Research Library at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT) provides comprehensive information services to health science professionals, students, and trainees in support of the health science center's mission of excellent patient care and community health, comprehensive education, and innovative research. It is East Texas' only full service, professionally staffed library dedicated to the health and biomedical sciences. Established in the 1970's and dedicated to a benefactor in 1984, the Library primarily serves the health science center's students, faculty, staff, and residents, but is also open to the public.

## SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

With many of its books and all its current journals accessible via the World Wide Web, the Library was already poised to deal with the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Library staff worked from home and were able to provide all but a handful of services to users wherever needed despite the closing of the Library facility for over eight months. These home-based services were facilitated by the acquisition of new laptops just before the pandemic. While most walk-in Library usage was interrupted, usage via email, phone, MS Teams, Zoom, and the Web increased. With distance education being approved and implemented just prior to

the pandemic, electronic Library instruction ultimately surpassed the typical number of face-to-face sessions. Sessions were provided for entire classes at faculty request and to new students as part of general orientation. Many orientation sessions were also provided to new clinical faculty in coordination with UTHSCT's medical staff office.

The Library's display equipment such as white marker boards and easels were used all over campus for signs, notices, and morale boosters related to COVID-19. Library staff even provided occasional support to the COVID Vaccine Clinic that was literally on the Library's doorstep.

In addition to providing routine services, a health science center librarian compiled a daily selection of references on COVID-19 from the massive number of articles and pre-prints that were being published. The lists and accompanying full text links were distributed via email to medical staff, research faculty, infection control and occupational health personnel, and others.

## PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

In conjunction with other UT System libraries, Wise Library began taking part in a state-wide effort to create a transformative approach to scholarly publishing, journal access, and cost-efficiency with the largest scholarly publisher in the world.

The Library enhanced its support of nursing specialty certification exam review by adding



a set of online materials to replace and update the same publisher's printed offerings and to facilitate access to nurses at remote clinics and other off-campus sites.

Library access options were expanded by the implementation of active directory authentication via a hosted proxy server that provides an alternative to off-campus network login and that also allows improved access from mobile devices so often used by physicians both on and off campus. Library staff worked closely with IT and Information Security staff to ensure the project's success. Most recently, Library study rooms are being made more flexible by the addition of monitors and wireless multi-user sharing devices designed for collaboration.

## COLLABORATION & PLANNING

The Wise Library director began reporting to the UT Tyler Provost, and both libraries' directors began meeting regularly. Personnel from both libraries worked together to investigate and selectively implement potential integration projects, including support of systematic reviews, mutual book circulation, joint purchases, and systems collaboration. The library directors also composed and submitted joint documentation of merger-related activities for review by academic accreditors, contributing to the approval of the combined institution and to the reaffirmation process.

Wise Library staff collaborated with personnel at both campuses on migration to the Canvas LMS, inter-campus web site links, and Library distance education.

In keeping with the UT Tyler Faculty Senate's composition and as part of the move to a joint body that represents both campuses, a UTHSCT librarian has been designated for membership in that group.

The Library began preliminary planning for support of the anticipated School of Medicine in conjunction with the School's Planning Dean. Planning also began for other academic programs.

We look forward to increasing the Library's reach into future degree and medical training programs, to maintaining the high level of

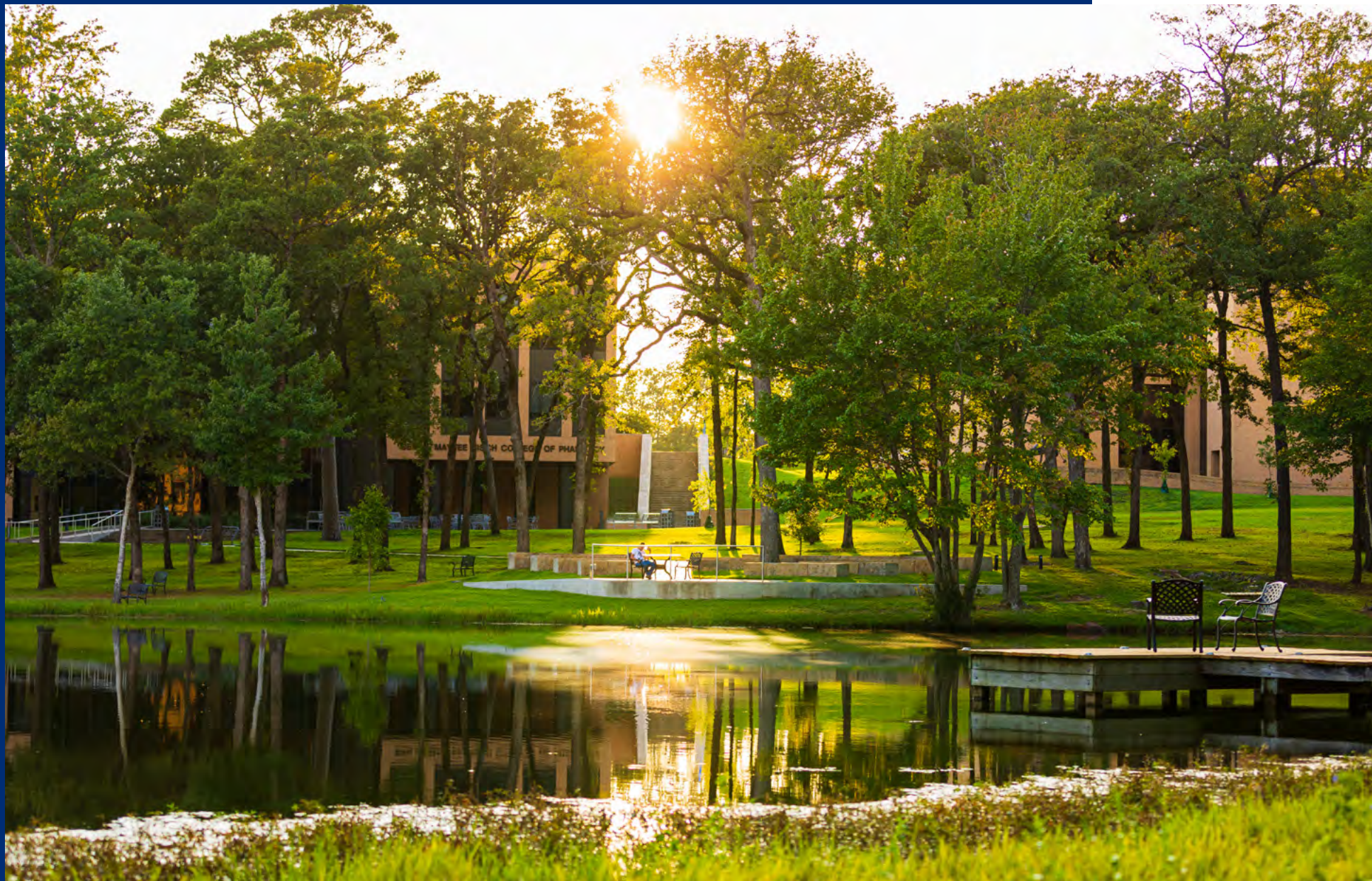
user satisfaction, and to providing optimal information resources and services.

Visit: [uthct.edu/wise-medical-research-library](http://uthct.edu/wise-medical-research-library)





# Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness Office



## Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Planning

The Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (AIE) office supported assessment of student learning outcomes for all educational programs through a systematic process to inform plans for continuous improvement. Ongoing assessment of academic/student services and administrative offices was completed for future planning as well.

**The annual assessment plan reviews were conducted in collaboration with faculty, staff and administrators using standardized internal review rubrics that guide documentation of essential elements recognized in higher education assessment.**

Additionally, the AIE Office works closely with the College Assessment Coordinators develop assessment plans for new programs, update existing program assessment plans, and provide discipline-specific assessment resources. The AIE office and college assessment coordinators meet regularly to review assessment processes and strengthen assessment quality.

Assessment of institutional effectiveness focused on the extent UT Tyler made toward our mission and goals. **The 2020–21 I. E. Advisory Committee met regularly to complete systematic reviews of progress toward Strategic Plan initiatives at the institutional level for each of the four UT Tyler Strategic Plan Pillars.**

## UT Tyler Graduation Exit Survey

All graduating students are invited to complete the UT Tyler Graduation Exit Survey. The results are collected through the month of August each year, and the annual reports are prepared in September. Over 1,600 undergraduate students and 700 graduate students completed the 2020 GES. Dashboards using Power BI, a data visualization tool, were created for undergraduate, graduate and student support services. All reports are shared with campus stakeholders, and aggregate dashboards are posted on the AIE website.

## Survey Software Support

The AIE office serves as the campus administrator for Qualtrics survey software. Common user categories include research, course and co-curricular surveys, in addition to unit level and institutional level satisfaction surveys for assessment and planning. Qualtrics is offering recently updated on-demand training and live webinars through basecamp. qualtrics.com.

## Accreditation Support

### UT Tyler and UT Health Science Center Substantive Change Prospectus

The AIE office facilitated completion and submission of the Prospectus on the Substantive Change for the Institutional



Merger. A leadership team was organized to prepare narrative responses for each section of the Prospectus. The Substantive Change Leadership Team prepare narrative responses, and a Technology Committee met regularly to prepare for a successful virtual site visit for the SACSCOC on-site review in April using Zoom. A duplicate back-up plan was prepared using Teams. During the two-day meetings, committee members interviewed campus participants including faculty, staff and administrators. The committee report was positive and included commendations to UT Tyler for the quality of the Prospectus narratives, and for a successful virtual experience. The only recommendation was for UT Tyler to provide additional evidence of public disclosure about the merger. A follow-up report will be submitted in September with progress made since March. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees meets in December 2021, to vote on the final decision for approval of the Merger Prospectus.

## UT Tyler Decennial Reaffirmation

The Reaffirmation Leadership Team began meeting the week that the Substantive Change Prospectus was submitted in early March. The Reaffirmation Compliance Certificate Report (CCR) provides institutional information and support documents as compliance evidence for the SACSCOC principles of accreditation.

As part of the decennial review, UT Tyler has identified a Quality Enhancement Plan focused on real-world problem solving in support of the UT Tyler Mission and Strategic Plan. The topic was identified through collaboration with the campus community. A QEP pilot will be implemented during the 2021 fall semester as part of the planning for the QEP proposal that will be submitted in advance of the 2022 spring site visit. A QEP director will begin in September to facilitate and lead the successful planning and implementation of the QEP.





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