Sister Act:
Jaclyn and Brittany Siegel
Dean’s Message

ELAINE M. WALLACE, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S.

WITH THE NEWNESS OF SPRING has come a new attitude at the COM—a refocus on the well-being of ourselves, along with the care that we have always given to our patients.

Student wellness is a top priority at the COM. The academical societies have undergone a rebirth, combining academic and social support of students by faculty members that incorporates health awareness. Monthly luncheons highlight topics such as meditation, five-minute aerobic exercise, healthy eating, and drug-abuse awareness—fostering a spirit of communion as students work together to study, play, and serve.

Our students continue to focus on the wellness of the NSU and greater South Florida communities through service projects that include 5K runs for pediatric cancer, heart disease, and breast cancer. In addition to serving as ambassadors for NSU applicants, our students also act as tutors, clean Florida beaches, and volunteer at homeless shelters and pediatric camps. These acts of kind service not only help numerous organizations and thousands of individuals, but reward the givers as well as the recipients.

An alumni mentor program is being implemented that enables our graduates to support their junior colleagues with experienced advice throughout their medical school and residency training. Additionally, the Faculty Wellness Program provides monthly lectures and interactive activities on topics such as “Healthy Cooking in 30 Minutes” and “Understanding Physician Stress.” Faculty members also developed the college’s inaugural Open Mic Night to share their stories, poetry, and musical talents in a supportive and entertaining environment.

New paint and posters in the Terry Building stairwells beautify the landings and encourage faculty and staff members to exercise wherever and whenever they can. Another way we are encouraging active lifestyles is through the submission of a presidential grant to provide Fitbits to members of the COM. I have even begun walking meetings three days per week, so if you want to talk, you need to walk.

All of this has helped the COM recommit to a fundamental osteopathic philosophy—that the focus of patient care should be wellness. Please take a moment and reflect on that very simple principle and then join us, in any way you are able.

Be part of the renaissance. Be well.

Chancellor’s COMmuniqué

FREDERICK LIPPMAN, R.Ph., Ed.D.

AS I HAVE DISCUSSED IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, NSU has been undergoing a transformation related to the realignment of various academic programs. This realignment has created an ancillary benefit, allowing the Health Professions Division (HPD) colleges to look into establishing new baccalaureate and certificate programs that can help channel new students into the graduate and first-professional degree programs.

Currently, about 80 percent of NSU’s undergraduate matriculants are biology majors, with many of them seeking opportunities to gain preliminary exposure within the HPD to our pedagogy, labs, and research methods. As a result, the soon-to-be eight HPD colleges are working diligently to establish these types of opportunities.

For example, the College of Medical Sciences created a program that allows undergraduate biology majors to attend presentations in the Anatomy Lab during a two-week summer session. This initiative provides a wonderful opportunity for undergraduate students to involve themselves in activities that may lead them to pursue specific careers within the health professions.

In an effort to provide additional educational opportunities to first-time college students, a number of bachelor’s degree programs are being proposed or developed within the HPD colleges in areas such as nutrition, medical education, and public health. The establishment of new certificate programs that will enhance the educational mix, such as one for pharmacy technicians, is also being considered.

After reviewing some recent admissions data regarding students who matriculate into the HPD programs, it has become evident that they know our university is going through a positive academic realignment. Many of these students have also expressed, to our admissions teams, that they believe NSU is a very holistic and interprofessional academic entity.

NSU is at a very exciting point in its history. As we continue to enhance our educational offerings and enrich our reputation, the significance of these advancements will be of tremendous value to us in the future.
Sister Act Pursues Shared D.O. Dream

By Scott Colton, B.A., APR
COM/HPD Director of Medical Communications and Public Relations

There are moments in life most of us will forever cherish, from meeting the loves of our lives to landing the jobs of our dreams. For second-year students Brittany and Jaclyn Siegel, one of those defining moments occurred on August 4, 2014, when they received a life-altering phone call that set them on the path to realizing their dreams.

Because they had not received an acceptance into medical school, the twins devoted their time to working two jobs, traveling to faraway places such as South Africa, shadowing physicians, and training for athletic competitions. "With ample amounts of time on our hands, and few demanding obligations, we renewed our lease in Gainesville, Florida, which had been our home for the last five years," Jaclyn explained. But on that fateful day, with the ringing of a cell phone, this lifestyle—and everything we had come to know as home—changed.

On August 4, 2014, while the NSU-COM class of 2018 was participating in its first day of orientation-week activities in the Steele Auditorium at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, Brittany and Jaclyn were busy working in Gainesville when Jaclyn’s phone rang early in the afternoon. Because it was an unknown caller who appeared on her phone while she was working, Jaclyn respectfully declined the call. Two hours later, however, when the same number appeared, Jaclyn's curiosity compelled her to answer.

What followed was news akin to winning the Powerball lottery, as Jaclyn was informed that she had been offered a seat in NSU-COM’s class of 2018. After the initial shock wore off, she collapsed to the floor in tears while repeating the words, “I accept! I accept! I accept!” Within seconds, however, Jaclyn regained her composure and asked the NSU representative if Brittany was also being offered admission. To her immense joy and relief, the answer was a resounding yes.

Although Brittany and Jaclyn were thrilled to be accepted into NSU-COM, their last-minute admittance meant their lives were thrust into immediate chaos. "In order to make the second day of mandatory orientation, we were instructed to arrive at the college by 7:30 a.m. the following day," Brittany said. “This meant we had to immediately quit our jobs, pack up our things, move out of our apartment, and say goodbye to not only our friends, but to life as we had known it for the past five years.”

(Continued on page 6)
Sister Act Pursues Shared D.O. Dream (cont.)

Not surprisingly, Brittany and Jaclyn admitted that the whirlwind of activity that followed the joyful phone call from the NSU-COM admissions representative was the most uplifting yet overwhelming experience they had ever endured. “Unlike our fellow colleagues who arranged celebration dinners, days of school shopping, and preparation—and most importantly, a good night’s sleep before the first day of classes—we did things a little differently,” Jaclyn explained. “We slept for only two hours, entered school with only a piece of paper and a pen, and lived out of a suitcase until we found time to get settled in an apartment.”

The Path to NSU-COM
As native South Floridians who were born at Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood and lived in North Miami Beach before relocating to nearby Weston at the age of nine, the Siegel twins found themselves drawn to pursuing medical careers for a number of reasons. “For as long as we could remember, we always appreciated a challenge and desired achievement and success,” Jaclyn explained. “At one point, Brittany considered becoming a lawyer. However, science classes in school and medical-based TV shows shaped and encouraged our interest in pursuing a medical career.”

Although their father, Mark Siegel, has a health care background that includes serving on Florida’s Emergency Cardiac Care Committee and teaching various aspects of emergency medicine and neurology at several South Florida colleges and universities, his career choices didn’t have a particular influence on the twins’ decision to attend medical school. “The mere beauty of medicine and the miracles it can bring is we ultimately have the same brain,” said Brittany. “In this regard, I trust Jaclyn to write all the flash cards, while she trusts me to compose the outlines. This, of course, saves us a bunch of time, because we get double the work done in half the time. It’s also assuring to know we always have someone nearby who understands our frustrations and the stresses of medical school.”

While being a twin certainly has its advantages, both Brittany and Jaclyn said it also has the potential to strip away their individuality. “Although we look alike, think alike, and even score similar grades on our exams, we do have different personality traits and desires,” Jaclyn explained. “It’s sometimes disheartening to be addressed by classmates as ‘twins,’ because they either don’t care to learn our individual names, or never viewed us as individuals.”

Even before they began attending NSU-COM in 2014, Brittany and Jaclyn had established a tradition of volunteering for others by volunteering their time to various organizations, such as the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Special Olympics. Similarly, while they were completing their Bachelor of Science degrees at the University of Florida in Gainesville, they spent countless hours volunteering in various UF Health Shands Hospital departments, including dermatology, pediatrics, and surgical intensive care.

As is the case with many close-knit twins, Brittany and Jaclyn have an uncanny knack for harmoniously balancing each other’s needs, which is why attending medical school in tandem works so well for the sisters. “We feel truly blessed to help and support each other as we learn and grow into doctors and share all the experiences of medical school together,” Jaclyn said. “There are indeed perks to having a double, especially in medical school, because we appreciate the ability to literally be in two places at once.”

For example, while Jaclyn is purchasing their meals during lunch break, Brittany is busy renting a study room and setting up their study space. “The cool thing about being a twin is we ultimately have the same brain,” said Brittany. “In this regard, I trust Jaclyn to write all the flash cards, while she trusts me to compose the outlines. This, of course, saves us a bunch of time, because we get double the work done in half the time. It’s also assuring to know we always have someone nearby who understands our frustrations and the stresses of medical school.”

Looking Back, Moving Forward
As they approach the start of their third-year clinical rotations this summer, Brittany and Jaclyn reflected on what they have enjoyed most about their first two years as NSU-COM students. “We both serve as peer mentors for our academical societies, where we assist the first-year medical students with their transition into medical school and coordinate myriad events for both first- and second-year students,” Brittany said. “Over the summer, we also served as anatomy fellows, which allowed us to tutor the physician assistant students and coordinate review sessions for their exams.”

They also had the honor of volunteering as NSU-COM student ambassadors, which Brittany considers to be one of the highlights of her NSU-COM experience to date. “I have had the privilege to meet a diverse group of prospective medical students as they come to campus for a tour during their interview day,” she explained. “It has also provided me with an opportunity to learn about the history and current academic and social standing of my graduate profession. In this role, I have traveled to four different undergraduate schools, where I offered advice to premedical students and shared my experiences as a medical student.”

With graduation looming in 2018, Brittany and Jaclyn are already plotting their postgraduate plans. “We both have a special passion for the pediatric patient population, so we are inspired to pursue a pediatric residency program, hopefully together,” Jaclyn said. “We would like to specialize in a certain field of medicine, but we’re still anxiously exploring our options. Our ultimate goal is to open our own practice together.”

No matter what the future holds, the sisters agree that the best part of attending medical school with their mirror image is the healthy competition that motivates them to always strive for greater glory. “Attending medical school was just part of the dream we had; attending medical school together was our true dream,” Brittany admitted. “Our desire to see each other succeed encourages us to never work against each other—but always work together.”

While their futures look exceedingly bright, both Brittany and Jaclyn never lose sight of how fortunate they were to gain the final two seats in the college’s class of 2018. “Looking back on our acceptance, we are reminded of the importance of flexibility, courage, and most importantly, hope,” Brittany declared. “That last-minute phone call forever changed our perceptions on what we consider to be absolute, black and white, or definitive. We learned that perseverance, hard work, and having the patience and courage to succeed can lead us to a point in our lives where a simple phone call could send us on the way to achieving our dreams and aspirations. Although we only started with a pen and paper, we will be leaving with so much more.”


Brittany (left) and Jaclyn with one of their favorite instructors, Glenn K. Moran, D.O., clinical professor of family medicine.
We buy insurance, hoping we will never need it. Sometimes, however, life pushes us to use the cushion we have prepared. That kind of unforeseen moment occurred on January 26, when two colleagues in NSU’s Physical Plant—Anthony Iovino, B.S., assistant director, and Edgar Ruiz, M.I.B.A., manager of fire and life safety—used their lifesaving skills to rescue their coworker, Jeffrey Heard.

In seconds, a regular Tuesday morning transformed into an unforgettable emergency. Heard started the workday at 7:45 a.m. by making and sorting copies at the printer in the administrative area next to Iovino’s office. Suddenly, he collapsed, and Iovino rushed over to find out what had happened. “Initially, I thought he was having a seizure, so I placed him on his side in case he started to vomit,” he said. “It didn’t look like he was breathing, so I called out immediately to others in the office to call 911.”

Opening the door to the hallway, Iovino shouted out to Ruiz, who stopped working at his desk and quickly came over to help assess the situation. When he arrived, Ruiz saw Heard shaking on the floor. Within seconds, he had lost consciousness and started turning blue.

Leaving Ruiz with Heard, Iovino ran down the hall to retrieve the automatic external defibrillator (AED)—a portable device designed to respond to a cardiac emergency by analyzing the heart rhythm and delivering an electrical shock if needed. AEDs have been installed in many areas throughout NSU and can increase the chance for lifesaving defibrillation.

Iovino returned with the AED, and both he and Ruiz immediately administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to Heard. While Iovino performed chest compressions, Ruiz rendered breaths. The men then attached the AED, which conducted an analysis and advised that a shock was needed. “I cleared the area around Heard on the floor, making sure no one was touching him, placed the pads, and shouted ‘Clear!’ before pressing the shock button,” Ruiz said.

Everyone backed away, watching and waiting tensely for the shock to occur. After the first shock, there was no response, so Ruiz and Iovino continued CPR. “The second round of CPR succeeded and he suddenly woke up, sat up, and was breathing and coherent. Within minutes, EMS arrived and took over the next phase of care,” Iovino said.

Emergency medical services (EMS) transported Heard to the hospital, where doctors diagnosed ventricular fibrillation and implanted a pacemaker in his chest. Two days later, on January 28, Heard left the hospital and went home. “I am thankful we were trained recently and were there to assist in such a miraculous recovery,” Iovino said.

Heard is still on medical leave from work, but praised his colleagues in a Sun Sentinel community news interview. “It’s a miracle,” he said. “I was very proud they were so versed in what to do and how to do it. I was very lucky those two were there for me at that time.”

Both Iovino and Ruiz have years of experience in lifesaving techniques and completed their latest training course on campus in December 2015. The American Heart Association’s Heartsaver CPR/AED training is offered by the College of Osteopathic Medicine’s Department of Emergency Medical Service Education and Training and provides lifesaving classes to faculty and staff members as well as students. The training is also offered to the larger community of businesses, schools, medical offices, and others.

Putting the vital and amazing moments of the rescue in perspective, Ruiz said, “Many times, employees don’t take CPR/AED training seriously, but we are living proof that the course offered through NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine was crucial in saving a life.”

The Power of Preparation Saves a Life

By Debra R. Gibbs, B.A., Medical Communications Coordinator

Anthony Iovino, left, and Edgar Ruiz, right, used their lifesaving training to help their coworker, Jeffrey Heard, center.
Addiction Medicine Club Provides Vital Instruction

Through the college’s enhanced student wellness initiatives, additional attention is being paid to the overall health of NSU-COM students thanks to a 10-topic curriculum that has been incorporated into the various Academical Society meetings that are held throughout the academic year. Despite this increased emphasis on student wellness, it’s important to note that the college has always underscored the topic’s importance through various means, including essential student organizations such as the Addiction Medicine Club.

Established in 2006, the club’s mission is to provide medical students with exposure to both addictionologists and board-certified addiction physicians who offer health care services within the biopsychosocial framework for persons with addiction. In addition, lectures are coordinated that address a range of topics, including understanding addiction as a disease, learning how to treat a person with substance-related health conditions, and providing guidance to family members whose health and functioning are affected by another’s substance use or addiction.

This unparalleled exposure will increase student physicians’ knowledge and awareness of addiction in an effort to better serve our community’s growing addiction-related illnesses, which we will face in the near future as physicians,” said second-year student Sean Mardis, who serves as president of the club, which currently consists of 15 members from the classes of 2018 and 2019. “Our club is a way for any students at the college who are interested in any of these subjects to become more aware of how addiction may affect their future patients, or how addiction may impact their own lives. Additionally, we frequently collaborate with other NSU-COM clubs when it comes to bringing in speakers.”

Because the club’s main focus is educating students on issues that span the addiction and substance-abuse spectrum, guest lecturers, as well as faculty members, are invited to offer their expertise and answer the attendees’ questions. “Much like any club, we do our best to bring in speakers from the field to discuss what it is like to practice in the field,” Mardis said. “Generally, we coordinate about four meetings each year. In the 2015–2016 academic year, we have already had three speakers, including one who discussed the delicate issue of prescribing opiates as painkillers—drugs to which many patients become addicted.”

Another speaker, first-year student Hytham Rashid, discussed the opiate antagonist named naloxone, which is used to reverse the effects of life-threatening opioid overdoses and help prevent fatal overdoses. “Hytham comes to NSU via San Francisco, where he was certified to administer the intranasal naloxone to someone who may have overdosed on opiates,” Mardis explained. “Having one of our own classmates as a speaker allowed us to have a more relaxed atmosphere. As a result, some of our shyer members felt more at ease and were able to ask insightful questions they may not have asked if a more veteran speaker was presenting.”

The club’s most recent guest speaker, Susan Nyamora, provided a presentation on the perils of addiction while being pregnant. Nyamora, who is a member of the Broward County Flakka Task Force, also discussed how the county is the epicenter for this new drug, as well as the effect it is having on the community. As a result of her presentation, Mardis is hoping to get the Addiction Medicine Club involved with the Broward County Flakka Task Force in a beneficial way.

To accomplish this, Mardis plans to attend an upcoming Broward County Flakka Task Force meeting to determine how the club could best provide its support. “After I speak with the task force, my goal is to figure out how our club can help the Broward community, whether this be by attending health fairs, or serving some of the homeless community of Broward, which is a high-risk group for using this cheap and dangerous drug,” he said.

Because addiction comes in many forms, Mardis is proud of what the club has done to destigmatize the disease and provide a forum for addiction and substance-abuse issues to be discussed in a frank manner. “When many people think of addiction, they see a drug addict who is homeless, an alcoholic, or some variation on this theme,” Mardis explained. “Fortunately, this is not the only way addiction changes someone’s life. Addiction can come in the form of sex, shopping—a dangerous thing when students are given very large amounts of loans they will have to repay with interest—gaming, or even studying the hardest so they can have the best grades.”

Officers
Sean Mardis (president)
Charlie Kent (vice president)
Stefanie Altmann (treasurer)
Hye Jeong Han (first-year student representative)
Peter Cohen, D.O. (faculty adviser)
When I’m not in the hospital on rotations or with my nose buried in the books, I enjoy going out into nature to de-stress. Whether you enjoy scuba diving on your favorite reef, trail running, kayaking in the Everglades, or just taking a walk off the beaten path, knowing how to apply your in-house medical training in an outdoor situation can be crucial if you get stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Going out into nature has always been a passion of mine. If my training as a Boy Scout and a wilderness guide has taught me anything, however, it’s that you always need to be prepared. Last November 21, I had the opportunity to help coordinate a hands-on wilderness medicine workshop on the beach in Crandon Park in Key Biscayne, Florida, to help expand wilderness medical knowledge in our area.

The workshop was affiliated with the Florida Wilderness Medical Association (FLoWMA), which is a group that was established in 2015 to enhance safety in the wilderness through wilderness medical training in Florida. The FLoWMA helps bring different health care professionals together to collaborate, network, and explore the outdoors. The event was the result of an expansion of a preexisting collaboration between NSU-COM’s Wilderness Medicine Club and Florida International University’s Emergency Medicine Club.

More than 50 medical students from 5 Caribbean and South Florida medical schools participated in the workshop. It involved 6 stations where students learned essential skills—including primary and secondary patient surveys—evacuation and carries, knot tying, splinting, anaphylaxis treatment, and venomous snakebite management. Emergency medicine physicians and residents, medical students with a wilderness medicine background, and Miami-Dade Venom One unit firefighters led the stations.

The workshop catered to the participants’ various expertise and years in medical school. Participants were challenged to work with the materials they had on hand—a stark difference to having access to traditional medical resources at the ready. For example, if a friend has a bee sting while out on a trail and you’ve already given him his EpiPen shot but he requires another dose, there’s a way to open up the pen with a pocketknife to extract more medicine.

In the wild, you might not have all the modern equipment you often rely on in a normal clinical environment, but there are several ways to improvise. The goal is to get the patient to a hospital as soon as possible, but that could take hours or days. Finding smart ways to use shirts, water bottles, the environment, and any other supplies on hand are imperative to helping the patient survive.

Wilderness skills also apply to international or resource-depleted regions where medical access is less available. Before your next medical outreach trip or outdoor adventure, brushing up on your wilderness medicine skills is a great way to prepare.

More than 50 medical students from 5 Caribbean and South Florida medical schools participated in the workshop.
During the week of December 12–19, 2015, a NSU-COM medical team led by Paula Anderson-Worts, D.O., M.P.H., associate professor of family medicine and public health, traveled to Jamaica to treat more than 1,100 pediatric and adult patients. Luzan Phillpotts, D.O., M.P.H., assistant professor of family medicine and public health, was instrumental in helping Anderson-Worts organize the medical outreach team. The medical team, which provided care to patients in Westmoreland, Jamaica, consisted of 12 physicians, 29 first- and second-year NSU-COM students, 3 dentists, 2 optometrists, and 14 volunteers.

On top of a mountain, at the end of a long and winding road, a small concrete church sits seamlessly upon the beautiful landscape around it. Outside, an elderly man with a single rusted shovel works tirelessly in the hot sun, turning over the soil on the large, rolling backyard of this place of worship. Inside, within the back room of the church and hidden behind a large curtain, several local women prepare lunch for the visitors who have come to help treat patients.

It is here, on a December day during a weeklong stay in Jamaica, that our team met Kiwayne Ellis, the five-year-old grandson of the church’s pastor. Kiwayne has one of those innocent smiles that could make even the toughest person melt. For an hour the team played tag, blew up medical gloves to make balloons, and burned more calories than it thought possible. But Kiwayne’s energy didn’t falter for a moment.

At this point, you may be wondering what any of this has to do with a medical outreach trip. The fact is, this story embodies an essential force in health care that many are quick to forget—treating the soul.

While in Jamaica, the team treated patients in makeshift clinics in schools, churches, and hotel bathrooms. It was in these self-made exam rooms that an array of patients who had a variety of complaints were treated. One unique case encountered was a middle-aged woman who came in complaining of eating dirt compulsively. She was very embarrassed and ashamed of this habit, but she was soon reassured that it was a natural occurrence known as pica, which had been driven by her extreme lack of iron due to heavy bleeding over the past few years.

Along with the peculiar and interesting cases, countless men and women were treated for diabetes, hypertension, and various infections. Fortunately, the pharmacy station was able to provide two- or three-month supplies of most drugs to these patients. The whole process worked quite efficiently, because the team saw more than 150 patients a day. These are examples of treating the mind and the body, so where does the soul come in?

One case that comes to mind was an elderly woman who came in complaining of pain during urination. Initially the patient’s interview focused primarily on this chief complaint, but this approach changed when a few red flags were raised during the social history portion. It turned out that the patient had been depressed due to past and current unfortunate circumstances, which resulted in her turning to alcohol in the absence of proper help. After reassuring her both medically and spiritually, as well as offering advice on how she can rebuild her support group to find stability and happiness in her life, the patient went on her way.

What she left behind, however, was a very valuable lesson. Although the team may be treating the physical ailments of the patients, both their minds and souls must also be attended to, because true health and happiness come from a balance of all three—mind, body, and spirit.

This is a lesson that must be brought home with the team. It is very easy to get caught up in the hectic nature of this profession and to fall into the traditional practices in health care. But the most success has always come from those physicians who truly listen to their patients and show the compassion that is needed to recharge one’s spirit, just like the way Kiwayne and all the other beautiful people in Jamaica recharged the team’s souls as health care workers and volunteers.

Although the medical volunteers may speak and look different from their patients, and hold distinctive traditions and values, one thing to keep in mind is that true compassion is recognized by all and can even heal the wounds that remain unseen. ■
During the week of December 6–13, 2015, an NSU-COM medical team led by Cheryl Atherley-Todd, M.D., CMD, assistant professor of family medicine, traveled to the Dominican Republic to treat more than 500 pediatric and adult patients. The team, which consisted of 7 physicians, 19 second-year students, and 1 staff member, provided medical care for the people of Jarabacoa and Moca.

The team members stayed in lodges tucked away in the mountains in Jarabacoa, about 100 miles north of Santo Domingo, the country’s capital, and Moca, just 30 miles north. A range of services was provided in the makeshift clinic sites, including minor lab checks such as finger testing for diabetes, urinalysis, pregnancy tests, and rapid strep exams. They also provided osteopathic manipulative treatment to patients presenting with musculoskeletal problems.

The most common problems encountered were chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes, and gastroesophageal reflux, although many patients had acute upper-respiratory problems and seasonal allergic rhinitis. When the trip concluded, all unused medications were donated to a local hospital.

“The students benefited immensely from this experience,” Atherley-Todd said. “They learned how to triage, examine, and treat patients and were able to hone their skills in presenting cases to the attending physicians. The students rotated with all seven physicians, so they were exposed to different teaching styles. They also rotated through the pharmacy, which allowed them to learn about the medications we used to treat different illnesses.”

Although providing vital health care to an underserved population was the primary goal, the team members found time to have fun as well. During their downtime, they went whitewater rafting and horseback riding, visited dazzling waterfalls, and enjoyed a bonfire at the hotel one evening.

One of the quick-thinking participants even brought marshmallows for toasting.

On the final evening, the local hosts took the team to a nightspot in downtown Jarabacoa, where local musicians provided entertainment. The deputy mayor of Jarabacoa and her assistant attended and thanked the team members for their services to the community. Additionally, each team member was presented with a certificate of recognition as a distinguished visitor to Jarabacoa. The students were not only grateful for this gesture, but also humbled by it.

“All the team members performed admirably,” Atherley-Todd said. “The medical students worked very well as a cohesive team and were always punctual, respectful, willing to help, and willing to learn. In addition, Nelly Tejeda Rodriguez-Rivas, assistant director of student and alumni affairs and our cultural attaché, did an excellent job with triage, translating, and assisting with everything. Overall, the trip was a major success.”
Altruism Showcased in Boston

By Romeena Lee, Second-Year Student

When one thinks of global health, the first thought is to travel far distances to third-world countries, where malnourished individuals living in subpar conditions are commonly seen. Students and health care professionals travel great distances to provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, and health care. Yet, global health is truly global, because disease does not discriminate between classes, countries, or race, and distance is not necessary to see the need for social justice in our own backyard. A population often forgotten in the shadows of our homes is the homeless.

During last December’s winter break, nine second-year NSU-COM students had the opportunity to travel to Boston, Massachusetts, to learn about providing health care for homeless individuals, social justice, and pivotal historical movements that allowed for change in health care. The week began with a welcome didactic session given by the president of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP).

During the informational lecture, the students learned about homeless health care and leadership and were provided the opportunity to ask questions about the challenges of providing health care to the underserved. The students rotated throughout sites in Boston, served more than 150 patients, had the opportunity to interact with homeless patients in various clinics, and provided basic health care.

The students organized patient activities, including arts and crafts and bingo, accompanied patients to appointments, or simply spent time with them. They also provided foot care to homeless individuals, which is a critical component of their preventative care.

The busy week was filled not only with opportunities for academic learning, but also with opportunities to serve and build relationships with individuals who are often forgotten in the shadows.

Students Win National Fellowships

The Blue Ribbon Foundation, in partnership with the Wisconsin Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Association, Inc., presented NSU-COM’s Institute for Neuro-Immune Medicine (INIM) with an $8,000 stipend for three second-year students—Kelly Gaunt, Kristina Gemayel, and Akashan Monga—that was shared by the student trio.

The Blue Ribbon Foundation Medical Fellowship program provides 10 medical students each summer with a stipend to spend 8 weeks as summer fellows at 10 of the top encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome institutes in the world. The students assist at assigned sites to increase research in fields such as gene expression, big data, and translational medicine. Students also shadow doctors as they diagnose and treat patients.

Nancy Klimas, M.D., professor and director of the INIM, along with assistant professors Irma Rey, M.D., and Maria Vera, M.D., who teach and pursue research within the INIM, served as mentors to the winning students and assisted them in creating a research project. Some students were able to gather preliminary data for analysis, while others refined their research design.

Application for the Blue Ribbon Fellowship included submission of an abstract to serve as the basis of a poster abstract. If statistics were not gathered, the research could become a catalyst for future studies, with the goal of submitting a poster abstract at a national conference.

Students honored with the fellowships must submit an abstract to the 2016 International Association for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis annual meeting being held in October 2016. The stipend covers travel expenses and conference registration fees.

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During the informational lecture, the students learned about homeless health care and leadership and were provided the opportunity to ask questions about the challenges of providing health care to the underserved. The students rotated throughout sites in Boston, served more than 150 patients, had the opportunity to interact with homeless patients in various clinics, and provided basic health care.

The students organized patient activities, including arts and crafts and bingo, accompanied patients to appointments, or simply spent time with them. They also provided foot care to homeless individuals, which is a critical component of their preventative care.

The students also had an opportunity to learn about HIV and hepatitis C care through the HIV team at a Boston Medical Center clinic and toured the oldest homeless shelter in the country, Pine Street Inn, where they learned about establishing medical clinics for the underserved.

In addition, the students learned about BHCHP’s respite care facility, the Barbara McInnis House, and worked alongside interdisciplinary medical teams to treat inpatients. They also attended a private historical tour of Massachusetts General Hospital, as well as a grand rounds presentation on innovative substance-use programs and new biochemical pathway findings crucial to the treatment of individuals with substance-use disorders.

The busy week was filled not only with opportunities for academic learning, but also with opportunities to serve and build relationships with individuals who are often forgotten in the shadows.
On January 26–27, a number of NSU-COM students and faculty members traveled to Tallahassee to participate in Dean’s Day at the Florida State Capitol. During Dean’s Day, the Council of Florida Medical School Deans, which comprises the deans from each of Florida’s seven allopathic and two osteopathic medical schools, comes together annually to discuss important issues with the council members and legislators.

Participants included third-year students Saamia Shaikh and Lauren Boudreau, second-year student Bhavik Gupta, and Corey Dubose, D.O., chief family medicine resident at Broward Health Medical Center. Faculty members in attendance were Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S., NSU-COM dean; Kenneth Johnson, D.O., FACOOG, assistant dean of faculty; and James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., assistant dean of professional relations.

During Dean’s Day, the attendees met with various representatives and senators, as well as with John Armstrong, M.D., the state surgeon general, and Marshall Criser III, who serves as chancellor of the State University System of Florida. Some of the issues discussed while at the Florida State Capitol were additional graduate medical education opportunities in Florida, the continuation of Medicaid payments to the state’s public medical schools, telehealth, and mental health.

Legislative Process in Action at Dean’s Day

Fourth-year student Trevine Albert collaborated with 2015 NSU-COM alumnus Michael Young, D.O., on the research project, “The Role of Adjuvant Radiotherapy Following Gross Total Resection of Atypical Meningiomas.” The project won first place in the neurosurgery category at the 2015 Annual Clinical Assembly of Osteopathic Surgeons poster competition held last October in Chicago, Illinois.

Second-year student Laura Morrison served as third author on the article, “RFX Transcription Factors Are Essential for Hearing in Mice,” which was published in the October 2015 issue of *Nature Communications*. Morrison worked on this project at the University of Maryland Medical Center during her gap years in Baltimore.

Fourth-year student Alecia Folkes, M.S., coauthored an article, “Recurrent Basal Cell Carcinoma with Perineural Invasion: A Case Report and Review,” that was accepted for publication in volume 34 of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology*.

Second-year students Kelly Gaunt and Christopher Mancuso were selected to participate in the college’s 2015–2016 Predoctoral Research Fellowship Program. During their fellowship year, which will commence in July 2016, Gaunt and Mancuso will have the opportunity to develop their own research projects and collaborate with others involved in the research field.

Third-year students Alexandra Grammenos and Ana Rivas had their article, “Review of Rhomboid Flaps and Their Modern Modifications,” published in volume 34 of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology*, where their article was featured as an editor’s pick. They worked in conjunction with David L. Thomas, M.D., J.D., Ed.D., and 2005 NSU-COM alumnus Jacqueline Thomas, D.O.

First-year student Benjamin Eisenman had his coauthored article, “High- or Standard-Dose Influenza Vaccine for Middle-Aged Adults with Cardiovascular Disease: What’s a Doctor to Do?” published in the *Journal of Cardiology*. The article initially appeared online on December 1, 2015.

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(Continued on next page)
News Briefs


Second-year student Vinayak Shenoy coauthored an article, “Gender Differences in Door to EKG Time in the STEMI Population Lead to Worse Cardiovascular Outcomes,” which was accepted for presentation at the American College of Cardiology 65th Annual Scientific Session and Expo held April 2–4 in Chicago, Illinois.

Fourth-year student Kelly Thibert and 16 other medical professionals visited the Department of Defense’s medical training facilities in San Antonio, Texas, on January 7. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command brought the mix of physicians, students, educators, and nurses to Brooke Army Medical Center, the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center, the Center for the Intrepid rehabilitation center, and a combat support hospital at Camp Bullis. Attendees were most interested in how the army’s health care practices and techniques could be shared in the civilian sector.

On January 14, Traci-lyn Eisenberg, D.O., assistant professor of family medicine, accompanied eight NSU-COM students to Tallahassee, Florida, to participate in Osteopathic Medicine and Health Awareness Day, where they were able to meet with the speaker of the house and several state senators and representatives. Pictured (from left) are Joe Bhagratie; Nicole Bixler, D.O., M.B.A., FACOFP (FOMA president-elect); Traci-lyn Eisenberg; Hemali Patel; Mark Sawh; Aadil Vora; An Nguyen; Michael Wilczek; William Stager, D.O., M.S., M.P.H., FAAMA, FAAO, FACOFP (FOMA president); Heather Kligfield; and Daniel Vergara.

Third-year student Ravi Uppal was elected as the national president of the Canadian Osteopathic Medical Student Association, which is dedicated to spreading knowledge of osteopathic medicine in Canada and abroad.

Student COMmunications

Faculty/Staff COMmunications

Peter Cohen, D.O., assistant professor of family medicine, was named as the family practice residency director at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah.

Linda Maurice, M.A., director of the college’s Lifelong Learning Institute, received the TRIAD 2015 Citizen of the Year Award at the winter annual recognition event held at the Davie Police Department in December 2015. TRIAD is a partnership between the Broward Sheriff’s Office, the Broward County Chiefs of Police, the Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons, and older/retired leadership in the area.

Deborah A. Mulligan, M.D., clinical professor of pediatrics and director of the Health Professions Division’s Institute for Child Health Policy, was appointed to the University of California, Santa Barbara Center for Digital Games Research Board of Advisors. The center studies digital media and games from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Kelley Davis, Ph.D., professor of microbiology and director of the college’s Master of Science in Disaster and Emergency Management Program, was named as the NSU College of Medical Sciences’ Professor of the Year in October 2015.

From left: George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and CEO; Kelley Davis; and Ralph V. Rogers, Ph.D., NSU provost and executive vice president for academic affairs.
Transitions

Employees Honored for Longevity
On December 11, the college recognized 22 individuals who celebrated significant employment milestones in 2015.

30 Years
- Steven Zucker

25 Years
- Judith Schaffer

15 Years
- Steve Bronsburg
- Michelle Gagnon Blodgett
- Carol Siu
- Elaine Wallace

10 Years
- Isa Fernandez
- Janet Hamstra
- Nilda Hernandez
- Samuel Snyder

5 Years
- Winston Alexis
- Cheryl Atherley-Todd
- Kara Brien
- Roberta Duenas
- Mark Gabay
- T. Lucas Hollar
- Hadi Masri
- Kristi Messer
- Doris Newman
- Dennis Pennell
- Chania Vargas
- Jill Wallace-Ross

Employee Anniversaries

Delia Harper-Celestine, Ed.D., M.P.H., was promoted to assistant dean of osteopathic postgraduate education and will be responsible for postgraduate residency training programs and Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education partners.

Guy M. Nehrenz, Ed.D., M.A., RRT, joined the college on February 15, assuming the position of professor and associate dean of osteopathic medical education. In this role, he will oversee the areas of preclinical, clinical, and postgraduate education. Before joining NSU-COM, Nehrenz, who has worked at NSU since 2002, served as executive associate dean and professor in the NSU College of Health Care Sciences. His multifaceted experience includes more than 35 years in education, health care administration, medical research, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, aeromedical critical care transport, trauma, neonatal ICU, and pulmonary procedures.

Doris Newman, D.O., FAAO, was promoted to assistant dean of osteopathic clinical education and will be responsible for the administration of third- and fourth-year clinical rotations and all relationships with directors of medical education and training hospitals.

Arif M. Rana, Ph.D., Ed.S., M.S., assistant professor of biomedical informatics and medical education and director of faculty development, was named program director for the college’s Master of Science in Medical Education Program.

Mark Sandhouse, D.O., M.S., assistant dean of administration, has been named academic director of medical education for the college’s training programs and interim chief academic officer for the Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education.

Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FACOFP dist, dean emeritus and professor of family medicine and public health, has assumed the role of director of international medicine and interprofessional medicine. His focus will include overseeing all NSU medical outreach programs, serving as faculty adviser for the International Medical Outreach Club, and administering the evaluation and approval of all international rotations in rural or underserved medicine. As director of interprofessional medicine, he will work with Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., R.D., assistant dean of research and innovation, to expand initiatives in interprofessional health care and assume responsibility for HPD Interprofessional Day.
Faculty/Staff COMmunications

Changing Course

On January 5, the college organized a farewell reception for Marti Echols, Ph.D., M.Ed., assistant dean and chair of medical education. Echols, who worked at the college for almost nine years, has accepted a groundbreaking position as associate dean of academic affairs at the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Smith, Arkansas. At the reception, she reflected fondly on her years at NSU-COM and graciously thanked her colleagues for their support.

ON JANUARY 21, the college coordinated a farewell reception for Angela S. Garcia, Pharm.D., M.P.H., CPH, assistant professor of public health. Garcia, who joined the college in January 2014 to oversee the required field experiences of the Master of Public Health Program, earned both her Doctor of Pharmacy and Master of Public Health degrees at NSU. Her award-winning career is set to continue at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Faculty Members Earn State Reappointments

In November 2015, James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., assistant dean of professional relations, and Mark Gabay, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, assistant professor of pediatrics, were reappointed to the 13-member Physician Workforce Advisory Council by Florida’s state surgeon general and secretary of health. All appointments are four-year terms lasting through November 2019.

The Physician Workforce Advisory Council, composed of various stakeholders throughout the medical community, serves as a coordinating and strategic planning body to assess the state’s physician workforce needs. Initiatives include policy development that improves graduate medical education and physician training, retention, distribution, and diversity.
Faculty Perspective

Interprofessional Education and Practice
Creating the Environment for Leadership

By Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., R.D.
Assistant Dean for Research and Innovation Director, Center for Interprofessional Education and Practice

THE CONCEPT OF interprofessional education and practice (IEP) is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the fundamentals of IEP go back to the 1920s. It was not until World War II, however, when wounded soldiers returned home and were provided with home care and rehabilitation by a team of experts that often included a nurse, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and a physiatrist, that the term interdisciplinary practice became recognized.

In the decades that followed, the terms interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and even interprofessional/intraprofessional were often used interchangeably to identify team-based practice. The team-based movement of the past 70 years led to the realization that team-based education and ultimate practice had significant implications related to the quality of overall patient care and outcomes. In the early part of the 21st century, the Institute of Medicine recommended that interprofessional education and practice become intertwined into all health care delivery, and that all future health care providers be educated to be part of an interprofessional team.

There was something new and different with this focus on interprofessional education and practice, as it now included consumers/patients and their family members as full and active members of the health team. Interprofessional took on the real meaning of team-based care, with different and individually unique members of the health, social, education, and other pertinent professions needed on a team to equally participate together with the patients and their family members in the planning and delivery of their health care throughout the lifespan—and within the context of the medical home.

In 2009, six national education associations of health professions schools representing higher education in both allopathic and osteopathic medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, and public health formed a collaborative to promote and encourage interprofessional learning experiences. These organizations formed the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), which established four common-core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice that provide the foundation for curriculum development across all the health professions. The competency domains include values/ethics for interprofessional practice, roles and responsibilities, interprofessional communication, and teams and teamwork.

The foundation the IPEC provided for interprofessional education and practice was integrated throughout the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. As a result, more than 60 health education accrediting organizations now require that interprofessional education and practice be part of the curriculum. NSU-COM responded quickly, forming an interprofessional initiative in 2011 as a result of a dual-degree program grant it received in osteopathic medicine and public health that focused on developing leaders in interprofessional education and practice.

In 2012, the project’s faculty members expanded their interprofessional leadership into the development of the NSU-COM Center for Interprofessional Education and Practice (CIPEP). Additionally, a new federal grant was received for an interprofessional dual-degree program for physician assistant students and the Master of Public Health Program. Concurrent with the implementation of these interprofessional dual-degree programs, the CIPEP organized the NSU Interprofessional Education Collaborative (NSU IPEC), which consists of representatives from various NSU programs.

In its first year, there were 9 academic programs represented. Currently, there are 22 disciplines and more than 30 members represented on the NSU IPEC coordinated by the CIPEP. The IPEC has been instrumental in developing interprofessional programs and simulations, as well as faculty and community opportunities for continuing education. One of the IPEC’s highlights has been the development through CIPEP of an annual IPE day for NSU students. During an event held on March 30, more than 1,000 students and 60 faculty leaders conducted and participated in team-based and active-learning programs.

The CIPEP’s ongoing activities and opportunities are significant and include the following:

**Interprofessional Student Leadership Program** includes journal clubs, the Interprofessional Leadership course, clinical observations, simulations, and interprofessional student research.

**Current Issues Forum** encompasses topics such as Ebola, Zika, health care financing, Medicare, and Medicaid.

**Interprofessional Student Fall Fair** is a student-led event showcasing each profession in a side-by-side setup.

**IPE Day** features interprofessional presentations, simulation experiences, clinic tours, and student discussions.

**Building Blocks** is an interprofessional faculty development program delivered at the various NSU campuses where faculty members are challenged to develop a leadership plan to implement interprofessional education in the clinical and academic setting.

**Faculty IEP Training** is delivered via tailored workshops for HPD faculty members.

**HPD Faculty Development Programs** are planned monthly, including a spring program that offers a summary of past and future interprofessional activities.

**HPD Interprofessional Grand Rounds** were established to allow HPD faculty members to better understand each programmatic discipline and understand each other’s scopes of practice, as well as the opportunities for true interprofessional practice.

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Institutions of higher education need to examine interprofessional education as an overarching core component in their professional education for the simple reason that 21st-century health care systems offer significant challenges and opportunities for professionals. Interprofessional education and practice can assist professionals to work with their patients and family members to ultimately achieve:

- better patient outcomes through improved quality and satisfaction of the care provided
- improved overall health of the population
- better efficiency in the delivery of care

Our two greatest challenges remain ongoing IEP integration throughout the curriculum and in practice—where students, residents, and professionals actively learn together and not just merely sit together in a lecture hall or attend a single-discipline professional meeting—and ongoing research on patient outcomes as a result of interprofessional care delivery from a lifespan perspective. The CIPEP faculty and staff members are ready to help further advance the mission of interprofessional integration and development of leaders in interprofessional education and practice.

NSU is ideally positioned to become a national leader in interprofessional education and practice because it houses the ideal environment to foster interprofessional leadership.

Interprofessional Education and Practice (continued)

Our core team members are

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Amanda Finley, D.O., who serves as an NSU-COM clinical professor at Magnolia Regional Health Center in Mississippi, was lead author of the article, “Postpartum Vertebral Artery Dissection,” which was published in BMJ Case Reports. Finley coauthored the article with Brenton Rogers, D.O., Theodore Richards, Jr., D.O., and Heather Vogel, D.O., who are residents in Magnolia’s internal medicine program.

T. Lucas Hollar, Ph.D., presented two papers that he coauthored with Nicole Cook, Ph.D., M.P.A., and David Quinn, M.P.H., at the 143rd American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo held October 31–November 4, 2015, in Chicago, Illinois. The first was “Challenges and Rigor in Evaluating Early Childcare Centers’ Adoption of Nutrition Policies and Practices: Lessons Learned from Transforming Our Community’s Health (TOUCH) Community Transformation Grant Evaluation.” The second was “Nutrition Policy and Practice Changes Improve Nutrition Environments in Early Childcare Centers Serving Racially and Ethnically Diverse, Low-Income Children in Broward County, Florida.”


(Continued on next page)
Lynn Lafferty, Pharm.D., N.D., was named to the American Academy of Environmental Medicine Board of Directors at its fall annual meeting in Florida, as well as to the board of the Broward County Pharmacy Association, in October 2015.

Kenya Rivas, M.D., was selected for inclusion in The Latino American Who’s Who. The publication is a New York-based biographical publication that selects and distinguishes leading Latino professionals throughout the world who have attained a recognizable degree of success in their fields of endeavor and thereby contribute to the growth of industry and culture. She also appeared on NSU’s public service television program Dateline Health to discuss geriatric care and senior services.

Janet L. Roseman, Ph.D., R-DMT, was guest editor for a themed issue on spirituality in the medical encounter for the journal Alternative and Complementary Therapies. In addition, her article, “Can History’s Most Inspirational Woman Warrior Joan of Arc Serve as an Enduring Model of Empowerment for Women with a Cancer Diagnosis?” was accepted for publication in Advances in Mind-Body Medicine.


Kamilah B. Thomas-Purcell, Ph.D., M.P.H., CHES, was appointed as a research fellow at the Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation Research Institute in Grenada, West Indies, in October 2015. She was recognized for her Kenyon Grant-funded pilot project, “Perspectives on the Uptake of Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening in Grenada: A Collaborative Approach.” The study will be expanded to include the additional English-speaking Windward Islands of Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent, as well as the Grenadines, and will be supported by the Caribbean Public Health Agency and the National Institutes of Health. Thomas-Purcell also earned the advanced-level Master Certified Health Education Specialist credential from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing last November.

During the NSU External Funding Recognition Reception held October 22, 2015, at the Grande Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida, 108 faculty members from 14 colleges and 4 units were honored for their external funding expertise. The event recognizes the extraordinary efforts of NSU faculty members, who received more than $82 million in external grant funding during the previous fiscal year.

Thanks to the sustained efforts of the following full-time NSU-COM faculty members, significant amounts of external funding have been received to sustain, enhance, or create various research programs and projects:

- Cyril Blavo, D.O., M.S., M.P.H.T.M.
- Nicole Cook, Ph.D., M.P.A.
- Joseph De Gaetano, D.O., M.S.Ed.
- M. Isabel Fernandez, Ph.D., M.A.
- Mary Ann Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A., M.P.H.
- Stephen Grant, Ph.D.
- Nancy Klimas, M.D.
- Leonard Levy, D.P.M., M.P.H.
- Jennie Lou, M.D., M.S.
- Oneka Marriott, D.O., M.P.H.
- Mariana Morris, Ph.D.
- Lubov Nathanson, Ph.D., M.S.
- Raymond Owomby, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A.
- Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD
- Irma Rey, M.D.
- Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., R.D.
- Janet Roseman, Ph.D.
- Irina Rozenfeld, M.S.N., A.R.N.P.
- Gustavo Soldias, M.P.H.
- Elliot Sklar, Ph.D., M.S.
- Kamilah Thomas-Purcell, Ph.D., M.P.H.
- Steven Zucker, D.M.D., M.Ed.
Alumni in the News

Maria Behnam-Terneus, D.O., FAAP, FACOP (’99), a pediatric hospitalist for Miami Children’s Health System, received the NSU Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography Distinguished Alumni Award in November 2015 at a reception held at the Grande Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida. She was one of 14 outstanding Alumni Award in November 2015 at a reception held at the Grande Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida. From left: Richard E. Dodge, Ph.D., Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography dean; Maria Behnam-Terneus; and Jennifer O’Flannery Anderson, NSU vice president for advancement and community relations.

Tina A. Fabiano, D.O. (’11), recently joined the Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) at Midwest Regional Medical Center in Zion, Illinois, as a quality-of-life physician. Before joining CTCA at Midwest, Fabiano served as a primary care provider for outpatients at a large health care system in Wisconsin. In her new role, Fabiano will offer patients the most appropriate and effective pathway of care, incorporating their values to ensure personalized, patient-centric medicine.

Michael W. Gray, D.O. (’88), who is a surgeon at the Michigan Cosmetic Surgery Center and Skin Deep Spa in West Bloomfield, Michigan, recently launched a new scar product called TherASCAR (http://therascar.com), which combines ingredients that help rejuvenate and aid the body in healing skin.

Jamie Hale, D.O. (’11), and Stacey Pilkington, D.O. (’11), who completed their dermatology residency training at Largo Medical Center in June 2015, opened their own practice—Azeal Dermatology Institute—last July. They practice both medical and cosmetic dermatology, with a special emphasis on ensuring a positive patient experience.

Tyler Cymet, D.O., FACP, FACOP (’88), was a featured expert in the Time magazine article “You Asked: Can Stress Cause Gray Hair?” which was published in last year’s November 19 issue. He also appeared in an episode of the new season of Untold Stories of the ER, which is broadcast by Discovery Life and TLC. This marks the fifth time Cymet has been featured on television, in medicine, television, and business, he has crafted a multidimensional career.

Will Kirby, D.O., FACOG (’00), who has practiced in the primary care field since completing her residency training in 2010, is working for a company called myDirectMD in Orlando, Florida. His wife of 19 years, Kerry B. Ace, D.O., who he met while attending NSU-COM, passed away on December 5, 2015, at the age of 50. His wife of 19 years, Kerry B. Ace, D.O., who he met while attending NSU-COM, passed away on December 5, 2015, at the age of 50.

Toni Muzzonigro, D.O. (’07), who has been practicing in the primary care field since completing her residency training in 2010, is working for a company called myDirectMD in Orlando, Florida. She was one of 14 outstanding graduates honored at the NSU Distinguished Alumni Achievement Awards—the highest and most prestigious honor NSU bestows on its graduates.

Eric M. Shoemaker, D.O. (’08), is now affiliated with Pain Consultants of West Florida, which provides integrated pain management solutions for people suffering from chronic or acute pain. Shoemaker, who is board certified in sports medicine and physical medicine and rehabilitation, completed his residency training at the University of Colorado. He then pursued a fellowship in interventional spine and sports medicine at Washington University.

John D. Siddens, D.O., FAACOG (’93), was named director of the Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Service at the newly formed Greenville Hospital System Eye Institute, which is a component of the Greenville Health System Department of Surgery in Greenville, South Carolina. He also serves as assistant professor of surgery and ophthalmology at the University of South Carolina in Greenville and as clinical associate professor of ophthalmology at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

Alan G. Weinstein, D.O., FACOG (’99), is the founder of PrivatePassport.com, a cloud-based initiative that safely stores transportable prenatal records. As a result, prenatal medical records are now instantly available to doctors, midwives, and patients at time of delivery or during any obstetric-related emergency.

Fawn Winkelman, D.O. (’10), who recently opened her own practice in Boca Raton, Florida, Elite Medicine and Aesthetic Institute (elitemdfl.com), was elected treasurer of the Broward County Osteopathic Medical Association in January.

Robert T. Hasty, D.O., FACOP, FACOP (’00), who previously served as associate dean for postgraduate affairs at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in North Carolina, was named founding dean and chief academic officer for Idaho’s first osteopathic medical school—the Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine (ICOM). Hasty will manage day-to-day operations and strategic growth of the medical school in collaboration with the board of trustees, which consists of local and regional physicians and health care executives who will govern the privately funded school. The ICOM will undergo an accreditation process through the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. Classes are expected to begin in August 2018.

In Memoriam

Christopher David Robert, D.O. (’99), who served as chief of anesthesiology at Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota, passed away on December 5, 2015, at the age of 50. His wife of 19 years, Kerry B. Ace, D.O., who he met while attending NSU-COM, is a 1997 alumna.
HEN Mayrene Hernandez, D.O., was informed that she had been selected as the 2015 NSU Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award recipient from the College of Osteopathic Medicine, she admitted to being dumbfounded—and even a bit confused. “As I read the other candidates’ profiles from the other NSU schools, I felt my achievements were no milestones by comparison,” she confessed. “I even went as far as to offer a no-hard-feelings approach if NSU changed its mind.”

Given her upbringing in Havana, Cuba, in the 1970s, it’s not surprising to learn that Hernandez is exceedingly modest when it comes to discussing her personal and professional achievements. Like many Cuban Americans, Hernandez’s life was thrust into turmoil when, at the age of nine, she and her family relocated to Florida as part of the controversial Mariel boatlift in 1980.

“I was always inspired by my grandfather’s love for freedom and motivation to teach the new generation that there was more to life than living in a communist country,” said Hernandez, who grew up in a small Cuban province called San Nicolás de Bari. “In 1980, when the opportunity to migrate to the United States became available via the Mariel boatlift, our family defected via this flotilla, reaching Key West on May 18.”

To illustrate why her family members were willing to risk their lives to make the perilous 90-mile journey from Cuba to Key West, Hernandez shared the story of her first cousin, Ivan Chiu, who made a significant contribution to the scientific world while living in Cuba. “He was a gifted young biological engineering professor who worked closely with a team of Russian scientists that was responsible for discovering the current DNA abstraction process used in the making of the world-famous Hib vaccine,” she explained.

The creation of the vaccine, which prevents serious infections such as meningitis and pneumonia from developing, should have earned her cousin both wealth and world acclaim. Instead, the notable achievement was barely acknowledged. “In the United States, it could have resulted in the equivalent of the Nobel Prize,” she said. “Instead, the Cuban regime recognized him with a bicycle and a new razor.”

Adjusting to life in a new country is a challenging undertaking, especially for a nine-year-old, yet Hernandez adapted quickly to American life. By the time she graduated from high school in 1989, she ranked in the top five of her class and set her sights on a prodigious professional future. “I come from a very traditional family where men did the studying and the women stayed home to care for the children,” said Hernandez, who graduated from Florida International University (FIU) with a Bachelor of Science in Health Information and Administration Management in 1993. “I always wanted to pursue a professional career and serve as an example one day to my own children. Fortunately, my dream was supported by my mother, who studied agricultural engineering but never completed her degree after marrying and having children.”

After graduating from FIU, Hernandez spent the next several years serving in leadership positions for a local chain of nursing homes. During this time, however, her father suffered a significant health scare that would precipitate a change in her career trajectory. “In the early 1990s, my father became ill, as he had acquired viral hepatitis following a minor surgical procedure that was performed while we still lived in Cuba,” she explained. “His health declined, and my frustrations escalated as I tried to help him.”

The depths of her love and concern led her to volunteer in the University of Miami hepatology department. As a result, in 1996, Hernandez was able to perform a biopsy of her father’s liver alongside a prominent hepatology professor. “My father

(Continued on next page)
underwent a liver transplant—one of the first 100 performed as part of the Jackson Memorial liver transplant program,” she said. “This fired my motivation to go back to college and finish my premed courses while still working full time.”

Thanks to the love and support of her husband, Alberto, whom she met at FIU and married in 1993, Hernandez was able to pursue her goal of attending medical school.

“I have always been inclined to help others, but I doubted my own stamina to become a physician,” said Hernandez, who became an NSU-COM student in 1997. “Thanks to my iron will, and with the support of my family, my dream was made possible. My husband played a key role in reassuring me that I would have his unconditional love and support throughout my medical education and training. I had been working for a living since the age of 14, and entering medical school was the first time I was able to dedicate all my time to my studies and not have to be part of the workforce.”

Hernandez’s first mentor, Barry Blumenthal, D.O., who served as the medical director at one of the nursing homes where she had worked, helped pave Hernandez’s road to NSU. “He had direct connections to NSU and encouraged me to pursue an osteopathic pathway,” said Hernandez, who is the proud mother of daughters Natalie, 15, and Naylie, 12. “Dr. Blumenthal’s approach stood apart when compared to the allopathic physicians I had been exposed to while working in the nursing home. The whole-body approach to medicine made sense to me, and I truly feel that an osteopathic education has provided me not only with traditional medical principles, but also additional training and knowledge to become a better diagnostician and well-rounded clinician.”

After graduating from NSU-COM in 2001, Hernandez spent the next three years completing her traditional rotating internship and family medicine residency training at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah, Florida. Although she worked as a primary care physician during her first few post-residency years, Hernandez eventually chose to pursue the business side of medicine over the clinical practice aspect. “When the opportunity came to blend my administrative background with my clinical experience, I became curious as to how one would complement the other,” said Hernandez, who currently serves as UnitedHealthCare’s market medical director for Florida and the Virgin Islands at its South Florida office in Miramar.

At the age of nine, Mayrene Hernandez and her family relocated to Florida from Cuba.

Hernandez, who is president of the Broward County Osteopathic Medical Association and previously served as a Florida Osteopathic Medical Association trustee, also knows how important it is to be politically active in the medical profession. “Knowing the politics behind the health care system has helped me thrive both professionally and personally,” she said. “This exposure has kept me abreast of the latest evidence-based medicine and up to date in our national health policy development. While in private practice, I would have cared for about 1,000 patients. The role I currently hold, however, empowers me to advocate to a larger patient audience within the state and our nation.”

As is the case for many working women, becoming a mother forever altered Hernandez’s perspective on life. “My outlook regarding the care of people was drastically changed when I became a mother,” said Hernandez, who serves as an NSU-COM clinical assistant professor of family medicine and provides insightful lectures that address the business side of modern medicine. “I felt honored to be able to proudly care for others as I do my own children and family. I realized I was not only blessed because I was a physician, but also as a surrogate mom to many others whose lives I touched, became a part of, and helped care for over the years.”

Not content to rest on her laurels, Hernandez is adding to her already impressive resume by pursuing a master’s degree in business administration and publishing a book trilogy called The Beacons: The Children of the Rainbow. “I am predisposed to helping others,” she admitted. “I would like to be part of the legacy in encouraging new generations of physicians to become involved and make changes toward improving our health care system.”

Because she is a woman of resolve, Hernandez is always ready to overcome whatever obstacles come her way, which was exemplified when she applied to NSU-COM nearly two decades ago. “When a member of the admissions team questioned me as to why I wanted to become a physician, and why he should give me the opportunity for an interview, I replied, ‘Because I will never give up my dream of becoming a physician. I warn you, be prepared to see me year after year sitting in front of you until my hair is gray or I cease to exist.’”

Her unexpectedly forthright response earned her an interview, but also a caveat that once the interview concluded, she would be on her own. “He was right in giving me the interview, but wrong about my being alone,” Hernandez concluded. “With an education at NSU, you are never alone. I am so blessed and grateful for the opportunities NSU has given me.”
Alumni Achievements Earn Distinguished Accolade

ON NOVEMBER 12, 2015, Mayrene Hernandez, D.O., was one of 14 outstanding graduates honored at the NSU Distinguished Alumni Achievement Awards reception held at the Grande Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida. The Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award, which is the highest and most prestigious honor NSU bestows on its graduates, recognizes alumni who are changing lives and changing the world by demonstrating a record of distinguished service and extraordinary achievement in a particular profession, discipline, organization, or community cause. The award also pays tribute to alumni who have great pride in their alma mater and are committed to advancing NSU’s values and goals.

Hernandez, who gives back to her alma mater by serving as a clinical assistant professor of family medicine, was nominated for recognition as one of the Influential Hispanic Women Leaders in South Florida. Some of her fondest NSU-COM memories include “the White Coat Ceremony, my first day in the Anatomy Lab, and multiple all-night marathons spent studying with friends for our osteopathic manipulative treatment lab exams,” she said.

Alumni Achievements Earn Distinguished Accolade (cont.)

Examining Termination Provisions in Employment Contracts

THE FIRST PIECE OF ADVICE I tell young physicians about reviewing a proposed employment contract is to always consider how they can get out of it. A contract, of course, is a commitment. Every person or entity that signs on the dotted line is committing to doing something. This concept is almost universally understood. It is not uncommon, however, for me to come across a person who did not carefully consider the ramifications of his or her commitment before signing a contract, especially when it comes to termination provisions.

Almost every contract contains at least one termination provision. These provisions govern how each party can terminate (i.e., get out of) a contract. A termination provision in a physician’s employment contract will likely be categorized as either a termination “for cause” or a termination “without cause.” Also, a contract will automatically terminate if the term, as defined in the contract, expires and there is no automatic renewal clause.

Consider this: A doctor named Good Fellow entered into a three-year contract with Upstart Medical Group (UMG) to provide professional medical services for UMG’s patients. The contract commenced on November 1, 2014, and expires on November 1, 2017. Although he enjoyed his first six months at UMG, things have started to sour for Fellow. He recently decided that UMG is not the right fit. Further, he is confident he can find a position elsewhere. As a result, he would like to terminate his contract with UMG.

Termination may not be easy for Fellow. His employment contract with UMG does not have a without-cause termination provision. Most without-cause termination provisions allow a party to terminate an agreement for any reason so long as the party provides the required amount of notice stated in the provision. Terminating the agreement without cause would be Fellow’s cleanest way out. The only other early termination provision in the agreement allows for termination only for cause.

Like most other for-cause provisions, it only gives Fellow the right to terminate the agreement upon UMG’s breach of the agreement and UMG’s failure to “cure” the breach (i.e., begin performing the action that precipitated the breach) within 30 days after Fellow provides UMG written notice of UMG’s breach. These types of cure provisions are common in all types of contracts.

Without an easy way out, Fellow is in a precarious position. While, in Fellow’s opinion, UMG is not a very good employer, it has not done anything that a reasonable person would categorize as a breach of the agreement. Thus, he may either have to negotiate a way out or wait until the
Pediatrics Club Bestows Child Advocacy Award

On November 3, 2015, NSU-COM’s Pediatrics Club honored Hector Rodriguez-Cortes, M.D., with its Arnold Melnick Child Advocacy Award for his dedication to childhood causes.

Rodriguez-Cortes, a pediatric hematology-oncology specialist, began his career in Puerto Rico at the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine. He completed his residency in pediatrics at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, when he took the job, which is something he should have thought about when he signed an employment agreement lacking a without-cause termination provision.

There are many examples and situations that physicians should consider when evaluating their termination clauses in a contract. In addition, physicians must determine whether their agreement contains a provision that restricts a physician from taking positions with certain other employers after termination (i.e., a non-compete provision), but that’s an article for another day.

Fellow’s conundrum is one of many that could arise. Don’t construe this article, however, as advice that you should never enter into a contract unless it has a without-cause termination provision. In fact, some employers will refuse to add one. The purpose of this column is to put expiration of the term. Turns out, Fellow was skeptical about UMG when he took the job, which is something he should have thought about when he signed an employment agreement lacking a without-cause termination provision.

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Transatlantic Collaboration with Slovakia Reaps Rewards

IN 2008, when Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., R.D., assistant dean for research and innovation, was appointed as the Slovak Honorary Consul for the state of Florida, one of the first people she met on her visit to Bratislava, Slovakia, as the Florida consul was Daniela Ostatnikova, M.D., Ph.D., the associate dean of Comenius University College of Medicine. The meeting of these two dynamic individuals sparked an academic partnership that over the past eight years has grown beyond the dreams and expectations of both Rokusek and Ostatnikova.

As a result of their meeting, more than 100 NSU students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the College of Pharmacy have traveled to Comenius University to participate in short-term study opportunities. Additionally, three NSU-COM Fulbright scholars have traveled to Slovakia during the past eight years to partake in collaborative learning opportunities.

Currently, Anna Pivovarciova, M.D., a Fulbright scholar from Slovakia who is in the midst of completing her Ph.D. degree, is conducting autism and behavior management research at NSU’s Mailman Segal Center for Human Development. Pivovarciova, who established the first national parent support group for autism in Slovakia, connects with these parents daily using social media.

In addition to Pivovarciova’s work, there is collaborative autism and cellular research occurring between Comenius University, NSU-COM, and the College of Pharmacy, which has already resulted in the publication of several articles in professional journals. In March and April, three NSU-COM students traveled to Slovakia to participate in a one-month international selective rotation, while fourth-year student Mackenzie Rapp will be conducting geriatric research in Slovakia for two months as part of her research to fulfill her M.P.H. degree requirements.

AOA President Shares Insights with Students, Faculty Members

ON FEBRUARY 19, John W. Becher, D.O., the 119th president of the American Osteopathic Association, visited NSU-COM to discuss the bright future of the osteopathic profession with students and faculty members. “The dynamic times we’re living in have brought extraordinary change to health care in just the past few years,” he said. “Osteopathic medicine is one of the fastest-growing segments of health care professionals in the United States, and the demand for our philosophy and approach to care has never been greater.”

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Cell Therapy Institute Joins Research Center

Nova Southeastern University is at the forefront of conducting pioneering cell-based biomedical research with the launch of the new NSU Cell Therapy Institute—an international collaboration with prominent medical research scientists from Sweden’s world-renowned Karolinska Institutet. The organization is globally recognized for its Nobel Assembly, which annually awards the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine. The institute will be located in NSU’s 215,000-square-foot Center for Collaborative Research, which is one of the largest and most advanced research facilities in Florida.

The NSU Cell Therapy Institute is dedicated to the discovery and development of innovative translational biomedical research that focuses on the potential of cell-based therapies to prevent, treat, and cure life-threatening and debilitating diseases. The institute is accelerating the advancement of next-generation approaches to precision medicine, which includes targeted immunotherapy and regenerative medicine with an initial focus on targeting cancers, heart disease, and disorders causing blindness.

College of Allopathic Medicine Names Founding Dean

Johannes W. Vieweg, M.D., FACS, was named founding dean of NSU’s College of Allopathic Medicine, which is aiming to welcome its first class of M.D. candidates in 2018, once it receives appropriate accreditation.

Vieweg joins NSU from the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, where he served as the Wayne and Marti Huizenga Endowed Research Scholar’s Chair, director of the UF Prostate Disease Center, and chair of the Florida Prostate Cancer Advisory Council. “Dr. Vieweg has a stellar reputation as a physician leader and researcher, and with his guidance, NSU’s College of Allopathic Medicine will be home to a strong M.D. program that complements NSU’s existing D.O. program in the College of Osteopathic Medicine and helps meet the growing need of physicians both in our community and on a regional and national level,” said George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and chief executive officer.

The College of Allopathic Medicine will be the eighth college in NSU’s Health Professions Division, which includes the colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Dental Medicine, Nursing, Health Care Sciences, Medical Sciences, Pharmacy, and Optometry. NSU will be the only university in the southeastern United States—and the first in Florida—to house both osteopathic (D.O.) and allopathic (M.D.) medical schools.