Features

04 Medical Family Therapy Clinic Augments Patient Care
08 CPR Program Blends the Desire to Save Lives with Firsthand Skills
10 Targeting the Management of Natural and Man-Made Emergencies
14 Philanthropic Acts Benefit Students, NSU-COM Initiatives
20 Discipline and Dedication Define Student Affairs Dean
24 Ecuador Odyssey: A Medical Education High Point
26 Volunteer Outreach in Jamaica Enriches Staff Member
28 India Medical Outreach Excursion Expands Cultural Awareness
33 $1.83 Million in Grants Fund Gulf War Illness Studies
44 2006 Alumnus Credits NSU-COM Roots for Career Success
Departments

02 Editor’s Exchange
03 Chancellor’s COMMunicé
30 Research/Scholarly COMMunications
34 Student Perspective
36 Student COMMunications
38 Faculty/Staff COMMunications
41 NSU COMMunications
42 Alumni Corner
47 NSU News of Note
49 In Memoriam

ON THE COVER:
Editor’s Exchange

From a professional standpoint, there's nothing quite as exciting as plotting the next issue of COM Outlook. Much like a painter stares at a blank canvas before being hit by a bolt of inspiration, however, the task of executing a magazine can be quite daunting.

Fortunately, thanks to the input of our students, alumni, faculty and staff members, and others who offer insight and willingly work with the magazine's editorial team, a high-quality, award-winning magazine is produced on a continuum. This issue is no exception.

The cover story, which focuses on NSU's Realizing Potential fund-raising initiative and what NSU-COM is doing to assist the university in meeting its goals, shines a light on why so many individuals and organizations give back to the college. Another interesting article of note was penned by a second-year student, who had the privilege of conversing with President Barack Obama at the White House.

Because interprofessional exchange is a university hallmark, NSU-COM and the Department of Family Therapy at NSU’s College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences have formed a clinical partnership that combines biological and biopsychosocial care to help patients. The article, “Medical Family Therapy Clinic Augments Patient Care,” discusses this alliance and how it is benefiting everyone involved.

One of the joys involved with serving as executive editor of COM Outlook is having the opportunity to write about the many faculty members and administrators who represent the college with distinction. Such is the case with the profile “Discipline and Dedication Define Student Affairs Dean,” which documents the accomplishments of an administrator who has enhanced the college in every role she has served in throughout her NSU-COM career.

From a programmatic point of view, the college’s Master of Science in Disaster and Emergency Management Program receives an in-depth analysis, as does the lifesaving cardiopulmonary resuscitation training course offered through the Division of EMS Education and Training. Adding an international flavor to the magazine are updates on popular medical outreach endeavors in Ecuador, India, and Jamaica, which are documented from both student and staff member perspectives.

What starts as an editorial blank canvas at the beginning of each editorial cycle evolves into an information-packed magazine featuring the best of NSU-COM. Even after almost 18 years of serving as COM Outlook’s creator in chief, I marvel at the fact that we continue to have so many compelling stories to tell.

Scott Colton, B.A., APR
COM/HPD Director of Medical Communications and Public Relations
Being involved with the Health Professions Division’s Board of Governors and the NSU Board of Trustees meetings makes me quite aware that a major focus is being placed on the community’s involvement not only with its time, but also with its treasure. What I’m referring to when I use the word treasure are matters related to endowed scholarships, the naming of academic units, and other financial gifts, which are so necessary to ensuring the university’s continued growth and success.

At Nova Southeastern University—and at most private, not-for-profit educational institutions in the United States—additional emphasis is being placed on the value of what we refer to as charitable giving, or what I describe as investment giving. When you invest in education, you are investing in the stability of our great country, and in our ability to gain knowledge for the betterment of humanity.

As NSU President George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., often states, “The seeds that you plant are the trees that will grow into the shade trees of the future.” You may not be available to sit under one of these trees, but there are many people who will sit under them for many years to come. I’m a firm believer in this philosophy.

Fortunately, many organizations and individuals affiliated with NSU are planting these seeds and investing in the future of the university—and in the future of our society. From an altruistic standpoint, NSU investment giving is increasing. But it doesn’t just relate to people in the community who have become professionally or entrepreneurially successful who are giving of their treasure. Dedicated alumni and administrators, as well as faculty and staff members, are giving back financially to the university and supporting the projects and programs they are passionate about.

Whether it’s a monetary donation to help fund an endowed student scholarship, or through deferred gifts such as life insurance policies and planned estate giving, the internal and external NSU community has realized that an investment in education is a sensible way to leave a positive and indelible imprint on society.

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.
Chancellor, Health Professions Division
Nova Southeastern University
Medical Family Therapy Clinic Augments Patient Care

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR
COM/HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Innovative collaboration merges the physiological and biopsychosocial aspects of health care

Providing patients with the most effective care possible has been a long-standing goal of the college’s various medical clinics. Thanks to a collaboration between NSU-COM and the Department of Family Therapy at NSU’s College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS), patients are benefiting from a clinical partnership that combines biological and biopsychosocial care.

On April 25, 2016, the Medical Family Therapy Clinic at the College of Osteopathic Medicine began providing free supplemental services to patients at the NSU-COM medical clinics. The clinic, which is located in room 4189 in the Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The clinic’s genesis dates back to July 2015, when the college’s dean, Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., recommended that Daniel E. Shaw, Ph.D., M.Ed., associate professor of psychiatry, supervise the development and implementation of the Medical Family Therapy Clinic. Shaw immediately began discussions with members of the Department of Family Therapy regarding how to best merge the visions for the mission and day-to-day operation of the clinic.

According to Arlene Brett Gordon, Ph.D., LMFT, director of the CAHSS’s Brief Therapy Institute, the medical family therapy team consists of six advanced doctoral student-therapists who have completed their clinical internship at NSU’s Family Therapy Clinic. Each therapist has years of experience working directly with individuals, couples, and families who are struggling to cope with life’s challenges.

The therapists are supervised by Gordon; Tommie Boyd, Ph.D., LMFT, director of the CAHSS’s Ph.D. in Family Therapy Program; and Venetia (Vinnie) Bennett, LMFT, a Ph.D. student who serves as the program’s on-call supervisor. From an NSU-COM perspective, Shaw and Edward Packer, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, assistant dean of clinical affairs, function as key clinic players.

The medical family therapy team offers patients a multitiered approach that includes therapy, education, and advocacy. "As clinicians, we offer systemic therapeutic assistance to patients, their support systems, and members of their medical team," Gordon explained. “Our services also include patient education based on individual and/or family need. For example, if a patient is living with hypertension, we would explore new coping strategies to address stress. If someone is living with anxiety, mindfulness training and meditation practices might be beneficial.”

Because multifaceted communication is integral to a patient’s overarching health, the clinic team works closely with a patient to engage and facilitate conversations between the patient’s family and affiliated health care providers. “As systemic therapists, we help incorporate a patient’s family into the health and healing process, as well as help find resources for patients and their families that go beyond the treatment room,” Gordon said. “We also make referrals to appropriate community services.”

The mind-body-spirit methodology that epitomizes osteopathic medicine makes the Medical Family Therapy Clinic collaboration a natural extension of NSU-COM’s existing patient care services. As research has shown, life stressors, such as relationship issues, financial setbacks, and job loss, can have serious implications on the human body. Consequently, therapeutic interventions that address stress reduction and introduce key coping strategies support the patients’ potential for making healthy change.

“Our goal is to be available on-site for COM physicians, residents, students, patients, family members, and their support systems,” Gordon said. “Referrals are addressed immediately or in a timely manner. If we are not busy seeing a patient, we are available to meet with patients during their medical visit or accept physician referrals to contact patients to schedule appointments.”

Continued on next page
Clinic Provides Crucial Learning Opportunities

As is the case with other NSU health care clinics, the Medical Family Therapy Clinic’s primary goal is providing compassionate and effective patient care. A secondary, but equally important, clinic objective involves serving as a fertile learning environment for attending physicians, residents, and medical students. Training opportunities are scheduled on an ongoing basis via live presentations, which are designed to provide medical team members a chance to learn about medical family therapy and to explore the medical implications through systemic collaboration.

“The clinic is delivering a strength-based mental health systems approach, as well as much-needed ancillary clinical services for our patients,” Shaw said. “In doing so, our physicians and students are learning a highly regarded and effective style of patient- and family-centered care.”

In addition to scheduled live trainings, webinars are available for viewing based on the viewer’s schedule and assigned need. The webinars, which cover topics such as the referral process, are particularly useful to residents and medical students on rotation who want to support their patients’ healing on various levels.

“Medical family therapists, working side-by-side with physicians in this integrative model of care, invite a more systemic approach to patient care. Working with systemic family therapists is a wonderful opportunity for members of NSU-COM’s medical teams to explore ways to incorporate systemic thinking into their work with patients and their families,” Gordon said. “This approach recognizes the importance of the context in which patients live, the resources available to them, and mental health considerations.”

In certain situations, members of the medical team are invited to attend therapy sessions to benefit the patients’ needs. “For example, when working with pediatric patients, we meet with not only the child, but also the
family members who support that child,” Gordon explained. “We work collaboratively with the family, the medical team, and others to better meet the needs of the child and the family system.”

Thanks to the participation of everyone involved, the Medical Family Therapy Clinic has become a successful complement to the services provided by the college’s medical clinics. “Solely through doctor referral, we have a steady stream of patients who are dealing with the emotional stressors of chronic pain, injury, long-term illness, and disability,” said Aprile Andelle, M.S., LMFT, a doctoral student who works in the clinic. “We see patients in the exam room alongside the doctors, which begins this great partnership in the best interest of the patient’s overall wellness.”

Nika Alakbarova, M.A., a Ph.D. student who works as a graduate assistant at the Brief Therapy Institute, is involved with clinic tasks that include creating schedules and forms, collaborating with physicians, and training other therapists. “The experience of working and training in this clinic has provided me with ample opportunities to learn from physicians about the medical aspect of therapeutic change,” she said. “My hope for the future is to see change not only in the therapeutic context, but also in the medical field in relation to working with medical family therapists.”

Family Therapy at NSU:
An Overview

According to Tommie Boyd, the teaching of medical family therapy began in 1992 at what was then known as NSU’s School of Social Sciences.

Family therapists can be found in a range of settings involving people of all ages who are facing diverse concerns, including hospitals, mental health facilities, health and managed care facilities, hospice, schools, recovery and addiction centers, and private practice. NSU’s Department of Family Therapy offers a graduate certificate in family systems health care that includes biopsychosocial and systemic theories, relationship skills, professional issues, and health care systems.

Although NSU-COM’s collaboration with the family therapy department in relation to the Medical Family Therapy Clinic is fairly new, a historical relationship between the department and the Health Professions Division (HPD) has existed for many years. For example, the HPD and the Department of Family Therapy collaborated on several projects, such as providing services to caregivers and patients coping with life following a stroke. The department also joined forces with other HPD programs, such as nursing and occupational therapy, to support patients and their families facing chronic health issues.
Would you know what to do if someone you loved—or even a stranger—fell in front of you, suffering cardiac arrest? Several NSU-COM staff members recently made the commitment to respond to that situation and stand ready to save a life by learning to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Nearly 80 percent of cardiac arrests occur at home, at work, at school, or in a public place. Unfortunately, a number of these individuals do not receive the immediate help they need. NSU-COM’s Division of EMS Education and Training teaches the importance of achieving and delivering lifesaving skills before medical professionals arrive on the scene.

The training focuses on the practice-while-watching technique—a practice proven by scientific research. Experienced instructors lecture and guide participants as they watch the American Heart Association video and...
then perform CPR procedures on adult- and infant-sized practice manikins. Trainees learn how to use 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.

“Since many of our trainings are directed to active health care providers, we feel our instructors should have experience in the field. Our EMS instructors are seasoned health care providers with past or current experience as paramedics, nurses, respiratory therapists, or physicians. Combined, our instructors have saved countless lives,” said Kara Brien, B.S., manager of the Division of EMS Education and Training.

“During our practice sessions, instructors are actively involved providing feedback and recommendations to all participants,” she added. “With our small class size never exceeding one instructor to eight participants, our instructors are able to focus and provide quality, personal training to everyone in the course.”

In October, 26 participants took the Heartsaver CPR-AED training. “The most noteworthy moment was seeing participants after they had completed their training,” Brien said. “They were enthusiastic and engaged during the session, repeating the lessons they learned in the course. While no one hopes for an emergency to arise, NSU-COM staff members felt confident they could handle an emergency situation before expert medical professionals arrive on the scene.”

Odessa Pemberton, B.S., employee services consultant I, was one of the trainees who wanted to be prepared. “CPR is important to me because it can increase the chances of survival during an emergency. I was inspired to take CPR even though I haven’t had any past experiences where a family member or friend needed help, but CPR training is needed because you never know what might happen,” she explained. “I would definitely recommend CPR training to others, because it can give them the knowledge and the confidence to respond during an emergency situation with skills that can help save a life.”

Kristine Freitas, B.S., training coordinator for two of the college’s disaster preparedness programs—SEAMIST and HazMIRTSI—took the training with her mother, Kim, a registered nurse with emergency care training, who came to refresh her skills. “Growing up, while attending my sporting events, my mom often became the first responder to anyone in distress, whether a player, parent, or onlooker. Looking back, I recall the ease with which she responded to emergency situations—due entirely to her preparation and training for such events,” Freitas said. “Having taken the CPR-AED training, I now feel more confident in my ability to respond to someone in distress.”

Brien invited those who are interested in obtaining CPR training to contact the Division of EMS Education and Training at ems@nova.edu or (954) 262-4367.
When Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in October 2016, two NSU-COM student groups—the Disaster Medicine Club (DMC) and the Student National Medical Association—rallied to collect goods and financial donations to help rebuild two medical clinics destroyed by the massive and mighty storm. The two groups also teamed up with a local Chipotle Mexican Grill in a dine-and-donate endeavor to raise funds to help the island nation recover.

Those efforts are part of the successful and burgeoning evolution of NSU-COM’s Master of Science in Disaster and Emergency Management Program, which was established in August 2012.

The death and destruction of 9/11, and the subsequent dangers from letters containing anthrax, evoked a heightened concern about the potential threat of biological and other weapons against the United States. Through the leadership of Leonard Levy, D.P.M., M.P.H., former associate dean of research and innovation and professor emeritus, and James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., assistant dean of professional relations, NSU-COM received funding from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response—part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—and created the Center for Bioterrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness (CBAP).

The CBAP was established in 2002 with the goal of developing training courses that would address hazards that include bioterrorism, other intentional man-made disasters, nonintentional man-made disasters, natural disasters—hurricanes, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, and earthquakes—pandemics, and acts of maritime piracy. In the next few years, more than 256,000 individuals from across the United States and numerous foreign countries took the training.

Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., R.D., former assistant dean for research and innovation, later joined the CBAP and, along with Levy, envisioned a degree program that included prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery to all types of hazards—natural and man-made. Their planning produced the first steps toward an academic program that
began with four courses, expanded to more than a dozen, and currently includes courses for gerontology, health, and child protection.

As the project of developing a full academic program continued, Kelley Davis, Ph.D., program director for the M.S. in Disaster and Emergency Management (M.S. DEM) Program and faculty adviser for the DMC, accepted the task to research other degree programs in the United States that related to disaster preparedness and response. “What we found was that there are essentially three different types of programs available,” Davis said. “Those specifically focused on disasters management—often referred to as emergency management—those specifically focused on homeland security, and those which combine the two topics.”

With the focus and function dedicated to disasters and preparedness, the organizers—led by Davis—developed the program. The CBAP was renamed the Institute for Disaster and Emergency Preparedness to include the many threats that require planning and management. After fact-finding with various individuals around the state and nation, the degree program was developed for the master’s level and approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in February 2012.

Two students made up the first class and were admitted for courses that started in August 2012. Since that time, the program has grown to 30 students with 11 graduates—with 11 additional students garnering degrees in May 2016. Last year, the program was renamed Disaster and Emergency Management to reflect the full scope of the curriculum, which addresses preparedness and incorporates all aspects of the disaster cycle—preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.

The program’s courses are offered exclusively online, but faculty members must maintain regular, synchronous, online sessions with their classes. The complexity of handling disasters involves many different players—law enforcement, municipal government administration, fire service, public works, public health, engineering, nongovernmental organizations, private companies, and corporations.

Collaboration is paramount, as students share and learn from their classmates and the various perspectives everyone brings to solving problems. Students are encouraged to take elective courses in public health, biomedical informatics, and national security affairs.
Accomplishments Expand for Award-Winning Graduates

The following alumni were recognized for their academic and community service achievements during their respective graduation awards banquets.

**Angelo Belfiore**, M.S. ('15), winner of the Chancellor’s Award for being the student who best exemplifies a combination of scholarship, leadership, integrity, humanity, and loyalty to the profession, is assistant director for the Continuity of Operations Program at NYC Health + Hospitals in New York. He has also worked with a private emergency management consulting firm to develop and deliver training modules on PODs, or points of distribution.

**Chuandelai Harris**, M.S. ('15), winner of the program’s Service Award for her demonstrated and sincere interest in community service or community projects, said, “NSU’s DEM Program is a personalized learning experience based on your professional interests. The professors have a genuine respect for the students and passion for the field.”

**Christina Ortiz**, M.S. ('14), a winner of the Dean’s Award for academic excellence, currently works for Orange County Public Schools as the Jeanne Clery Act compliance administrator. The consumer protection law requires all colleges and universities that receive federal funding to share information about crime to improve campus safety. “The program not only teaches you the knowledge and abilities needed for the field, but also sets you up to be a success in your career,” Ortiz said.

**Scott Paul Sloane**, M.S. ('16), also a recipient of the Dean’s Award for graduating with the highest scholastic achievement, praised the program as one “of excellence and the place in South Florida to get a quality degree.”

The online component assembles students from local areas, throughout Florida, and from several different states, including Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, and Oklahoma. Many students join the program after experiencing a disaster in their communities—events such as tornadoes, Superstorm Sandy, or a similar catastrophe—and their multifaceted experiences offer diverse ways to rebuild communities.

An outstanding strength of the program is the emphasis on linking theory with practical skills. Students learn how to write a continuity of operations plan, perform a risk assessment, and develop an exercise tied to a variety of scenarios from a dam breech to a pandemic. The integrated knowledge offers the opportunity to create a portfolio that can be shared with prospective employers.

Davis believes the trademark of the M.S. DEM Program is rooted in responding to the complex demands of the many professions that handle catastrophic events. “Our students discover many things they may not have thought to consider or incorporate,” she explained. “They learn the importance of what other groups and professions experience in a disaster and how to include other groups, ideas, or professions into their planning and implementation in current and future planning and response efforts.

“For this reason, we developed concentrations that go beyond the course requirements,” she added. “Most of the degree programs available have a set of courses that every student takes, regardless of background, career goals, or previous knowledge. Our breadth of content covers areas such as public health, fire administration, environmental hazards, cybersecurity, and law enforcement, making NSU’s program unique. Our success resulted in the honor of being ranked the fifth-best online degree program in this discipline.”
“It’s not just about being able to write a check. It’s being able to touch somebody’s life.”
—Oprah Winfrey

Winfrey’s quote about philanthropic giving perfectly depicts the reasons why so many individuals and organizations have made a habit of making generous financial contributions to NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine.

NSU-COM’s hard-earned reputation as a progressive college that puts the needs of its students first, while also focusing on important areas such as faculty development and research expansion, has helped spur increased charitable giving to the college. Couple that with NSU’s Realizing Potential: The Campaign for Nova Southeastern University fund-raising initiative and you have a robust engine to drive increased giving opportunities.

In 2010, NSU launched the largest-ever fund-raising effort in its history—Realizing Potential—to elevate the university to new levels of achievement by setting a goal of generating $250 million in philanthropy and $300 million in sponsored research by 2020.

As of January 13, NSU has raised $155.93 million—or 62.37 percent—of its philanthropic goal. To assist in this effort, the College of Osteopathic Medicine has been charged with raising $12.5 million by the campaign’s conclusion in 2020. Similarly, NSU-COM has secured $7.77 million in philanthropic contributions—individual, foundation, and corporate gifts—representing 61.2 percent of the college’s Realizing Potential target.

In an attempt to help NSU achieve its fund-raising goal, the College of Osteopathic Medicine targeted three priority areas: student support, faculty development, and transformative research. While the majority of the college’s operating revenue is generated through tuition costs, NSU-COM relies on philanthropic contributions from alumni, friends, corporations, faculty and staff members, and foundations to ensure 21st-century education and experiential learning opportunities for its students.

“NSU-COM understands its responsibility to provide students with the highest-quality academic training, as well as innovative opportunities for personal and professional development,” said Shannon Brown, director of development for the Health Professions Division. “Tuition alone does not cover the costs associated with the world-class education our students deserve. As a result, contributions are necessary to hire renowned faculty, advance

Continued on page 17
Clockwise from top: Elaine M. Wallace and Jill Wallace-Ross, Mohan and Meenu Gupta, Steve Winn, Howard Neer, James and Sherry Turner, Kenneth and Michelle Johnson.
Altruistic Gifts Offer Multifaceted Support

Over the years, a number of benevolent donors have provided financial support to fund an array of initiatives. Below is a summary of some of the financial gifts the college has received and how they are being used to enhance everything from student education and research to faculty support and technology enhancements.

DOCTOR’S HOSPITAL FOUNDATION: $10 MILLION
Since its inception in 1986, thousands of NSU-COM students have benefited from the foundation's annual contributions, which are used to fund any and all aspects related to osteopathic student education at the College of Osteopathic Medicine. The proceeds from this foundation are donated to NSU-COM through the benevolence of Howard Neer, D.O., FACOFP, executive associate dean for professional affairs for the Health Professions Division.

THE SCHEMEL FAMILY FOUNDATION: $4 MILLION
The Schemel Endowed Fund for Translational Research supports high research activity and clinical trials in the areas of neurology, immunology, and genetics at the NSU Institute for Neuro-Immune Medicine.

NSU UROLOGICAL RESEARCH NETWORK FUND: $75,000
This scholarship, which is funded by the Urological Research Network LLC, supports a fellowship in prosthetic urology and sexual medicine in the College of Osteopathic Medicine.

STANDARD PROCESS: $40,000
Standard Process partnered with NSU-COM to facilitate wellness programming and initiatives and to develop curriculum for the college's certificate program in nutrition. By partnering with NSU-COM, Standard Process—a Palmyra, Wisconsin-based whole food supplements company—is able to integrate its whole food nutrition and herbal therapy philosophy with medically trained students and faculty members for the purposes of product development, curriculum integration, and clinical research.

DRS. MOHAN AND MEENU GUPTA SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND: $25,000
This endowment supports NSU-COM students who have completed or are preparing to complete a medical outreach program in India or a clinical rotation in India.

SHANNON BROWN FAMILY CHANGING LIVES SCHOLARSHIP
This scholarship was created to support deserving students seeking a doctorate in osteopathic medicine.
research, provide student scholarships, and furnish our labs with state-of-the-art equipment.”

Providing funding for student scholarships has proven to be a particularly popular contributor choice, which is reflected in the diverse scholarships that have been created and endowed to benefit NSU-COM students. One recent example is the Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni Endowed Legacy Fund, which was established to honor the college’s former dean and support students who wish to do a portion of their clinical training in medically underserved areas of the world.

Within weeks of its creation, the Silvagni Endowed Legacy Fund exceeded expectations thanks to generous donations from various colleagues, organizations, and friends. Neena Gupta, D.O., whose son Akhil will be graduating from NSU-COM in May 2017, donated $5,000 to the Silvagni Endowed Legacy Fund to honor the former dean, who continues to make a difference in the lives of NSU-COM students in his role as director of international and interprofessional medicine.

“When you know 100 percent of your money is going for a cause that is so powerful that it can change the way people receive their health care, that’s when you give—and Dr. Silvagni does just that,” Gupta explained. “He and his wife, Dianna, take bags of supplies with a team of students and physicians to remote areas of the world to serve in areas that may not even have running water. His knowledge and insight go beyond medicine. We are blessed to know him as a mentor, friend, great dean, and physician.”


“My wife and I do not consider ourselves to be philanthropists. Rather, we give of the blessings we have received to those causes we deem to meet a standard beyond our immediate touch,” he said.

“This particular gift was made in honor of an outstanding osteopathic physician, Dr. Anthony J. Silvagni—a man who has served as a leader in this profession in so many ways for so many years,” Turner added. “But this cause is one that reaches beyond the immediate goal of honoring Dr. Silvagni. It will have a lasting legacy of aiding students to pursue the dream of serving mankind. It will foster medical education and help meet the significant gap between the need for physicians and availability.”

For those who are affiliated with the college as an administrator or a faculty or staff member, making a financial contribution to benefit current and future generations of students is a true gesture in paying it forward. That explains why the college’s dean, Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S., and Jill Wallace-Ross, D.O., assistant professor of family medicine, recently established the Wallace-Ross Family Endowed Scholarship Program, which will provide support to
one student annually who demonstrates outstanding performance in the osteopathic principles and practice curriculum.

"NSU-COM provides so many opportunities for students to enrich their lives while pursuing their educational goals. For our family, NSU-COM is a vital part of our lives," Wallace-Ross explained. "In addition to working here, I am an alumna and am currently enrolled in a master’s-level program through NSU-COM. I feel a deep commitment to the students and the field of osteopathic manipulation and want our family to demonstrate this through philanthropic giving. It is exciting to think about the potential these students will realize with the financial support they will receive."

Although providing financial resources for student scholarships is a staple of charitable giving, significant donations have also been received to fund everything from endowed faculty chair positions and cutting-edge research to osteopathic medical education and library services.

The Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA), which makes monetary contributions to NSU-COM on a continuum, is committed to supporting the college and its students, who will be the future leaders of the profession. "The Florida Osteopathic Medical Association and its members believe in their mission statement to support scientific advancement in the treatment, prevention, and alleviation of human ailments for the public in the state of Florida," said Steven R. Winn, FOMA executive director.

"With the FOMA’s philanthropic donations to Florida’s osteopathic colleges, such as NSU-COM, we are taking the necessary steps in helping to ensure future osteopathic physicians succeed," Winn added. "We want NSU-COM to be able to attract the best professors, students, and programs so it may embark on groundbreaking research, provide student scholarships, and ultimately graduate osteopathic physicians who will treat our Florida citizens. We hope our continued donations to NSU-COM will have a lasting effect on future generations of osteopathic physicians and their patients."

As the numerous examples of altruism presented in this article exemplify, those who provide philanthropic support to the College of Osteopathic Medicine do so for a range of self-motivated reasons. "Philanthropic giving is not a transaction but, rather, an investment in change, to improve circumstances for one or many people. Social studies have validated the anecdote that people give not to ideas, but to people with ideas," said Brown. "Dean Karlan, an American development economist and highly regarded contributor to the international conversation on philanthropic motivation, once said, ‘Giving is not about a calculation of what you are buying. It is about participating in a fight.’ "
Charitable Giving Takes Many Forms

When most people think about making a contribution to an organization, the most obvious form of giving that comes to mind is an outright cash gift. According to Shannon Brown, director of development for the Health Professions Division, however, the act of charitable giving is actually quite multifaceted.

“There are many ways people can contribute to an organization. You can contribute money—either as a one-time gift or as a pledge—which can be paid over a series of months or years,” she explained. “You can donate goods or services, which is called an in-kind contribution and is tax-deductible.”

Additionally, Brown added, “You can name NSU in your will as a beneficiary of a portion of your estate or life insurance policy. In fact, we offer a number of ways you can be engaged as a legacy donor, which means your gift is deferred, but you enjoy the recognition and benefits now, just as someone would who donates a cash gift.” Brown also points out that “if you are an employee, you can even contribute to a designated cause, scholarship, program, or college via payroll deduction each month.”

To learn more about the various ways to make a monetary contribution to NSU-COM, please contact Shannon Brown at (954) 529-6776 or sbrown2@nova.edu.
As a child growing up on the sunny Caribbean isle of Trinidad, Delia Harper-Celestine, Ed.D., M.P.H., CHES, had no inclination of what the future held in store for her from a career standpoint. All she knew was that it would be a life dedicated to helping people in some form.

“I was told I should use my life to serve others, and that is all I cared about,” said Harper-Celestine, who was named assistant dean of student and alumni affairs last July. “I was therefore interested in the helping professions.”

Growing up in Trinidad provided Harper-Celestine with many happy memories, such as playing sports, singing in the high school choir, embracing her Catholic faith, and spending time with devoted family members. “I have fond memories of rambunctious aunts and uncles, loving and wise grandparents, and fun cousins who all played a very important role in my development,” she said. “As a child, I could not finish my homework and chores quickly enough so I could go outside to play hide-and-seek or go roller-skating and bike riding.”

During her high school years, Harper-Celestine’s focus shifted to music, which led her to join the school choir and perform at music festivals, Christmas shows, nursing homes, and other venues. “I am grateful for the experience because it taught me discipline, tenacity, and how to push myself to get the outcome required,” she explained. “There is something about three-hour practices and repeating the same notes to perfection.
that did something to my brain and heightened my appreciation for the adage that practice makes perfect.”

New Life in New York

After finishing high school, Harper-Celestine relied heavily on her tenacity and sense of discipline when she made the bold decision to leave Trinidad and relocate to New York. With her gaze cast firmly on the future, she attended Brooklyn College, attaining a Bachelor of Science in Health Science in 1991.

Harper-Celestine’s move to the Big Apple also provided an unexpected—but much-welcomed—life change in 1990 when she met the man who would become her husband and the father of their two children, 19-year-old Adia and 17-year-old Josiah. “I met my husband, Curtis Celestine, at a summer party in Brooklyn,” she recalled. “He asked a mutual friend to be introduced to me. At the end of the night, he did not have a pen and wrote down my phone number with a lipstick on a napkin. My kids enjoyed a good laugh when I told them this story.”

Armed with her bachelor’s degree, Harper-Celestine landed a job as a pharmaceutical representative, with a goal of saving enough money to return to school and pursue a master’s degree in public health (M.P.H.). “I hated the job, but the salary was good, and I was able to pay my bills and save money,” she explained. “My motivation to get an M.P.H. was to help others. I saw the M.P.H. as a degree that would teach me how to do the things I liked doing, such as designing interventional programs for children, the elderly, or any other population.”

Thanks to her disciplined nature, Harper-Celestine’s days were spent working as a pharmaceutical representative, while her nights were consumed with pursuing her M.P.H. at New York University. “I specialized in community health education and became a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES). When I graduated in 1996, I was hired at the agency where I completed my field practicum as a health educator,” she said. “Although I was making less money with my M.P.H. than I did at the pharmaceutical company, I did not suffer the cognitive dissonance I had previously experienced.”

The next several years were busy ones for Harper-Celestine, who gave birth to her two children while progressing up the career ladder. “Being a health educator required traveling around New York City to work with various groups of people,” she explained. “By this time, I had my first child and was tired of traveling around the city. I needed to be in one place where I could be reached now that I had a child, since this was in the era before cell phones were ubiquitous.”

Putting her M.P.H. to good use, Harper-Celestine accepted a position at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYCOM) in its Educational Development Resource Unit, serving as a medical education...
Florida in Focus

After more than a decade of living in New York, Harper-Celestine was ready to trade in the frigid northern winters for the year-round sunshine and warmth of South Florida. “I was happy with the work I was doing, but we decided to relocate to South Florida in 2002 because I was tired of the freezing winters,” she admitted. “I also wanted my children to have the opportunity to play outdoors year-round, just as I did when I was a child.”

Harper-Celestine’s professional introduction to the Sunshine State came via a job opportunity with Broward College in Davie, Florida, where she spent almost two years working on a grant-funded project called the Health Science Summer Institute. “We solicited science teachers from Broward County Public Schools and designed a curriculum for them to deliver to high school students who expressed an interest in health care,” said Harper-Celestine, who would soon make the switch from Broward College to nearby Nova Southeastern University.

Because she had worked at NYCOM for several years, Harper-Celestine was already familiar with NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine. “I knew about NSU-COM because of my work at NYCOM. I had attended several national American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine meetings and was aware there was an osteopathic medical college in Fort Lauderdale,” she explained. “I decided to pursue a career here because the philosophy of an osteopathic medical college is in congruence with my public health training.”

In September 2004, Harper-Celestine launched what has become the most fulfilling period of her career, which commenced with a two-year stint as the college’s admissions counselor. “I had never worked in admissions before, so it was an opportunity to learn something new,” she said. “The best part was meeting the applicants, who were brimming with enthusiasm that was so contagious. Back in 2004, the Office of Admissions was also responsible for recruitment, so I traveled to all the Florida universities to speak about osteopathic medicine and NSU.”

In 2006, Harper-Celestine transitioned into the role of director of the Department of Rural and Urban Underserved Medicine while concurrently pursuing her Ed.D. in Health Care Education from NSU. Under the
mentorship of James Howell, M.D., M.P.H., assistant dean of professional relations and department chair, Harper-Celestine thrived in her new position.

“I again had the opportunity to travel the state and learn all about the underserved communities in Florida,” said Harper-Celestine, who earned her Ed.D. in 2011. “The best part of this position was seeing our students adapt to a different learning environment and then excel at it. The positive feedback we received from preceptors about NSU-COM students was worth driving for hours to remote places in Florida. It also helped that Dr. Howell is a storyteller who had me laughing as we crisscrossed the state.”

Several years later, Harper-Celestine was afforded an opportunity to become proficient in another aspect of medical education when she was appointed director of graduate medical education of the college’s Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education. “I was now working with residency directors, program directors, and residents,” said Harper-Celestine, who worked under the tutelage of Joseph De Gaetano, D.O., M.S.Ed., FAAFP, FACOFP, professor of family medicine.

“I enjoyed learning the ins and outs of this new world,” she said. “My main task was to make sure all our affiliated programs maintained accreditation. Once again, seeing our students match into the discipline of medicine they desired—and move on to be what they wanted to be—was the most fulfilling part of this experience.”

With her NSU-COM career on the ascendancy, Harper-Celestine tackled several other challenging positions, including a stint as executive director of the Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education. In July 2016, however, Harper-Celestine assumed what may be her meatiest academic role to date when she became the college’s assistant dean of student and alumni affairs.

“This position was attractive to me because it focused on our students. I had worked with them prior to their matriculating here; I worked with them during the clinical years while they did their rural and underserved rotations; and I worked with them as they moved into their residency training,” she explained. “This opportunity collapsed everything into one, and I felt I was ready to harness the experiences I had amassed and bring them to this position.”

Future Plans in Motion

Because the world we live in operates in a constant state of flux, Harper-Celestine has already formulated plans to ensure that the Office of Student and Alumni Affairs transitions with the times. “The college as a whole is already in the process of changing and making enhancements due to the fact that our accreditation is changing, which means we have to adapt,” she said.

To make the office even more student centered, an immediate goal is to expand the office’s services to include career counseling for all students. “The dean and I have already discussed this project, and we hope to unveil something very soon,” she said. “I am blessed to have a talented and industrious staff, and together we plan to raise the level of service we provide our students. The office sometimes gets crazy busy, so we are currently tracking all academic year activities and requests, which will help us plan ahead and do timelines for each activity so the crazy times are minimized.”

Despite the obvious stressors that come with being the leader of the college’s student nerve center, Harper-Celestine looks forward to embracing whatever challenges come her way. “The ability to grow and learn is part of what makes working at NSU-COM so special,” she said. “The most gratifying aspect of working here is the interaction with smart, interesting people.”

With a thriving career at NSU-COM and a fulfilling family life, Harper-Celestine looks forward to a day in the near future when she can focus her attention on some long-neglected personal pursuits. “As my kids leave the nest, and I have more free time, I hope to get more involved in things that bring me joy, such as becoming more physically active and getting back into music on some level,” she said.

In a life well lived, Harper-Celestine credits one particular facet for keeping her grounded, disciplined, and humble. “With all the changes in my life—the moving, the changing jobs, having a family—the one thing that has been a constant is my faith,” she revealed. “I have chosen to be positive and to see the glass as half full. Even in the storms of life, I look for the lesson I am supposed to get from the pain.”
The best part about medical school is not being in medical school. Let me rephrase. My most cherished memories as a medical student thus far have not been in the classroom, but rather the times I have been face-to-face with patients with a stethoscope around my neck.

Last December, I was blessed with the opportunity to take on the role of trip leader for the medical outreach trip to Ecuador. I also had the pleasure of working with the wonderful NSU-COM administrators who tirelessly planned, coordinated, and helped execute a successful volunteer-abroad program.
The trip began with a flight to Quito, Ecuador, the day after we took our final exam of the fall 2016 semester. Fifteen students and five academic preceptors never took their eyes from the bus windows as we made our way from the airport up the mountain to our lodge—Hosteria San Jorge. Jorge Cruz, a retired veterinarian and our host for the week, welcomed us into three of his lodges during our time in the cities of Quito, Tandayapa, and Milpe.

While in Quito, we took a historic tour through the city and were lucky enough to enjoy a parade, local food, and live music in celebration of a local holiday. In Tandayapa and Milpe, we hiked to 10 waterfalls, where just about everyone in the group braved the cold water for pictures amid the scenery. We also had the opportunity to visit Intiñan Museum, which is considered the actual location of the equator.

Although the time we spent hiking, touring, and exploring was thrilling, many people in our group most enjoyed the days spent in the clinic. The team converted a schoolhouse into a health care facility with the help of local volunteers. The room was separated into stations for triage, patient interviews, osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT), and pharmacy. A private area was also set up to perform female pelvic exams.

We were fortunate to have one family medicine/sports medicine physician, one emergency medicine physician, one interventional radiologist, and two occupational therapists on the team of NSU faculty preceptors teaching the students. My classmates and I were responsible for taking patient histories, performing initial physical exams, presenting our notes to the attending preceptors with an assessment and plan, and providing medications, OMT, and education to our patients with the help of translators.

Two students had the opportunity to administer trigger-point injections for a man with chronic back pain, while many others performed female pelvic exams with the assistance of the college’s dean, Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S., who served as our faculty leader. Additionally, the students had the exciting opportunity to treat their patients with OMT.

International medical outreach is one of the best ways to witness true pathology as a first- or second-year student. It is an excellent environment to step out of the didactic-style comfort zone and practice the patient interviewing, charting, OMT, and physical-exam skills we have learned thus far in our training.

One of my most memorable moments in Ecuador involved a shy young girl who exhibited the manifestations of fetal alcohol syndrome. After completing her chart, I and a few other student volunteers played hopscotch outside the clinic with her, her sister, and some of their friends in the community. I can still hear the sound of their laughter when I look at the photo of the two sisters.

Memories like these remind me of why I chose to dedicate my life to medicine. I am so thankful to have gained this experience as a medical volunteer.
Marva Hare Morris (third from right) poses with members of the medical outreach team—and some curious children.
Volunteer Outreach in Jamaica Enriches Staff Member

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, COM/HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

When Marva Hare Morris, M.S., who provides administrative support to several faculty members, decided to serve as a volunteer for the college’s one-week medical outreach trip to Jamaica last December, she excitedly anticipated returning to her homeland to visit areas of the country she had never seen before.

As the outreach endeavor drew closer, however, Hare Morris realized that a minor oversight threatened to derail her plans. “I knew that one of the main requirements of the trip was a valid passport, but when I checked mine, I realized it had expired,” she said. “I didn’t want to miss the trip, so I hurriedly got my passport renewed and finished the necessary preparations.”

With the potential crisis averted, Hare Morris joined the NSU-COM team members and embarked on what promised to be an exciting and fulfilling odyssey to Montego Bay, Jamaica. “I was curious to see what was involved in a medical outreach trip, and to see how the different components come together to serve the patients,” she said.

The next seven days proved to be a whirlwind of activity for Hare Morris, whose primary volunteer role was to communicate with the patients and register them for the services they would be receiving at the various sites the medical outreach contingent visited.

“I was a bit hesitant to perform the tasks required of me, mainly because I don’t have a medical background,” she explained. “But I listened and watched, and soon I was sitting at the desk talking to the patients, which turned out well since I was in my homeland among my people. By the end of the first day, I felt comfortable and confident at what was required of me, and I felt proud of myself and thankful to those who had shown me what was needed to accomplish the tasks.”

According to Hare Morris, the most memorable aspect of the medical outreach trip involved a patient encounter that exemplifies why so many physicians, students, and staff members are willing to volunteer their time and talents to such worthy humanitarian causes. “One of the patients was so insistent on giving us gifts, so after being seen by a physician, she came back hours later with various fruits for the team,” she recalled. “The patient was so appreciative of the services she had received, and this was her way of showing her gratitude.”

Although long hours dedicated to providing needed patient care to the medically underserved population was the predominant focus, there was some free time allotted to sneak in a little fun. Some members of the NSU-COM team had the opportunity to visit Dunn’s River Falls in Ocho Rios, while others opted to go shopping for souvenirs at the local craft market.

A third option—visiting the Blue Hole—proved to be equally as compelling. “The Blue Hole is divided into two sections and includes the breathtaking swimming hole, which practically invites you to jump in and take a swim,” Hare Morris explained. “There is also a beautiful waterfall, so when you visit the Blue Hole, you can take a swim, climb the falls, or simply bask in the beauty of nature.”

Having the opportunity to return to her homeland provided Hare Morris with a range of heartfelt memories that have left an indelible imprint on her soul. “Working as a volunteer on this medical outreach trip has been a rewarding, humbling, and life-changing experience,” she said. “It gave me such elation to be able to give back to my country, and to see the expression of thankfulness and happiness on the faces of those being served.”
In December, 42 NSU-COM students traveled halfway across the world to provide much-needed health care to villagers in Ahwa, India, along with 16 graduate students from the NSU College of Psychology and 7 medical students from the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine. Additionally, various physicians and preceptors were recruited to work with the students during the weeklong trip, including a family medicine practitioner, a dermatologist, a psychologist, and a physician assistant.

Because the villagers of Ahwa suffer from a lack of resources, many of them are afflicted with ill health. The patients, who ranged in age from infants to elderly, presented with a range of clinical diseases, including skin infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, and psychiatric disorders. Using local and student translators,
the medical outreach team performed clinical interviews with the patients, while medications were prescribed for free. Additionally, osteopathic manipulative treatment provided crucial relief to those afflicted with musculoskeletal dysfunctions.

The trip was organized by the college’s student chapter of the Indian Physicians of South Florida; Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.Sc., FACOFP dist., FCPP, FAFPE, dean emeritus and director of international and interprofessional medicine; and Ashok Patel, D.D.S., who practices dentistry in Massachusetts. Patel established the Kantilal J. Patel Charitable Trust of India to create a free clinic in Ahwa, where the outreach team conducted more than 1,500 patient visits.

The participating students gained invaluable medical knowledge and cultural awareness during their time in India, which is why NSU-COM has been coordinating various international medical outreach opportunities for almost two decades. “I want to emphasize how compassionate and caring our students and faculty and staff members are,” Silvagni said. “They make personal sacrifices to do this volunteer work while also increasing the breadth of their medical and cultural knowledge and experience.”

(Information and photos provided by second-year students Adam Devine, Arti Patel, and Bhavik Upadhyay.)
Mary Ann Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A., coauthored an article with Nancy Klimas, M.D., “Tele-phone-Administered Versus Live Group Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management for Adults with CFS,” in the February 2017 issue of the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. She also coauthored the article, "Psychological Distress Mediates the Effect of Alexithymia on 2-Year Change in HIV Viral Load," which was published in the November 2016 issue of the *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*.

Stephen G. Grant, Ph.D., presented a lecture, “Molecular Mechanisms of Altered Brain Development in Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders,” at the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society Southern Regional Meeting held October 22 in Fort Lauderdale. He also participated in a group presentation on October 26 with Mary Ann Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A.; Nancy G. Klimas, M.D.; and others at the International Association for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis’s 12th International Clinical and Research preconference event in Fort Lauderdale. Grant and his colleagues discussed “Cumulative Analysis of Total Genotoxic Exposure and Genetic Susceptibility to Genotoxicity: Implications for Gulf War Illness.”

Elizabeth Hames, D.O., M.A.; Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD; and others coauthored the article, “A GIS Approach to Identifying Socially and Medically Vulnerable Older Adult Populations in South Florida,” which was published in *The Gerontologist*.

T. Lucas Hollar, Ph.D.; Nicole Cook, Ph.D., M.P.A.; and David Quinn, M.P.H., coauthored the article, “Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Policies Show Promise in Reducing Secondhand Smoke Exposure Among Racially andEthnically Diverse, Low-Income Seniors,” which was published in *The Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

Nancy Klimas, M.D., presented the keynote address at a national conference on neuro-immune disease at the University of Tokyo, where she spoke about the utility of modeling strategies to identify therapeutic targets in complex medical disorders, such as myalgic encephalomyelitis and Gulf War illness.
Bindu Mayi, Ph.D., M.Sc., published a book, *Mrs. A*, which is aimed at children and adults. The book tells the story of a strong mentor who not only challenges a child to value learning and overcome bullying, but works to prevent *Staphylococcus aureus*, better known as MRSA.

Maria Vera Nunez, M.D., coauthored a poster, “Low Dose Naltrexone in a Case with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and Isolated Liver Enzyme Elevation,” which was published in the January *IACFS/ME Newsletter*. She also coauthored the article, “Poor Sleep Quality Is Associated with Greater Circulating Pro-Inflammatory Cytokines and Severity and Frequency of CFS/ME Symptoms in Women,” which was published in the February issue of the *Journal of Neuroimmunology*.


Kenya Rivas, M.D., CMD, and Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD, FACP, were awarded first-place honors for their quality improvement poster, “Transitioning from Sliding Scale Insulin (SSI) to Patient-Centered Care Diabetes Management,” at the FMDA-Florida Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine 25th annual symposium held October 13–16 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Additionally, she was invited to serve as a blueprint content reviewer for the American Board of Internal Medicine’s Geriatric Medicine Examination.

Mark Sandhouse, D.O., M.S., coauthored the article, “Effect of Osteopathic Cranial Manipulative Medicine on Visual Function,” which was published in the November issue of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*. He also was named chief academic officer of the college’s Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education Executive Committee.
Reception Honors Faculty Research Endeavors

During the NSU External Funding Recognition Reception held October 20 at the Grande Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida, more than 130 faculty members from 12 colleges and 6 units were honored for their external funding expertise. NSU faculty members received almost $87 million in external grant funding during the previous fiscal year.

The event recognized the extraordinary efforts of all faculty members who contributed to this accomplishment and encourages the continued pursuit of external funding. 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.;
- Rogerio Faillace, M.D.;
- M. Isabel Fernandez, Ph.D., M.A.;
- Mary Ann Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A.;
- Marie H. Florent-Carre, D.O.;
- Stephen Grant, Ph.D.;
- Janet Hamstra, Ed.D., M.S.;
- Patrick C. Hardigan, Ph.D.;
- T. Lucas Hollar, Ph.D.;
- Nancy Klimas, M.D.;
- Jennie Lou, M.D., M.S.;
- Mariana Morris, Ph.D.;
- Lubov Nathanson, Ph.D., M.S.;
- Elizabeth O. Oviawe, Ed.S.;
- Raymond Ownby, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A.;
- Edward Packer, D.O.;
- Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD;
- Bruce B. Peters, D.O.;
- Stacey M. Pinnock, D.H.Sc.;
- Janet Roseman, Ph.D.;
- Gustavo A. Saldias, M.P.H.;
- Kamilah Thomas-Purcell, Ph.D., M.P.H.;
- Paula A. Faria Waziry, Ph.D.; and
- Steven Zucker, D.M.D., M.Ed.
Travis Craddock, Ph.D., assistant professor in the NSU College of Psychology’s Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and associate director of the NSU Institute for Neuro-Immune Medicine’s Clinical Systems Biology Group, and Stephen Grant, Ph.D., associate professor of public health, are conducting multiple research studies to learn more about and ultimately help veterans facing Gulf War illness (GWI). Their research teams recently received grants from the U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity totaling $1,830,389 to fund three studies:

- “Improving Diagnostics and Treatments for GWI Females by Accounting for the Effects of PTSD”—$655,822, with Craddock serving as the principal investigator
- “Disentangling the Effects of PTSD from GWI for Improved Diagnostics and Treatments”—$592,825, with Craddock serving as the principal investigator
- “Persistently Elevated Somatic Mutation as a Biomarker of Clinically Relevant Exposures in Gulf War Illness”—$581,742, with Grant serving as the principal investigator

GWI is at least in part caused by illness-specific inflammatory activity. Specifically, Craddock’s team aims to understand the role of systemic inflammatory mechanisms in GWI in the presence and absence of probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis, as this is critical to define subtypes of GWI and for the development of subtype-specific treatments.

The first two studies, which are of a three-year duration, are aimed at identifying subgroups of GWI based on the presence or absence of PTSD resulting from time on the battlefield in both men and women. Craddock and his research team will perform a systems biology analysis to isolate biobehavioral profiles that identify the effects of PTSD in GWI. The goal is to improve diagnostic criteria and to assess potential treatment avenues for GWI in the context of probable PTSD diagnosis.

The final three-year study is based on the idea that long-term effects of exposures from service in the Gulf Wars are due to damage affecting the regenerative stem cells of the body. Grant and his research team will examine the cumulative effects of many types of exposures that can damage DNA in cells (genotoxicity) using blood samples from patients with GWI to help determine possible causes of the disease using a patent-pending biodosimetric technique.

The U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity, 820 Chandler Street, Fort Detrick, MD 21702-5014, is the awarding and administering acquisition office. These works were supported by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs through the Gulf War Illness Research Program under Award Nos. W81XWH-16-1-0632, W81XWH-16-1-0552, and W81XWH-16-1-0678. Opinions, interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Department of Defense.
In today's charged political atmosphere, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the perceived polarized opinions within society. Indeed, politicians of late have resorted to emotional tactics designed to energize their base, while simultaneously alienating the opposition.

The result of this type of displayed leadership is a blunt separation within the populace—one that prevents harmony and encourages mistrust. As an osteopathic medical student who possesses a holistic approach to life, I often wonder if today's leadership could embrace the same osteopathic philosophy, or if perhaps it already exists behind closed doors.

In the fall of 2016, I visited the Oval Office to meet with President Barack Obama. My oldest brother is a director at the White House, and I have been very fortunate to attend several White House events over the years. This visit, however, was my first opportunity to talk directly with the President. Although the meeting was to be brief, I was anxious to discover if indeed the President of the
free world had a personality matching the characteristics I attribute to a strong, yet balanced, leader.

With so much political turmoil, I wondered if he, too, became polarized, or whether he would be encouraging or disheartening in person. These questions mattered to me, because as a future oncologist, I strive to become a source of inspiration to my patients and a leader to my community.

The moment I walked into the Oval Office with my family, I received a warm and charming welcome. After all the introductions were made—and after stealing my six-month-old niece away from my brother—President Obama very meticulously determined where each of us should be positioned within the office. From then on, the conversation was easy and free-flowing.

The President was a jokester, full of energy. Although he could be very frank, he also welcomed open expression of speech and created an atmosphere that felt safe. I spoke to him about my past service in the military, about my current studies, and my desire to treat terminally ill patients. He listened, gave advice, and provided encouragement. This was a leader.

During my flight back to Florida, I reflected on this experience, as well as my previous experiences with various politicians. Whether it was when I worked with a Democratic governor or as an aid to a Republican senate minority leader, regardless of their outspoken views or how the media portrayed them, they each shared the same leadership quality I saw in President Obama.

More important, in private, it was clear that hope was not lost at all. Granted, politics have become dirty, possibly due to an ever-increasing competition for attention, but hope still exists. Leaders are still among us, even when society is divided. Having seen President Obama’s composure and attitude at a time when the country has become so angry inspires me to carry forward a similar approach for challenges that await me as an oncologist.

---

**Student D.O. of the Year Recipient Announced**

In December, fourth-year student Kristi Ray was named NSU-COM’s 2016–2017 Student D.O. of the Year. Ray was nominated by her peers and chosen by the NSU-COM Local Selection Committee, whose members were determined by the national Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents.

In 2016, Ray was elected by the American Osteopathic Association Bureau on Scientific Affairs and Public Health to advocate for a mental health initiative not only for the NSU-COM student body, but for all U.S. osteopathic medical students. Locally, she works with the Broward County Climate Change Task Force, serving as the public health representative responsible for promoting healthy lifestyles. She has also volunteered her time to community service projects, such as beach cleanup events, nursing home visits, and animal shelter care.

In the research realm, Ray, who has participated in cutting-edge cancer research, was awarded a $15,000 grant to help survey hospice and palliative care in minority communities in South Florida. She also received a $10,000 grant to analyze the effects of therapeutic gardens on nursing home residents and Special Olympics participants.

Ray has received three TOUCH community service awards, as well as the Rose Humanitarian Award. She also was selected as a Paul Ambrose Scholar, which is an honor designated for health professions students who exhibit a desire to learn and integrate public health into their future clinical practice. Ray showcased her commitment to international public health when she participated in medical outreach trips to Guatemala, Jamaica, and Nicaragua—all within the same year.
On November 4, the college’s Consortium for Excellence in Medical Education (CEME) coordinated the Eighth Annual Scientific Research Poster Competition in the NSU Don Taft University Center. A record number of individuals from various CEME affiliates located throughout Florida and the southeastern United States, as well as NSU-COM students, submitted posters. The competition’s rapid growth is evident in the increase from 28 entries in 2012 to 146 in 2016.

All posters were judged based on the format and completeness of the abstract, the overall poster appearance, and the entrant’s oral presentation. Additionally, case presentations were judged on the originality, clinical relevance, and uniqueness of the case; the background, differential diagnosis, and clinical discussion of the case; whether the conclusions were supported by clinical rationale; and the value and clinical relevance of the case as stated by the entrant.

Experimental research presentations were judged on the originality, clinical relevance, and uniqueness of the research topic; whether the objectives, hypothesis, data analysis, and results were clear; whether the methods were clear and reproducible; and whether the conclusions were in accordance with the results. Cash prizes of $500, $250, and $100 were awarded to the first-, second-, and third-place winners in each category.

In the experimental research category, fourth-year students Sergey Arutyunyan, M.S., and Michael Carranza, M.S., earned second-place honors for their project, “Feasibility and Acceptability of a Computer-Based Cognitive Training Program in Parkinson’s Disease.” Urvi Patel, class of 2019, earned third-place recognition for his coauthored poster, “Diabetes Total Care: A Comprehensive Approach to Address Diabetes in Rural Western Pennsylvania.”

In the case study category, third-year student Kimberly Baran was awarded first-place for her coauthored poster, “C3 Glomerulonephritis: A Unique Correlation with Kartagener Syndrome?” Second-place honors went to fourth-year students Joanna Finazzo and Tayler van den Akker for their coauthored poster, “Multidisciplinary Surgical Management of Fournier Gangrene in a Community Hospital Setting.” The third-place award was presented to Christopher Mancuso, class of 2018, and Megan Hemmrich, class of 2020, for their poster, “Segmental Neurofibromatosis (NF5) of the Distal Upper Extremities.”
Sheikh Ali, class of 2020, coauthored the abstract, “Learning Curve with Endoscopic Endonasal Pituitary Surgery: Avoidance of Postoperative Meningitis and Spinal Fluid Leak,” which was displayed at the American Association of Neurological Surgeons Annual Scientific Meeting held April 22–26 in Los Angeles, California.

Third-year student and predoctoral research fellow Kelly Hilton presented her genetic research project, “Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,” at the Unite for Sight Global Health & Innovation Conference, which was held April 22–23 at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Third-year student Itsuka Kurihara served as third author on an article, “Blood Level of Inter-Alpha Inhibitor Proteins Distinguishes Necrotizing Enterocolitis from Spontaneous Intestinal Perforation,” which was published in the October 2016 issue of The Journal of Pediatrics.

Christopher Mancuso, M.H.S., class of 2018, was awarded an NSU Health Professions Division research grant for his study investigating patient treatment decision making for surgical treatments of basal cell carcinoma. He also received a PanSGA Professional Development Grant for his study investigating surgical treatment for recurrent keloids. He will be presenting his project, “The Use of Xenografts in the Reconstruction of the Ear Following Keloid Excision,” at the 14th International Conference on Clinical and Experimental Dermatology on June 19–20 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Fourth-year student Timothy Niedzielak co-authored two papers that were selected for presentation at the AOSpine Global Spine Congress held May 3–6 in Milan, Italy. The submissions covered the topics “Cervical Radiculopathy Treated with Posterior Cervical Cages: Intra-Operative and Clinical Outcomes in 76 Patients” and “Anterior Cervical Corpectomy and Fusion for Multiple-Level Cervical Spondylotic Myelopathy: Surgical Technique and a Review of Current Literature.”

Aadil Vora, class of 2018, was elected to the American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians Student National Board in the role of director of research. He also serves as national director of financial affairs for the Student Osteopathic Medical Association Foundation.
Faculty, Staff Members Recognized for Longevity

On January 4, the college recognized a number of NSU-COM faculty and staff members who celebrated significant employment milestones in 2016.

35 YEARS  Stanley Cohen

30 YEARS  Marysel Sierra

25 YEARS  Howard Neer and Debra Steinkohl

20 YEARS  Ricardo Arriaiza, Peter Cohen, Kenneth Johnson, Sandi Scott-Holman, and Margaret Wilkinson

15 YEARS  Renee Alexis, Edward Packer, Alina Perez, Sheri Schour, and Evelyn Walker

10 YEARS  David Boesler, Elizabeth Oviawe, and Alfredo Rehbein

5 YEARS  Ellice Abell, Nicole Cook, Barbara Gilbert, Karlon Godfrey, Sharon Goordeen, Stephen Grant, Nancy Klimas, Jordan Mathis, Linda Maurice, Stacey Pinnock, Maritza Portillo, Arif Rana, Rossalyn Santana, Dianna Silvagni, Elliot Sklar, and Kimberly Valenti
Cheryl Atherley-Todd, M.D., CMD, FAAFP, assistant professor of family medicine, earned the Degree of Fellow from the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which is the national medical association representing nearly 124,900 family physicians, residents, and medical students. The honor was conferred during a convocation on September 23 in conjunction with the AAFP’s annual meeting in Orlando, Florida. Established in 1971, the AAFP Degree of Fellow recognizes family physicians who have distinguished themselves through service to family medicine and ongoing professional development.

Tye Barber, D.O., Ph.D., assistant professor of family medicine, was named program director of the Broward Health Family Medicine Residency Program. Barber supplanted Paula Anderson-Worts, D.O., M.P.H., associate professor of family medicine, who relinquished the position to return as a full-time faculty member in the Department of Family Medicine.

Cyril Blavo, D.O., M.S., M.P.H.T.M., FACOP, professor and director of the Master of Public Health Program, received the Health Provider Award from the Broward Chapter of the United Nations Association on October 23 in honor of the 71st anniversary of the UN Charter. Blavo garnered the recognition for his support of the principles of the United Nations at the event held at the Inverrary Country Club in Lauderhill, Florida.

David Boesler, D.O., M.S., associate professor and chair of the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, received the 2015–16 NSU-COM Professor of the Year Award in October during the NSU 15th Annual Faculty Reception. The award is conferred upon a full-time faculty member who has served the university for at least 10 years, has achieved national and/or international prominence, and has earned a distinguished reputation through significant contributions to research and scholarship and exceptional instruction. Evidence of excellence was judged on scholarly productivity and in teaching/instruction.

Stanley B. Kaye, D.O., FACOS, who served as chair of the college’s Division of Surgery in the 1980s, passed away on October 13 at the age of 93.

Edward E. Packer, D.O., FAAP, FACOP, assistant dean of clinical affairs, was inaugurated as president of the American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians (ACOP) in April. The ACOP serves its members through a collegial organization that is sensitive to the professional needs of osteopathic pediatricians; that is based on the principles of integrity, ethical conduct, and inclusiveness; and that demonstrates a regard for tradition.

Mark Rubin, M.D., adjunct clinical professor of family medicine, was named as the physician adviser to Broward Health Medical Center. Rubin previously served as past chair of the Broward Health Medical Center Department of Family Medicine and is a member of the hospital’s Utilization Review Committee.
On October 24, the college coordinated a farewell reception for April Thomson, D.O., assistant professor of internal medicine and a 2010 alumna. Thomson, who joined the NSU-COM faculty in July 2014, is joining a private practice in Boca Raton, Florida.

April Thompson (left) with the college’s dean, Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S.

On January 6, the college organized a farewell reception for Robin J. Jacobs, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.S., M.P.H., associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral health, biomedical informatics, and public health. Jacobs, who joined the college in April 2008, spent the majority of her NSU-COM tenure as a medical researcher. She also served as director of international outreach for a period of time and had recently been named director of student research and mentoring. In her new professional capacity, Jacobs will serve as director of research at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Robin Jacobs (left) receives a warm send-off from Elaine M. Wallace.

On February 7, NSU-COM coordinated a farewell reception for staff members Kathy Sadler, director of intramural affairs, and Blake Constantinides, administrative coordinator. Sadler is leaving the college to relocate to Orlando, Florida, while Constantinides has accepted a position with NSU’s Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography.

From left: Blake Constantinides, Elaine M. Wallace, and Kathy Sadler
NSU COMmunications

NSU-COM Provides Worker Health and Safety Training

On January 23–27, and again on January 30–31, the college’s Institute for Disaster and Emergency Preparedness (IDEP) provided continuing safety education on NSU’s Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus. The training was offered at no cost through a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) of the National Institutes of Health.

The training was attended by more than 115 participants, including maritime industry workers, firefighters, emergency medical and emergency management professionals, port authority and marine facility operators, the U.S. Coast Guard, and law enforcement. The overarching goal of the hazardous materials worker health and safety training is to reduce injuries and death by providing engaging and interactive safety training for individuals responding to maritime disasters and emergencies that pose health and safety risks.

Stephen Grant, Ph.D., associate professor of public health, who serves as the principal investigator of this NIEHS grant program, participated in the Personal Protective Equipment section of the Hazardous Materials Operations course and suited up in a Level A suit—the highest level of protection against vapors, gases, mists, and particles. For additional information, please refer to the Hazardous Material Worker Health and Safety Training web page at nova.edu/hazmat.

Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber Honors HPD Chancellor

On November 17, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce honored Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D., chancellor of NSU’s Health Professions Division, with its Meritorious Service Award at the annual Excellence in Healthcare Awards Luncheon. Lippman accepted the honor at the chamber’s Perspectives in Florida’s Healthcare event held at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa.

“Dr. Fred Lippman has made an enormous impact in the lives of millions of people throughout our region, our state, and our nation,” said event co-chair Ashley Boxer while presenting Lippman with the award.
Alumni Corner

Alumni in the News

Roger Alvarez, D.O., M.P.H. ('09), who completed a pulmonary and critical care medicine fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh, recently joined the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine faculty. In his new role, Alvarez is focusing on clinical and basic research in pulmonary artery hypertension as an assistant professor in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine.

Carisa Champion, D.O., J.D., M.P.H. ('16), was selected to serve on the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents Mental Health Awareness Task Force. She also was appointed to the Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association’s (POMA) Mental Health Task Force and is serving as a POMA resident representative.

Tyler Cymet, D.O., FACP, FACOFP ('88), coauthored the article, “Multigeneration Cross-Contamination of Mail with Bacillus Anthracis Spores,” which was published in PLOS ONE. The article analyzes the postal anthrax attack of 2001 and explains the event scientifically. He also played a major role in revising the 2017 edition of the Glossary of Osteopathic Terminology.

Diana J. Graves, D.O. (''86), was selected as the Best Family Physician in Ocala, Florida, in the Ocala Star Banner’s 2016 Readers’ Choice Awards.

Marlow B. Hernandez, D.O., M.P.H., M.B.A., FACP ('11), is remaining as chief executive officer of his family’s primary care practice called Cano Health, which was recently sold to a “New York-based firm. Cano Health, which consists of 350 employees and 7 health centers, will continue to serve as a clinical training site for NSUCOM students.

Katarina Lindley, D.O., FACOFP ('04), was recently named a Fellow of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians. The FACOFP designation signifies recognition of an osteopathic physician’s experience, dedication, and contributions of the highest order to the advancement of family practice by his or her peers.
Joshua D. Lenchus, D.O., R.Ph., FACP, SFHM ('00), received the President’s Achievement Award from the Hillsborough County Osteopathic Medical Society at the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association’s (FOMA) December 2016 board meeting. Lenchus was recognized for “his outstanding achievements and dedicated services and leadership to the osteopathic profession.”

Joshua Lenchus (left), who serves as FOMA’s first vice president, receives the President’s Achievement Award from Brett Scotch, D.O., FAOCO.

Jacques E. Orces, D.O. ('96), who serves as the chief medical information officer at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital in Miami, Florida, was featured on the NBC Nightly News in October in a segment called “Telemedicine Trend: The Doctor Is Always In.” In addition to being an NSU-COM graduate, Orces earned his M.S.B.I. degree in August 2016 from the college’s Biomedical Informatics Program and serves as an adjunct faculty member in the program.

Brett Scotch, D.O. ('99), received the 2016 Distinguished Service Award from the Hillsborough County Osteopathic Medical Society in December.

Tiffany Sizemore-Ruiz, D.O., FACC ('09), has become a regularly featured medical contributor and expert on the national cable network Fox News regarding recent health-related stories and research.

James M. Turner, D.O., M.P.H., FACOFP, FACOEP ('88), who serves as dean of William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, was invited to the White House as part of the Opioid Working Group. The committee consists of a select number of educators, medical school deans, and addictionology physicians who are assisting with the transition from the President Barack Obama to President Donald Trump administration.

Jason A. Zell, D.O., M.P.H. ('01), was appointed as a U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) representative of the Gastrointestinal Steering Committee (GISC). In this role, he will be involved in developing phase III concepts from an elemental stage and advising the GISC on the scientific merit of phase II and phase III trials developed by the NIH’s National Clinical Trials Network Groups, cancer centers, and other entities.
Sometimes a person’s career path seems preordained from birth. That certainly proved to be the case for 2006 alumnus Parham Eftekhar, D.O., M.B.S., who was born into a family replete with physicians, dentists, and nurses.

Eftekhar, who was born in Tehran, Iran, and relocated to South Miami, Florida, with his family in 1984, said his interest in pursuing a medical career intensified at the age of 12. “My father was a professor and a physician at the University of Miami and at the veterans’ affairs medical center in downtown Miami,” he said. “I remember stopping by his office frequently after school and having the opportunity to interact with the veterans in his office, which was a unique and unforgettable experience.”

Because his father was an allopathic physical medicine and rehabilitation physician, Eftekhar witnessed the enduring impact he had on improving the veterans’ overall health. “My dad focused on improving their muscular strength and well-being, especially after they suffered catastrophic strokes or accidents,” he explained. “Witnessing the care he provided ultimately influenced my decision to become an osteopathic physician.”

In addition to his M.D. dad, Eftekhar’s family tree includes his mother, who is a retired nurse, as well as two brothers, who earned their medical degrees at NSU. Interestingly, his older brother, Hessam, earned his D.O. degree from the College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2001 and became an anesthesiologist a number of years after receiving his Pharm.D. from the College of Pharmacy. Similarly, his youngest brother, Samin, is a 2010 graduate of NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, who is practicing dentistry in West Palm Beach, Florida.

With an eye toward the future, Eftekhar majored in sociology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and specialized in public health and drug addiction, which culminated in a two-month public health rotation at University College London in England. “I always wanted to have a strong influence on patients and help promote better health habits and longevity,” said Eftekhar, who earned his bachelor’s degree in sociology from Emory in 2000. “My college experience further reinforced my passion and dream of becoming a physician.”

During his time at Emory, Eftekhar was also busy plotting the next steps in his educational ascent, which included a return to South Florida once he graduated. “Throughout college, I envisioned myself becoming a physician who would remain in South Florida,” he said. “When it came to the medical school application process,
I had no doubt that becoming an osteopathic physician at Nova Southeastern University was the right fit for me.

Before matriculating at NSU-COM, Eftekhari strengthened his science background by earning a Master of Biomedical Sciences degree at NSU’s College of Medical Sciences while serving as an anatomy tutor to NSU occupational therapy, physician assistant, and physical therapy students. In May 2006, after four years of intensive study, Eftekhari proudly realized his dream of becoming an osteopathic physician.

“Becoming an osteopathic physician encompassed all the elements I value as physician, such as the holistic care of patients beyond just medical or surgical treatment,” he explained. “It also involves a continued commitment to improving chronic medical conditions while bearing in mind that medications alone are not the only treatment option.”

Graduation and Beyond

After graduating from NSU-COM, Eftekhari was accepted into the prestigious Yale University Primary Care Internal Medicine Residency Training Program in New Haven, Connecticut, where his training focused on primary care, substance abuse, and international medicine. “I chose Yale because it had a strong international medicine training program and offered scholarship opportunities,” he said. “During my time at Yale, I was accepted into the Johnson & Johnson Global Health Scholars Program, which allowed me to spend two months in Uganda researching HIV and other infectious diseases.”

Eftekhari said his intense interest in international medicine was stoked while he was an NSU-COM student and had the opportunity to participate in the college’s medical outreach trips to Guatemala and Peru in 2004. “Those experiences were some of the most memorable I had in medical school, and they really reinforced my interest in international medicine and caring for underserved populations,” he said.

Not surprisingly, Eftekhari’s unrelenting commitment to providing exemplary patient care was recognized in May 2009 when he received the Gary Vernon Ralph Humanism in Medicine Award at his residency graduation ceremony. “The person who fueled my ambition to become a physician—my father—was in attendance that day with my mother,” he said. “Accepting the award was an honor I respected and shared with him.”

With his thirst for knowledge still unsated, Eftekhari decided to continue his postdoctoral training and complete a two-year nephrology fellowship at George Washington University Hospital in Washington, D.C. “I chose nephrology because it encompassed all the traditional aspects of internal medicine, with special emphasis on kidney health and heavy emphasis on
applying strategies of preventative care, such as controlling blood pressure, managing diabetes, and motivating patients to maintain their optimal health status,” he explained.

As was the case at his residency graduation, Eftekhari was singled out for commendation at his fellowship graduation when he received the George Washington University School of Medicine Fellow of the Year Award. “These accomplishments were special moments that prompted me to self-reflect on my postdoctoral training and educational experiences at NSU-COM,” he said.

**Postgraduate Fulfillment Beckons**

Following the completion of his fellowship training, Eftekhari returned to South Florida in 2011 and joined Renal Electrolyte & Hypertension Consultants, becoming a partner in 2015. He also serves as an assistant clinical professor of internal medicine at NSU-COM and at Broward Health Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale.

“I love my job because every day is a unique opportunity to help patients achieve appropriate kidney care while applying some of the holistic medical training NSU-COM taught me,” said Eftekhari, who received the Broward Health Internal Medicine Residency Teacher of the Year Award in 2012. “Thanks to my NSU-COM training, I avoid treating a specific health symptom without acknowledging other confounding medical issues. I also learned to respect my patients’ spiritual and personal preferences and incorporate them into their medical care decisions and action plans.”

Although providing the highest level of care to his patients is of paramount importance to Eftekhari, he’s also on a mission to educate the community about the intrinsic dangers involved with using synthetic designer drugs, such as flakka, bath salts, and synthetic fentanyl. “I serve as a volunteer on an important community response team that is attempting to educate people about this issue, along with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, local law enforcement, and other physicians,” he said.

In the 11 years since Eftekhari graduated from NSU-COM, he’s crafted a career brimming with accomplishment. Still, no matter how successful he becomes, Eftekhari said his primary focus will always be on his patients, who motivate him to achieve new levels of excellence every day. “I particularly cherish the opportunity to gain the loyalty and trust of my patients in regard to finding the optimal medical treatment plan for their holistic health and kidney care,” Eftekhari said. “Through holistic health, I acknowledge that each of my patients has different educational backgrounds, spiritual beliefs, and personal preferences in regard to receiving medical treatments. I always strive to look at these factors while providing the best possible medical treatments based on medical guidelines and research outcomes. The biggest joy I receive is watching my patients’ kidney health improve.”

Having the opportunity to do what he truly loves is a blessing Eftekhari doesn’t take for granted. It also explains why he is so committed to giving back to the next generation of osteopathic physicians. “I am grateful for the education and experience NSU-COM provided me,” he said. “I felt thoroughly prepared for my residency and fellowship training after graduating from medical school and feel blessed to be able to show my appreciation by mentoring medical students and residents.”
Sea Turtle Conservation Program Hits New Milestone

The researchers and volunteers who work with the Broward County Sea Turtle Conservation Program were busy in 2016, which turned out to be a record year for sea turtle nests in the county.

NSU has been working with Broward County to administer the Broward County Sea Turtle Conservation Program for more than a quarter century.

Derek Burkholder, Ph.D., who serves as a research scientist at NSU’s Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography and as principal investigator and director of the program, said there were 3,567 nests documented on Broward County’s beaches in 2016—the most since the program began in 1981. Sea turtle nesting season on Florida’s east coast runs from March 1 through October 31.

Burkholder said it’s too early to say why the numbers jumped so much, but he indicated that the numbers have been rising over the past few years, which he contributes to a better understanding of sea turtles by the public and better conservation and management that has been put in place during the past few decades. “It’s wonderful to see the hard work of so many dedicated people coming to fruition,” Burkholder said. “People are more aware of the nests on our beaches, and we’ve done a good job of protecting them until the eggs hatch.”
NSU Earns Military Friendly School Designation

NSU University School commemorates expanded sports center

NSU was selected as a recipient of the 2017 Military Friendly School designation by Victory Media, a publisher of G.I. Jobs, STEM Jobs, and Military Spouse. Established in 2003, Military Friendly Schools is the most comprehensive, powerful resource for veterans today. Each year, the list of schools is provided to service members and their families, helping them select the best college, university, or trade school to receive the education and training needed to pursue a civilian career.

NSU will be showcased along with other 2017 Military Friendly Schools in the annual Guide to Military Friendly Schools, special education issues of G.I. Jobs and Military Spouse, and on militaryfriendly.com.

NSU University School commemorates expanded sports center

NSU University School celebrated the grand opening and dedication ceremony of the newly expanded Noël P. Brown Sports Center. Located next to the Aquatics Complex on the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, the expanded addition spans 59,000 square feet and includes cutting-edge training and fitness rooms for student-athletes participating in 15 different sports.

It also includes a gymnasium for basketball, volleyball, and other activities; a general-purpose activity room for use by students as young as junior kindergarten; offices for athletics department staff; locker room facilities for aquatics and visiting athletes; and an office suite for Special Olympics Broward County. To complement the project, the original sports center received refurbishments to enhance classroom and programming areas.

The naming of the Noël P. Brown Sports Center is in appreciation of Keith Brown, an NSU Board of Trustees member, and his family’s recent gift to the university, which supports scholarships for undergraduate studies. Three of Brown’s children were NSU University School students, and he chose to name the sports center in honor of their mother.
On February 20, Geraldine Terry, R.N.—the wife of the late Morton Terry, D.O., M.Sc., who founded Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine and NSU’s Health Professions Division—passed away peacefully at the age of 93 at her home in Cooper City, Florida.

Born in 1923 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Terry went on to receive her nursing degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. While supervising the hospital’s newborn nursery, she met the ambitious physician Morton Terry, and the couple married in 1948. After discovering the beauty of Miami on their honeymoon, the Terrys decided to relocate to the Sunshine State.

Together, they pursued their shared dream of raising a family and establishing the osteopathic medical profession in South Florida. Although she gave up her nursing career to raise their four children, Terry remained active as an ardent volunteer for a range of organizations, including the Osteopathic General Hospital Guild.

As their family grew, so did the Terrys’ desire to serve the community by providing compassionate health care and creating an awareness of osteopathic medicine. Terry’s unwavering support and dedication to her husband and the profession resulted in the founding of Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1979, which then became Southeastern University of the Health Sciences (SUHS) in the late 1980s.

In 1994, SUHS merged with Nova University to become an educational powerhouse that is today known as Nova Southeastern University. The Terrys became dedicated NSU Sharks from the day the merger occurred and always believed in giving back, making significant contributions to the university throughout the decades.

Terry’s family will remember her as not only the driving force behind Morton’s Terry’s accomplishments, but also as a wonderful mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend. She was preceded in death by her husband, who passed away in 2004, and her son Matthew. She is survived by her son Jeffrey and daughters Pamela and Sheryl, 10 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.