University President Welcomes Incoming Students

I want to extend my welcome to the USU School of Medicine Class of 2012 and entering graduate students.

Welcome to USU, to the National Capital Area and to the study of medicine and biomedical sciences. I know you have worked hard and long to get here and you and your families are justifiably proud of this accomplishment. We at the university are also proud of you.

For the School of Medicine (SOM), almost 2,000 applicants competed for less than 200 positions in your class.

We often tell others how accomplished you are: your average MCAT is 30 and your average GPA is 3.53. A number of you have Master’s degrees, two of you have earned law degrees and one of you has a Doctorate in Pharmacology. You hail from all across the country: 22% from the Northeast; 41% from the South; 9% from the Midwest and 28% from the West; 33 members of your class are from minority groups. More than half of you do not have prior service and those of you who have served have done so as active duty officers, active duty enlisted, prior active duty enlisted; 21 of you are service academy graduates, 22 were direct ROTC graduates and four of you were reservists.

You are joining a group of highly distinguished individuals. Among USU alumni are Major General Tom Travis (’86), the commander of the 79th Medical Wing at Lackland AFB, Texas; Rear Admiral Sandra Kweder, U.S. Public Health Service (’84), Deputy Director, Office of New Drugs, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; Captain (select) Paul Kane, U.S. Navy (’92), Force Surgeon, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, in Djibouti; Brigadier General Joe Caravalho, U.S. Army (’83), and Colonel John Powell, U.S. Army (’86), who are leading medical efforts in Iraq as the Surgeon, Multinational Force-Iraq/Multinational Corps-Iraq, and Chief of Staff for Health Affairs, Multinational Security and Transition Command-Iraq, respectively. More USU alumni have been assigned to the White House Medical Unit than from any other medical school in the United States.

Additionally, this year, there are 64 graduate students entering the SOM Graduate programs in the three interdisciplinary programs, Medical and Clinical Psychology, and the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biometrics. Of these 64 graduate students, there are 34 entering Ph.D. students and 30 Master’s students, including U.S. citizens as well as students from Italy, Canada, Peru and Brazil. This year’s class has 35 military students from various branches of the uniformed services.

You have undertaken an extraordinary mission at an extraordinary time. Military and public health medicine are at the forefront of much of 21st century medicine and biomedical science. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) have challenged us as never before and the Military Health System has risen to these challenges by saving more lives than ever before and working to restore those wounded warriors to fuller lives than ever before. The university is deeply involved in addressing the challenges of combat injuries and at the same time deeply involved in health promotion, disease prevention, public health, and humanitarian medicine. The university is the focal point for cutting edge research and development of health care in infectious disease, confronting the issues of worldwide epidemics including HIV-AIDS and pandemic influenza. Our faculty also leads biomedical in issues relating to PTSD and TBI as well as fundamental and applied medical science as they relate to human health.

Recently, the university has stood up a new Center for Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine. This Center will extend the collaborations between the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services and is based on working closely with the National Institutes of Health. You are also entering USU at a remarkable and historic time in military medicine. In 2011 the new WRNMMC – a tri-care facility – will open on this base. The new tertiary care facility will be the flagship of military medicine and this campus has been characterized as the model academic health center of the 21st Century.

On the morning of July 23 I attended a ceremony in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol led by the leadership of the House and Senate, joined by DoD Secretary Robert Gates, many members of Congress and the former Secretary of Sate and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell. Particularly moving were remarks from two veterans of the famed Buffalo Division. This ceremony, “Marching Forward,” commemorated the 60th anniversary of the integration of the United States Armed Forces. Sixty years is both a moment ago and a very long time ago but today’s Armed Forces are the most representative organization in the United States. The university continues to strive to reflect this diversity and it is these men and women and their families for whom you will care whether you are serving in the Army, Navy, Air Force or U.S. Public Health Service: there is no higher calling.

Welcome to the USU and to this great mission: learning to care for those in harm’s way.
A Shining Reality for Simulation

The Uniformed Services University’s National Capital Area Medical Simulation Center has been awarded accreditation by the American College of Surgeons’ Program for Accreditation of Education Institutes. The ACS cited the Sim Center’s faculty, programs, simulators and leadership as key elements in its award of accreditation. Above from left to right are the Sim Center’s directors, Dr. Gil Muniz, Dr. Mark Bowyer, CAPT Joseph Lopreiato, MC, USN, Dr. Alan Liu, and Ms. Amy Risdal.

A Traditional Academic University with a Unique Focus

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For high school students, summer is not usually known for professionalism. However, for a few one-week sessions a year, professionalism is exactly what CAPT Cynthia Macri, MC, USN, demands of her students in the S2M2 Program.

The program, celebrating its fifth year, opens the reality of the medical world to gifted and ambitious students with diverse backgrounds. Pulling from schools across the country and locally in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, CAPT Macri explained that the diversity of the program creates a broader learning environment.

“There is a need out there,” Macri explains, “for doctors to understand what’s going on in the household. You can become judgmental when you work with only one genre of kid.”

Representing Science, Service, Medicine, and Mentoring, the S2M2 summer program focuses on diversity through peer mentoring. Incoming first year USU students and selected high school and college students participate and assist in the events as mentors. Allison Garney, a 19-year-old from Boca Raton, Fla., shared a unique perspective as a sophomore college student and mentor. She explained that “we have a great mix of students. We partnered them up and made them mix but they are still really gung-ho.”

Following a presentation by LCDR Jonathan Forsberg, MC, USN, a member of the USU Class of 2001, at the Orthopedics Department at Bethesda, NMMC, Matt Woodsen of Severna Park, Md., explained his personal interest in the program. “I don’t want to be a doctor. Instead, I want to work with prosthetics. I know the potential. I’m using orthopedics right now.”

Woodsen said he was really enjoying the program but included “the overall diversity is pretty low, moderate at best. But, they are trying to get better which is a really good sign.”
DoD Unveils New Government Travel Card

On January 15, 2008 the Department of Defense awarded the next DoD Travel Charge Card contract to Citibank.

Under this award, current DoD travel charge cards issued by Bank of America will close at midnight EST on Nov. 29, and the new travel cards issued by Citi will open at 12:01 a.m. on Nov. 30.

So, what should cardholders do to make sure their account transfer and official travel continues without interruption?

- If you have an open Bank of America travel card account you should receive a new Citi card sometime during the period of Aug. 31st – Sept.15. Cards will be issued by Citi to travelers with active and deactivated accounts at Bank of America, but if the accounts are closed, Citi will not issue cards.
- When you receive your new Citi card, you must verify receipt directly with Citi either by phone or on-line. If you have a credit balance on your account with Bank of America, make sure you call the bank at 800-472-1424 for a refund. After conversion, Bank of America is required to return all unclaimed credit balances to the comptroller of the state of residence of the cardholder.
- If traveling during the change, carry both cards. You may have to reserve your room with your BoFA card and then pay for it with your Citi card.

The Defense Travel Management office is programming DTS to add fields for the new Citi card. Cardholders will not have to add their new Citi account information in DTS. This information will be populated from a Citi file that will be provided to the DTMO and uploaded into DTS.

Updates will be provided via e-mail and the National Naval Medical Center’s Journal. For questions contact either Jim Wolff at 295-3353, jwolff@usuhs.mil or James Bruce at 295-3496, jbruce@usuhs.mil.

Preventive Medicine Faculty Member Deploys with USNS Mercy

By Jessica Dinneen
Assistant to the Office of External Affairs

In an effort to support and evaluate the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) Continuing Health Education training program aboard the USNS Mercy, USU Professor of Preventive Medicine, CAPT Kenneth Schor, MC, USN, deployed aboard the Mercy for the Pacific Partnership 2008 humanitarian mission in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Selected as head of the CHE effort by Dr. Charles Rice, USU president, Schor said he felt privileged to accept the assignment.

“I’m about the only USU faculty member that has been the senior physician for an amphibious task force,” Schor said.

The Mercy, one of the Navy’s two hospital ships, is capable of supporting both medical and humanitarian assistance needs and deployed for a similar mission in Southeast Asia in 2006.

During Pacific Promise 2006 deployment, the teams of civilian and military personal cared for almost 200,000 patients in Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Republic of the Philippines.

The training program, which is a part of the CHE Department at USU, is designed to provide Continuing Medical Education and Continuing Nursing Education credits to all doctors and nurses aboard the hospital ship. With more than 15,000 patient contacts and 1,000 medical personal aboard, 75 percent is US military. 12-14 are partner nations including India, Australia and New Zealand, and three NGO’s such as Operation Smile, Project HOPE, and International Medical Teams are aboard.

In one day, according to Schor, the hospital and its community based clinic sites treat more than 1,800 patients, repair 12 pieces of equipment saving $70,000, fix the TB lab at the main hospital, and work on the rehabilitation and construction of four sites.

“I am supporting the preventive medicine partnership effort with this country” Schor said. “This is a huge problem and my colleagues and I are hoping to improve their disease tracking. Something that can have a national impact.”

Student Profile: 2d Lt Michelle Bonneau, USAF

By Jessica Dinneen
Assistant to the Office of External Affairs

It is hard for 2d Lt Michelle Bonneau, USAF, a member of the USU Class of 2011, to say exactly where she is from.

Being an Army brat for most of her life, Europe is her best description of a hometown. It is much easier, however, to describe where the 21-year-old is bound.

A graduate from the Air Force Academy, Bonneau says she knew she wanted to be a doctor in high school, watching her assistant soccer coach and former Army flight surgeon care for her injured teammates.

“He was just the go-to guy,” she explained, “whenever someone would go down, no one would move until he ran out there. He was the starting factor for me.”

USU was an obvious choice for Bonneau. The traditional curriculum and unique multi-service atmosphere at USU appealed to Bonneau’s desire to make the military her career. “It’s more of a collective group effort, as opposed to an individual effort,” she clarified. “We have a group attitude of cooperate to graduate. I don’t see people with their uniform anymore.”

Beyond the academics, Bonneau elaborated, there is a feeling of comradeship not found at most medical schools.

“We have a collective goal of serving in the military and treating the same troops,” she said. “The campus and the school spend so much of its time and effort incorporating, not only the students, but also the family of the students. It’s the military family idea.”

Bonneau is pursuing a career in obstetrics and gynecology, but maintains an interest in family practice.

“What drew me to OB-GYN,” she said, “is that it has both primary care and secondary care. It’s the best of both worlds.”

Finishing her first year, Bonneau describes her time at USU as “pretty run of the mill in a good way.”

With aspirations for continuing in military medicine and deploying, Bonneau’s future will be anything but boring.
CPDR Receives Prostate Cancer Research Internship Grant

The Prostate Cancer Research Program (PCRP) Collaborative Undergraduate Historically Black College And University Student Summer Training Program was awarded by the Department of Defense, United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC) to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) Center for Prostate Disease Research (CPDR) and the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) collaborative team.

A successful collaborative effort between Dr. Shiv Srivastava, Department of Surgery, USU/CPDR and Dr. Deepak Kumar, UDC, provides a great opportunity for talented students to partake in the new Prostate Cancer Training Program that is conducted during their summer break. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have a diverse student body with a majority of students classified as minorities. Health Disparities such as the higher incidence of prostate disease among African American men that have been the focus of the CPDR research team are increasingly being addressed in various diseases including prostate cancer. So what better way to increase awareness of such trends and move towards a cure than to:

- Recruit and encourage highly qualified undergraduate trainees by providing them with a stimulating and intellectual environment that promotes state-of-the-art training and education in prostate cancer research.
- Motivate young researchers, who may contribute to prostate cancer research centers at HBCUs.
- Ensure that the new generation of biomedical scientists is properly trained to continue the fight against prostate cancer.

At the Uniformed Services University’s Center for Prostate Disease Research (CPDR), the four selected summer students from UDC are paired with one of the faculty members of USU, and focus on specific research projects in basic science and database research. There are goals and objectives for both mentors and students. Students are actively involved in the program through progressive research, regular lab meetings, seminars and personal discussions with faculty members, staff and fellow students. Research findings are presented by the students, at the end of the summer experience aiming scientific publications. The National Conference Award provides a unique opportunity for gifted students in a leading institution of the prostate cancer field.

AFRRI Researchers Share Latest Radiation Effects Findings

Internationally recognized radiobiology experts shared their latest research findings with an audience of more than 60 at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI) annual Medical Effects of Ionizing Radiation (MEIR) Scientific Course.

“The course focused on research about the medical effects of ionizing radiation to help clinicians, health physicists, and medical planners preserve troop health in the face of radiological/nuclear terrorism or warfare,” said MEIR Course Director Col L. Andrew Huff, USAF, MC, SFS.

The 23 presenters were from 13 civilian and federal U.S. academic, research, and emergency response organizations as well as from the World Health Organization’s Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network and from the joint Japan-U.S. Radiation Effects Research Foundation. Attendees represented the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service as well as the Canadian and the United Kingdom military organizations. Speakers addressed topics that included assessments of the current worldwide nuclear and radiological threat, emergency response practices, medical treatment protocols, and findings from long-term studies of exposures including those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and Chernobyl in 1986. Research updates included radiation dose assessment methods, development of radioprotectants, radiation countermeasure development strategies, and cancer risk in radiation-exposed populations.

In addition to this five-day course, AFRRI conducts the standard two and a half-day MEIR course in 12 to 18 venues each year, primarily for military medical providers at military bases in the United States and abroad. “These postgraduate-level training courses,” said Huff, “enhance Department of Defense preparedness for nuclear/radiological disaster both for maintaining military readiness and assisting when needed in support of civilian authorities in a federal response.”

USU Researcher Links Combatant Status, Sexual Violence, Psychological Trauma

Lynn Lawry, MD, MSPH, MSC, director of Research and Education for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine is the senior author of a manuscript titled, “Association Between Combatant Status and Sexual Violence and Health and Mental Health in Post-Conflict Liberia.”

The article is published in the Aug. 13 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

“This study is important because it brings attention to certain vulnerable groups who are currently underserved, specifically ex-combatants who make up 30 percent of 3.2 million people,” said Dr. Lawry. “We hope these findings will be used to help the Liberian Ministry of Health in writing their mental health policy.”

Dr. Lawry and a team of researchers surveyed a population of 1,666 adults aged 18 or older over a three week period in May 2008. The researchers used a cross-sectional, population based, multistage survey to study mental health predictors including Major Depressive Disorder, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, social functioning, exposure to sexual violence, and health and mental health needs in the Liberian combatant population.

According to the findings, more than 40 percent of the Liberian household population showed symptom criteria for MDD and 44 percent showed symptoms of PTSD. Out of the third of the surveyed population that served time as a combatant, one third of the adult males experienced sexual violence compared to 7.4 percent of men who did not serve in the fighting forces.

As a general category, 57 percent of combatants overall demonstrated characteristics of PTSD as compared with 37 percent of non-combatants.

The study also showed that male former combatants who did not experience sexual violence were almost half as likely to demonstrate symptoms of PTSD as though that did not experience sexual violence.

The study also considered the role of gender, concluding that male combatants who reported sexual violence had worse mental health outcomes than females with reported sexual violence.
USU Hosts JTF Capital Region-Medical Integration Conference

By Jan Clark
Dir., Gov't. and Community Affairs

Members of the Joint Task force National Capital Region-Medical held a JTF CapMed Integration Conference in classrooms at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) July 18 – 25.

Conference user groups consisted of representatives from clinical services, with functional family experts from Graduate Medical Education, Healthcare Professional Education, Graduate Dental Education, various Subject Matter Experts and department heads from the National Naval Medical Center, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DeWitt Health Care Network and USU.

The mission of the partnership is to validate space, manning requirements and concept of operations for the new hospital at Fort Belvoir and the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Conference participants reviewed draft manning documents, floor plans, space requirements and Concept of Operations documents. What they found was that much has changed since the initial CONOPS. Requests for additional manpower and space will need to be reconciled within the limitations. Further evaluations will be required between user groups between the north and south.

Dr. Jeffrey Longacre, director of USU’s Medical Education Department, associate chair for USU’s Department of Pediatrics and JTF CapMed liaison officer, said JTF Integration Conference reinforced the importance of quality medical education and research in the National Capitol Area’s developing academic environment.

“USU leaders from the School of Medicine and Graduate School of Nursing, Department Chairs, and the National Capital Consortium have partnered with JTF and MTF leaders in order to ensure academic excellence and provide outstanding training and research environments for the next generation of uniformed healthcare providers,” he said.

Dates to Remember

Sept. 2: MILPO New Hours of Operation - Starting the Sept. 2, the Military Personnel Office (C 1016) will be open at 7:30 a.m., but will be closed during the hours of 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. (Tuesdays only). Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, MILPO will continue to be open during normal working hours 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sept. 21: 2008 Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation Ride for Kids—Attention MOTORCYCLE enthusiasts! The Baltimore/Washington “Ride for Kids” road ride is set for Sunday, Sept. 21, starting at the mall in Columbia, Md. Donations for the ride (minimum $35.00 donation per bike) will benefit the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation.

Registration opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 9:15 a.m. The police-escorted ride through scenic countryside starts at 9:30 a.m., rain or shine. Riders on all makes and models are welcome. After the ride, stay for the Celebration of Life program to hear from the local children we help. Award presentations will honor the highest fundraisers and distribution of premiums will follow. The Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, Inc., is a federally-recognized nonprofit charitable organization. Their mission is to discover the cause of and cure for childhood brain tumors by supporting medical research, and early detection of children’s brain tumors in order to improve the quality of life for children. For more information contact CDR Rene Hernandez at 295-9635, or email at rherandez@usuhs.mil. You can also log onto: www.pbtfus.org/rideforkids/calendar/2008/baltimorewashington08.html.

Sept. 28: Navy Five-Miler—The 2008 Navy Five-Miler will be held Sept. 28 in downtown D.C. FC2 Adam Race will be heading up a team from the university. The course is mostly flat and good for beginning runners. For more information, visit www.navysmiler.com. Contact FC2 Race at 295-9637 or email him at arace@usuhs.mil to join the university’s team.

Oct. 10-13: U.S. 49th Armed Forces Open Chess Championship - National Naval Medical Center will be the site event for the 2008 Armed Forces Open Chess Championship, which will take place on Oct. 10-13 (Columbus Day Weekend) at 8 a.m. in the Galley of the National Naval Medical Center. The tournament is open to all Active Duty, Reservists, Military Retirees, Cadets, Midshipmen, and ROTC personnel who have a USCF Membership. Please enter in advance by sending an e-mail to Erick.Toribio@med.Navy.Mil. Please include Rank, Name, USCF ID number, current rating and branch of service. Come and participate regardless of your chess experience. For more information please contact PS3 Erick Toribio at (301) 295-5805.

Oct. 15 – 28: PFT/PFA/APFT Notice - The Fall 2008 Physical Fitness Test for all services is scheduled for Oct. 15, 16, 21, 22, 23 and 28 at 7 a.m. and noon. All military personnel are required to select the time and date that they will take their test. All Sailors must complete the Health Risk Assessment questionnaire and Physical Health Assessment annually, and Navy weigh-ins must be conducted between 10 days and 24 hours prior to the Physical Readiness Test. If there are any questions please contact your senior service advisor.

From S2M2, Pg. 4

Taylor Douglas, a Stone Ridge senior and mentor for the week, explained that sometimes students don’t realize the S2MS doesn’t just focus on racial diversity.

“I was part of the program 2 years ago,” Douglas elaborated. “We had a large group from Chicago that year. It was very regionally diverse that year but this week is more racially diverse.”

The students and mentors go through physical training exercises, learn to fix cracked bones in orthopedics, and wear casts to understand disability difficulties. However, the most unique aspect of the students’ experience is USU’s expertise in military medicine.

“Any time we give our injured guys, in my mind, is time well spent,” explained Forsberg. His presentation included photos of real battle wounds to give the students a realistic outlook on military medicine.

At a lecture on sports medicine, LTC Kevin DeWeber, MC, USA, told the students that “being a doctor is like being the team doctor for the most kick-butt team in the world.”

According to Macri, all of the presenters, lecturers and medical professionals are volunteers, demonstrating a strong commitment to medical education. Dr. Patrice Desvigne-Nickens, a doctor at the NIH Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, explained why she volunteered to lead a dissection and study of the heart.

“This program is essential because, for medicine, diversity is a no brainer,” Desvigne-Nickens said. “Medicine is something we have to offer all cultures and students must understand the challenges of that in their chosen profession.”

On the final day of the program, the students presented their projects to faculty, family and other members of the USU community. As the students gathered before the exhibit began, Macri reminded them that it was their turn to teach and “Today, you are the doctors.”