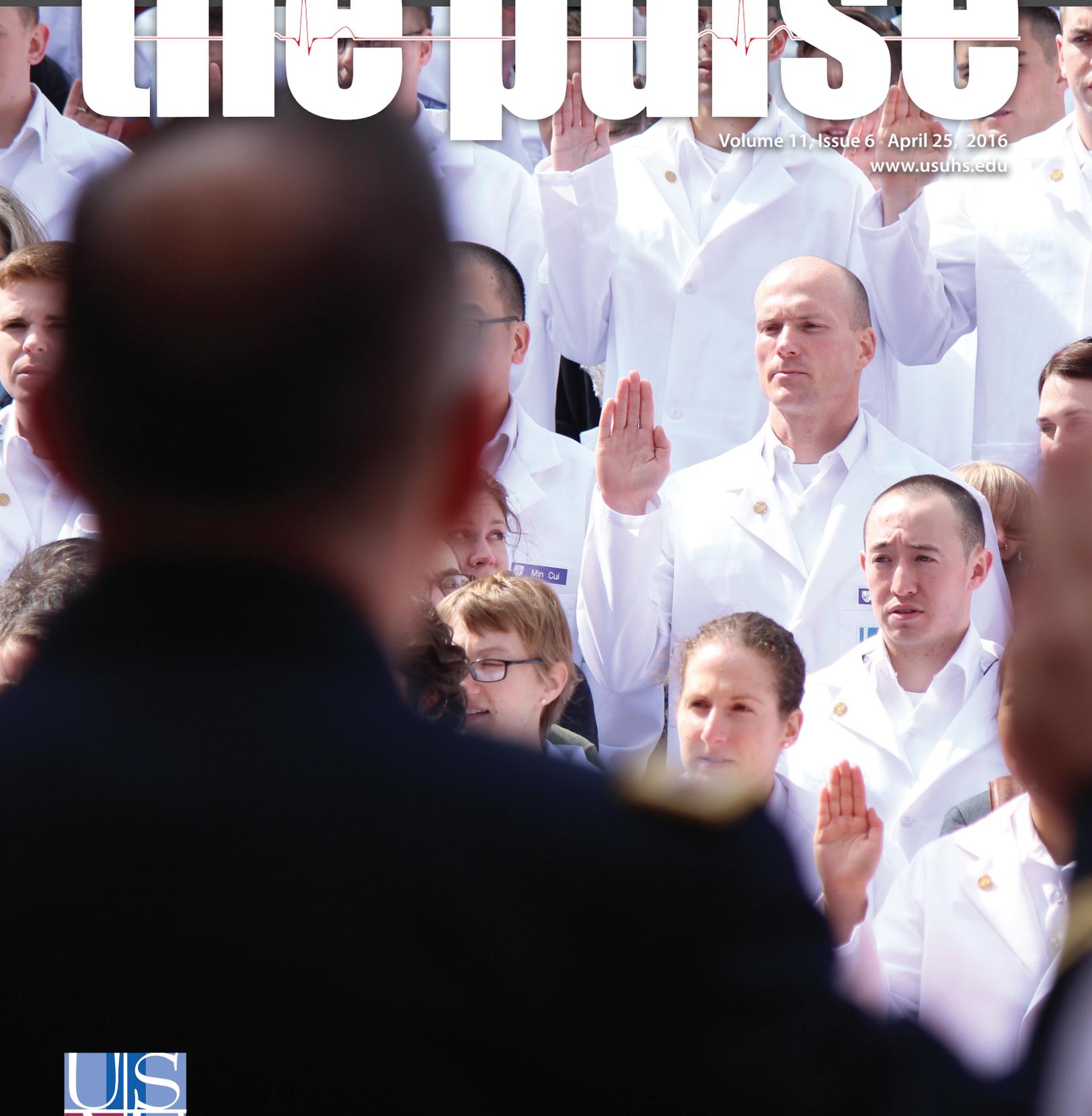


The Official USU Newsletter

# the pulse

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*Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way*

**Sharon Holland**

Deputy Vice President for External Affairs and Managing Editor

**Eric Ritter**

Writer and Editor

**MC3 Laura Bailey**

Writer and Photographer

**Tom Balfour**

Photographer

**Production**

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**Submissions**

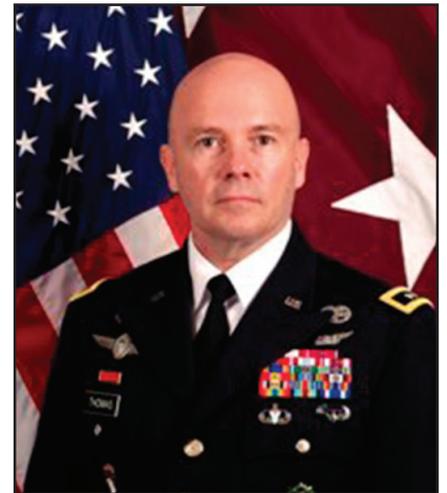
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# New USU President Announced

The Secretary of Defense has announced Major General (Dr.) Richard W. Thomas, MD, DDS, has been selected to be the next President of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and will succeed Dr. Charles Rice this summer. Thomas was selected from a large pool of candidates nationwide. A search committee was made up of faculty, staff, Board members, students and alumni led by Dr. Ronald Blanck, Chair of the University Board of Regents.

Thomas comes to the University with an incredible resume and experience through his many years in support of the Department of Defense and the Military Health System after recently completing a

two-year assignment as the first Director of Healthcare Operations for the Defense Health Agency.



*Major General (Dr.) Richard W. Thomas, MD, DDS, has been selected to be the next President of USU. (Courtesy Photo)*

## Cozza honored at White House

**On the cover**

*First-year medical students at the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine (SOM) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) recite the Hippocratic Oath after they donned their jackets for the first time during the annual White Coat ceremony in the amphitheater at USU, April 8. See story, page 3. (Photo by MC3 Laura Bailey)*



*Dr. Stephen Cozza, professor of Psychiatry and associate director of the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (right), was a guest speaker at a White House convening on "Operation Educate the Educators: Committed to Recognizing and Supporting our Military-Connected Students," on April 13. The forum, hosted by Second Lady, Dr. Jill Biden (left), a military mom and lifelong educator, was part of the Month of the Military Child celebration and part of Biden's Joining Forces initiative. (Courtesy photo)*

# SOM Students Don Symbolic White Coats

By MC3 Laura Bailey

More than 170 first-year medical students at the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine (SOM) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) recited the Hippocratic Oath as their families helped them don their jackets for the first time during the annual White Coat ceremony in the amphitheater at USU, April 8, 2016.

The coat is symbolic of their transition to working with patients during their clerkships. The associate dean for clinical affairs and chief diversity officer in the SOM, Army Col. (Dr.) Jeffrey Hutchinson, was the event's guest speaker.

"Right now, you are at the very beginning of your medical careers with real fear and anxiety about the future," said Hutchinson. "You can visualize someone recognizing your ignorance. But you also have no idea how important you are. You push us as teachers to be better; your presence insures that we work constantly to know the right answer. But, where you make the most difference is with patient care. Medical students are so much more than doctors in training, you bridge the communication gap between patients and providers."

He went on to share, from his own personal experience, how important medical students have been to him and his family.

"My wife is a breast cancer survivor and is currently being treated for a relapse of non-Hodgkins lymphoma," said Hutchinson. "So, the past few years have been challenging. I am grateful for military medicine and the care we have received and I hope that those of you who haven't experienced medicine

from the patient's point of view will never have to, but the experience of receiving health care in life threatening situations changes you. We have had doctors with every level of skill and every imaginable bedside manner. Also, the providers were smart and honest enough to know their limits. The best encounters in my eyes have almost always been with the medical students.

"One late afternoon, after being told that a lymph node needed to come out, the student on his hematology oncology rotation knocked and asked to come in. The team assumed that my wife was afraid of a procedure when we both were trying to understand the plan. Typically, medical students work very hard to give the appearance of confidence and competence. This young man came in and asked, "What can I do?" His goal was not to try and impress us with his medical knowledge, but to simply see how we were doing. So, instead of attempting to portray the "all knowing" provider, he just

came to visit and it was exactly what we needed at the time.

"I wish that all of us as doctors could hold on to that humility. I wish we could all maintain the ability of a medical student to accept our ignorance and simply listen to what our patients are saying. As you wield the power of your position as a health care provider I hope you can remember that your knowledge is wasted without the personal connection."

Students who received their coats engage in 48 weeks of required clinical clerkships in family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, psychiatry, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, and a selective. The basic science threads build on concepts that were introduced in the pre-clerkship modules. Clinical threads focus on the skills necessary to practice life-long learning and on evidence-based medicine. Visit the university website for more information about the SOM clerkship program.



SOM students prepare to don their white coats for the first time. (Photo by MC3 Laura Bailey)

# AΩA Announces Newest Class of 2017 Members

By Christopher Austin

The Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) Maryland Gamma Chapter announced its newest members for the class of 2017 this month.

“The elections were made that much more difficult given the number of impressive applications that we received, and the applicants were simply extraordinary,” Chapter

President, Air Force 2nd Lt. Jeremy Bolin said.

The Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, founded in 1902, is the national medical honor society focused on higher education and teaching accomplishments in 128 medical schools from around the country.

According to the society's website, students selected to join are in the top quartile of their class, and display qualities of leadership among their peers, professionalism,

a firm sense of ethics, promise of future success in medicine and a commitment to service in the school and community.

“Election to [Alpha Omega Alpha] is an honor signifying a lasting commitment to scholarship, leadership, professionalism and service,” Bolin continued. “Membership is a lifelong honor that confers recognition for a physician's dedication to the profession and art of healing.”

## USU Taking Leadership Role at 2016 Military Women's Health Research Conference

By Eric Ritter

The role of women in the military continues to evolve as new policies open new opportunities for women throughout the armed services. These new opportunities present new areas of focus for DoD leadership.

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) is taking the leadership role in sponsoring the inaugural Military Women's Health Research Conference, April 26, at the Women In Military Service For America Memorial at the Arlington National Cemetery.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Kostas-Polston, assistant professor at the Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing (GSN), and Co-chair of the event, this conference will convene with partners of some of the largest health care agencies in United States for the purpose to address research gaps and identifying opportunities in the field of military women's health care.

“The research topics will cover women's health through military service and into veteran life,”

Kostas-Polston said. “The focus of the research topics will be on optimal force readiness, cancer and prevention, and reproductive health.”

“Women's health research has always been important to the military,” she said. “However, the military goal is to increase the number of female members from 15 percent to 25 percent of the total force. In anticipation of this increase women's health, as impacted by mission readiness, requires further exploration.”

Kostas-Polston said she is excited about the caliber of scientists, critical researchers, policy makers and federal and non-federal leaders who will be participating.

“To my knowledge, this is the first military conference which is bringing together parties from the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs to learn about the state of the science of military women veteran's health. Research topics covered will be looking ahead from active duty members transitioning into the veteran community.

“An overall goal is for USU



Dr. Elizabeth Kostas-Polston, assistant professor at the Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing (GSN), will co-chair the Military Women's Health Research Conference, April 26. (Photo Tom Balfour)

to stand up a military research agenda,” she said. “In this leadership role, USU can then serve as the hub researchers in military health,” she said. “We are excited about where this is going and how this collaborative effort will make military women's healthcare more effective for the future.”

# Kellermann Delivers SOM State of the School Address

By Christopher Austin

Dr. Arthur Kellermann, dean of the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine (SOM) at The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) gave a state of the school address to the assembled faculty in Sanford Hall on April 21.

The major topics covered during the address were the recent re-accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), changes to the SOM's graduate student support, and the accomplishments and ways the school could improve.

"Dramatic changes have occurred in the last 18 months," Dr. Gregory Mueller, associate Dean of graduate affairs said. Eighteen months ago the DOD informed USU that it will no longer support graduate students with appropriate funds that were being administered as stipends. To continue to support the students USU was able to create paid positions for those students.

"The president and I made a bold move," Mueller continued, "That if we couldn't support them with stipends, we would hire them."

This provides them with a \$35,000 salary along with no tuition fees, free text books, transit benefits and health insurance.

"These are some of the things that attract applicants to our program," Mueller said. "In addition to the academic excellence that exists here," Muller said.

This year, there have been a total of 409 applications to the SOM graduate programs, a 10 percent increase from previous years.

"This is a very respectable

and nice increase in the number of applications that we can attribute to both the quality of our programs and the support we give our graduates," Mueller said.

Mueller pointed out that he would like to increase this number by possibly accepting applications from international students in the future.

Other improvements he'd like to see in the graduate program include developing more pathways for graduate students to enter non-traditional careers for Ph.D. students.

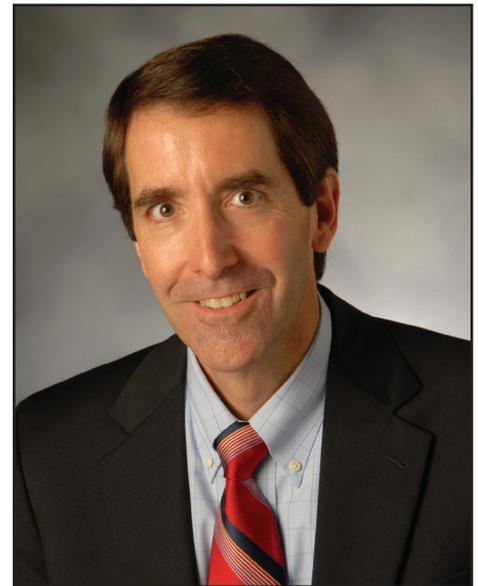
One of the observations by the LCME was that the strategic framework for the SOM needed to be updated. The drafting of the new strategic framework began last year with SOM leaders having an offsite meeting to determine how to fit the school's framework within that of the University.

The new framework will be posted online in May for review by SOM faculty to give feedback and suggestions.

The 2014 strategic framework was reviewed during the address to reflect on the goals of the SOM from two years ago and how they have been accomplished.

"We knocked it out of the park in curriculum reform," Kellermann said. "We've had better exam performance [recently] than any time in the history of this school.

"The School is ranked in the top 100 percent for growth of non-clinical revenue over the past five years," he continued. "With an eleven percent increase, year over year, in funding. Almost all of that is research dollars going to our power-



Dr. Arthur Kellermann, dean of the SOM at USU (Photo by Tom Balfour).

house centers and the work you are all doing."

Kellermann went on to add one of the areas that the SOM could improve upon is diversity.

"We have substantially improved our diversity in medical student recruitment and we are now at or above the national norm," he said. "We can and we will get better at the level of faculty as well but that takes longer because there is a very low turnover for the School of Medicine. We want the best, most talented, most dedicated people in America to come here and join with us to basically teach America. We pick the best talent, irrespective of background, diversity will take care of itself."

The address ended with Kellermann taking questions from faculty and announcing the results of the manpower survey response. . The SOM came in with 96 percent response while the GSN won with 100 percent response.

# USU Students Take 2nd Place in International Global Health Competition

*Courtesy article by Global Health Interest Group*

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) recently sent a team of students to Atlanta to compete in the 8th annual International Emory Global Health Case Competition. The students received second place in the competition for their solution and won a cash prize.

The Emory Global Health Institute sponsors the competition every year to provide students with the unique opportunity to work across disciplines to solve complex and critical global health problems. This year's competition included 137 students, who represented 24 universities from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Mexico.

The USU team members included Laura Kropp (fourth year EID graduate student), Kalpana Parvathaneni (third year MCB graduate student), Johanna Alfier (second year DrPH graduate student), Tarah Woddle (MS1, USAF), Yaroslav Bodnar (MS3, USPHS), and Madeline Fleit (MS1, USA). The Director of the USU Global Health Working Group, Dr. Edwin Burkett, served as the faculty mentor for the USU student team.

To prepare for the compe-

tion, the USU team spent months reviewing previous cases, reading and discussing global health articles, and attending lectures by the many global health experts at USU. However, the students were not able to prepare for the specific topic of the 2016 case, as it was not released until the week prior to the competition date. Once the 2016 case was released, the students researched the topic in order to design their solution, including the social, cultural, political, economic, and medical aspects.

The 2016 case, titled “Restoring Women’s Dignity: Preventing and Treating Obstetric Fistulas in India”, was framed as a hypothetical letter from Government of India. The letter requested a multidisciplinary, evidence-based approach to prevent and/or treat obstetric fistulas in one state of India over a five-year timeframe. The budget for the proposal was not to exceed \$30 million.

Students were asked to select and address the needs of one particular state of India, that would serve as a pilot for their intervention. Thus, the intervention was to be scalable to the rest of India after

the five-year timeframe.

During the week leading up to the competition, the students researched successful campaign methods that addressed the needs to rural and tribal populations in India. The students also extensively studied the existing health infrastructure in India and identified gaps in health care, policies, and programs in maternal and child health, weighing the costs associated with treating versus preventing obstetric fistula.

In the end, the students decided the best way to tackle the problem was to prevent obstetric fistula by increasing access for rural and tribal at-risk women to emergency cesarean sections. The students designed a comprehensive program called “LIFE: Labor Intervention for obstetric Fistula Elimination”, which detailed their solution.

At Emory University, the students presented their intervention to a panel of judges, which included subject matter experts Dr. Helen de Pinho and Maurice Middleberg. The 15-minute presentation was followed by a 10 minutes of questions from judges. The team received notice that they were selected to advance to the final round. Before the final round, a “curve ball” was thrown at them. Along with the other finalists, they were asked to incorporate policies on child marriage into their intervention. The team was given 30 minutes to do so, then asked to present in front of 10 expert judges and the 20 non-finalist teams. The team was elated when it was announced that they won second place overall.

Along with the prize money and recognition, additional perks of the competition included: 1) meeting pioneers in global health from Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2) a trip to the Emory University  
*See Competition Page 7*



*USU International Emory Global Health Case Competition team from left to right: Navy Ens. Tarah Woddle, Army 2nd Lt. Madeline Fleit, Johanna Alfier (DrPH student), Kalpana Parvathaneni (PhD Candidate), USPHS Ens. Yaroslav Bodnar, and team captain Laura Kropp (PhD Candidate). (Courtesy photo)*

# USU Reminds Members of Rules Regarding Political Activity

By Eric Ritter

The political and emotional energy in the air ramping up to this year's general presidential election is picking up. As electrified as some potential voters are, the Uniformed Services University wants to remind people there are DOs and DON'Ts during this year's election season.

"Military members have to remember that they are military members all of the time, and if they violate the terms of the DOD instructions [DODi 1344.10], they can be subject to disciplinary action," said Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) Brigade Judge Advocate, Air Force Major Janet Skow.

She acknowledged that it can be easy for a servicemember to forget that they represent the armed forces and the uniformed regulations even when not in uniform.

"It's easy to go home, get out of your uniform, get on social media and forget that you're in the military," she said. "That's why you always have to be conscious of what you're doing and how you're representing yourself like on social media."

She said everyone should analyze their social media accounts for anything that can be perceived as endorsement or any other violation of the instructions.

"It's just too easy for someone to click on a profile and see your political affiliation. Take a look at your social media pages. If your profile has you associated with a DOD

facility like USU, you have to have a disclaimer that your views are not the views associated with the military when writing about things that are political."

The DODi instruction 1344.10 does have very detailed criteria for other general political activities. Members on active duty may not campaign for a partisan candidate, engage in partisan fundraising activities, serve as an officer of a partisan club, or speak before a partisan gathering. All military personnel should avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DOD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign or cause.

Members may, however, express their personal opinions on political candidates and issues, and make monetary contributions to a political campaign or organization, so long as these activities are done in the personal capacity and no official endorsement is implied. Members may also attend political events as a spectator when not in uniform. Members may sign a petition provided the signing does not obligate them to engage in partisan political activity and is done in their private capacity and not as a representative of the Air Force. Members may also write letters to the editor expressing their personal views on public issues or political candidates, if it is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign or a solicitation of votes for or against a political party, partisan political cause or a candidate.

Skow did add that if a servicemember feels an activity is questionable, it's best to err on the side of caution and avoid the activity.

"Things can get very emotional," she said. "But, you have to learn how to temper that and keep in balance with rules."

Civilian employees also have restrictions in regards to political activity. DOD civilian employees' participation in political activities is regulated by a number of sources including the Hatch Act, implementing regulations found in the Code of Federal Regulations, as well as DOD policy. For the purposes of the Hatch Act, a political activity is defined as "an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office or partisan political group." Importantly, application of the Hatch Act rules varies depending on an employee's position or office. If a USU federal civilian employee does not know which rules pertain to their position, they should contact USU Human Resources.

Skow did conclude that even though there are many rules, in particular, for servicemembers, she stressed that the DOD wants everybody eligible to pursue their right to vote.

"The DOD absolutely wants people to vote and to express their opinion," said Skow. "Members just need to remember they have certain rules they have to follow when doing it."

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*Competition from Page 6* campus in Atlanta, and 3) ability to represent USU in matching team t-shirts.

Overall, the International Emory Global Health Case Competition provided a unique opportunity for teams to work on a public health problem completely outside

of their research interests. Further, it gave the team new insights on strategies to tackle global health problems. The competition taught valuable skills such as strategic planning, measuring specific outcomes, planning for potential pitfalls, and teamwork. The experience will undoubtedly aid them in their future

careers as global health leaders. The team will present their solution to USUHS faculty and students on May 18. The team encourages any student at USU who is interested in global health to consider joining the Global Health Interest Group and competing next year.

# Final Frame



During a “Snakes Alive” presentation on April 13 at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), snake expert Bruce Shwedick explains to the USU crowd about the non-venomous Albino Burmese Python. Shwedick gave the Snakes Alive presentation to medical students and staff at USU as part of the tropical medicine course for USU’s Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics on April 13.

Since 1982, Shwedick has been giving the “Snakes Alive” presentation at USU. The program focuses on “medically important species” snakes that are responsible for most cases of snakebite, such as the Copperhead and the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. Students learned about the regions of the world where snakebite is most prevalent, the effects of snake venom and medical protocols. (Photo by Tom Balfour)