

Med School Watercooler

NEWS FROM FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Thursday, March 8, 2012

Preserve the Past, Prepare for the Future



For Dr. Charles B. Rodning and his wife Mary, making a difference is more than just sharing what you have with others.

"It's about nurturing the next generation," said Mary, an artist who has served as an educator among numerous artistic and faith-based organizations.

The ethos of the Rodning family has always been that of servant leadership – a great respect for education, a vigorous work ethic, a striving for excellence, a strong sense of community, benevolence, gratitude, and humility.

Dr. Rodning, who serves as professor of surgery at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, said his family has

always aspired to service, both in the academic arena and the community at large.

To honor this commitment, the Rodning family recently made a gift to the USA Department of Surgery to provide funding for educational endeavors. The gift, totaling \$100,000.00, will be used to establish the Charles Bernard and Mary Elizabeth Rodning Endowed Surgical Educational Fund.

Dr. Rodning, who has been with the University for more than 30 years, hopes the gift will inspire others to contribute. "We wish this gift to exemplify our commitment, dedication, and loyalty to the University of South Alabama, and desire the institution to flourish and thrive."

Dr. Rodning joined the USA College of Medicine in 1981 after a military assignment in Okinawa, Japan. Since then, the Rodnings have been heavily involved in the USA Anatomical Gifts Program, the Mobile Medical Museum, the Mobile Museum of Art, the Mobile Symphony, and the Semmes Public Library.

As a mentor to medical students and residents at the USA College of Medicine, Dr. Rodning has the opportunity to counsel them daily. "Physicians must be philosophically grounded in the liberal arts if they would serve humanity effectually and meaningfully," he said.

In addition to the Department of Surgery gift, an endowment was also established to support the Mobile Medical Museum, which preserves the unique medical heritage of our community as a repository of artifacts and documents.

"We have the opportunity to educate Mobilians every day," Mary said. "These gifts represent our enthusiasm for both institutions to capitalize on every opportunity to preserve the past and prepare for the future."

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USA Physiology Department Participates in Community Outreach



Michael Francis (right), a graduate student from the USA Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program, visits with students from Palmer Pillans Middle School.



The physiology department at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently participated in an outreach project at Palmer Pillans Middle School in Mobile.

Three graduate students from the USA Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program – Kendra Reed, Michael Francis, and Patricia Villata – along with three faculty members from the physiology department – Drs. Mark Taylor, David Weber, and Tom Lincoln – met with the 7th grade life sciences classes.

According to Dr. Tom Lincoln, chair of physiology, the group talked to the students about various organ systems – skeletal, muscular, cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and reproductive.

“Mostly we supplemented what they learned from their teacher and provided a show-and-tell for the students,” Dr. Lincoln said. “We brought in a pig heart for the students to examine, and we all answered their questions about science.”

The physiology department first became involved with this project when Palmer Pillans Middle School teacher Tessa Brown contacted Dr. Lincoln about expanding classroom activities by having scientists visit the students.

Dr. Lincoln hopes the outreach project will encourage secondary school students to have a better appreciation of science.

“The students were very engaged and asked lots of good questions,” Dr. Lincoln said. “This is a very important activity that we undertook because it is important for all of us - students and faculty alike - to be involved in our community.”

According to Francis, a graduate student and Ph.D. candidate in the physiology department at the USA College of Medicine, the goal of this outreach project was to help foster the development of the next generation of scientists.

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"We have the opportunity to encourage interest in scientific education and careers and to address misconceptions about the public image of science," said Francis. "As a graduate student, experiencing these students' enthusiasm for problem solving helps keep me in touch with the motivation that first inspired me to pursue this career path."

Francis said the department is planning to continue outreach projects by participating in Career Day at Grand Bay Middle School on March 30, 2012.

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USA Senior Medical Students Await Residency Assignments



On March 16, 2012, senior medical students and residency training program directors across the United States and Canada will find out this year's Match Day results.

The National Residency Matching Program, or Match Day, is the annual event in which future doctors simultaneously learn where they will be doing their residency training.

Locally, the University of South Alabama's Match Day will be held at 10:30 a.m. CST, on March 16, 2012, in the Bon Secour Bay Ballroom at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel in Mobile. The Match envelopes will be handed out beginning at 10:45 a.m. and will be opened simultaneously at 11:00 a.m.

To learn more, be sure to "like" the Match Day Facebook page [here](#).

To read about last year's event, [click here](#).

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Mark Your Calendars: Upcoming Events



[Weight Loss Surgery Seminar](#) - March 15, 6 p.m., Mastin Building Room 203

[Match Day](#) - March 16, 10:30 a.m., Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel

[Oncology Outlook](#) - March 16-17, Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Ala.

[Greater Gulf Coast Trauma and Acute Care Surgery Symposium](#) - March 22-23, Five Rivers Delta Resource Center

[Mitchell Endowed Lectureship in Traumatology and Surgical Care](#) - March 22,

6:30 p.m., Five Rivers Delta Resource Center

4th Annual Gumbo Chili Showdown - March 24, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Ladd-Peebles Stadium before the USA Jaguars Spring Game

21st Annual OB/GYN Continuing Education Conference - April 12 & 13, Daphne Civic Center

1st Annual University Lions Club Golf Tournament - May 19, Azalea City Golf Course, Registration at 11 a.m. Shotgun start at 1 p.m. Funds raised will support outreach to Ronald McDonald House residents, Christmas Party for the sensory impaired, vision projects in the community, and a camp for children with diabetes. For more information, click here.

*Be sure to check back soon for more event details and updates.

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AAMC Announces New Medical College Admission Test



The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) recently announced that the new Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is scheduled to be introduced in Spring 2015. Dr. Ronald Franks, vice president for health sciences and interim chair of psychiatry at the University of South Alabama, served as vice chair of the MCAT revision committee that recommended the new update.

"The MCAT revision committee surveyed thousands of people to find out what and where the field of medicine is headed," said Dr. Franks. "We realized the exam needed to include more material on cellular and molecular biology, genetics, biochemistry, and social sciences."

The 2015 version of the MCAT exam will have four sections, and a separate score will be reported for each. The new test sections will be:

1. Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems,
2. Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems,
3. Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior, and
4. Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills.

"The MCAT exam scores will still be graded on a 15-point scale," said Dr. Franks.

This is only the fifth time that the MCAT exam will have been revised since the first exam was made in 1928. The exam changes are being made to mirror the modifications currently seen in the health care field.

"To be a good physician, doctors need to be trained to serve in an increasingly diverse community," Dr. Franks said. "It is important for doctors to know how to adapt the health care they provide to individuals."

The 2015 MCAT exam will see a change in its natural sciences section. This portion of the exam will add a social and behavioral sciences section and a critical analysis and reasoning skills section.

"I feel that the scientific inquiry and reasoning section will be a great tool to predict the future success of a medical school applicant," said Cody Penrod, a fourth year USA medical student who serves on the USA College of Medicine admissions committee. "I feel this section will give some insight into the

applicants' intellect as opposed to their general knowledge. This quality allows physicians to think through complicated patient problems, make connections between multiple systems, and apply this knowledge to the future treatment plan of the patient."

The written section of the exam will be discontinued as of January 2013.

"I am glad to hear they are taking away the essay," said Dianna Thomas, a fourth year USA medical student who also serves on the medical school's admissions committee. "Currently, I don't think it is looked at very much by admissions and no one really knows how to interpret it as a part of the score. Being able to write is important, but they need a new way of incorporating that into the test."

"The written portion of the exam is rarely used by admissions committees across the country," Dr. Franks added. "However, it was helpful to evaluate language skills in students that used English as a second language."

The 2015 version of the MCAT exam will be seven hours long versus the current 5-1/2 hour long test.

"This test is generally much longer than any pre-medical student has encountered before, and making the exam even longer will almost certainly make it more challenging," said Travis Harris, a fourth year USA medical student who also serves on the USA College of Medicine admissions committee. "It will now be even more important for students preparing for the MCAT to train under simulated testing conditions in order to build up stamina."

"A longer exam makes for a better exam," Dr. Franks said. "The advantage of the longer exam is that it will result in a more accurate representation of what students know in certain areas."

Some questions have been made as to whether or not pre-med students will see a curriculum change.

"Eighty-five percent of students will have already taken the coursework to prepare them for the exam," Dr. Franks said. "The new exam will be tested at an introductory level of psychology and sociology."

Dr. Cindy Stanfield, the pre-med advisor at USA, is planning ahead to prepare students for the 2015 exam.

"So far, it looks like most medical schools are not adding to required courses, but in practicality, I would recommend students take genetics/genomics and biochemistry," Dr. Stanfield said. "I will be working with several departments on campus to develop a list of courses that will meet the competences tested for in the new MCAT."

Overall, the changes to the 2015 version of the MCAT exam have been seen as a positive representation of how health care and science is currently evolving.

"In general I think it's great that the AAMC views the MCAT as a dynamic test that should change with the medical field," Penrod said. "It shows their dedication to improvement, which should positively influence the face of physicians of the future."

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