

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, February 12, 2021

Virtual conference to focus on innovations in learning

CoTL 2021



11th Annual South Alabama Conference on Teaching and Learning

"Innovations in Learning: Creative Solutions for Challenging Times" is the theme for the 11th annual South Alabama Conference on Teaching and Learning, set for Wednesday, May 12.

The one-day conference will be held fully online from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST. The keynote speaker will be Francis Edward Su, Ph.D., the Benediktsson-Karwa Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif.

Registration is free, though space is limited to 300 participants.

This year's theme encourages attendees to celebrate and learn from how institutions of higher learning have supported student, staff and faculty academic and personal well-being. Presentation types will include interactive workshops, PechaKuchas, a virtual poster exhibit and flipped forum.

Registration opens and early decision proposals are due on Monday, March 8. Final proposals are due Thursday, April 8, with registration closing on Friday, April 30.

Presentations are free for USA faculty, staff and students, \$40 for those from partner schools and \$50 for those from non-partner institutions.

Partner institutions include USA, Spring Hill College, the University of Mobile and Pathway USA community colleges including Bishop State, Coastal Alabama and Mississippi Gulf Coast.

For more information, contact S. Raj Chaudhury, Ph.D., Innovation in Learning Center, at schaudhury@southalabama.edu.

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Thursday, February 11, 2021

Meet a Med Student: Sydney Brown

Sydney Brown

Age: 22



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Blog Archive

- ▶ 2023 (11)
- ▶ 2022 (249)
- ▼ 2021 (269)
 - ▶ 12/12 - 12/19 (7)
 - ▶ 12/05 - 12/12 (6)
 - ▶ 11/28 - 12/05 (6)
 - ▶ 11/14 - 11/21 (4)
 - ▶ 11/07 - 11/14 (4)
 - ▶ 10/31 - 11/07 (10)
 - ▶ 10/24 - 10/31 (7)
 - ▶ 10/17 - 10/24 (5)
 - ▶ 10/10 - 10/17 (6)
 - ▶ 10/03 - 10/10 (8)
 - ▶ 09/26 - 10/03 (4)
 - ▶ 09/19 - 09/26 (4)
 - ▶ 09/12 - 09/19 (6)
 - ▶ 09/05 - 09/12 (7)
 - ▶ 08/29 - 09/05 (3)
 - ▶ 08/22 - 08/29 (7)
 - ▶ 08/15 - 08/22 (6)
 - ▶ 08/08 - 08/15 (4)
 - ▶ 08/01 - 08/08 (8)
 - ▶ 07/25 - 08/01 (6)
 - ▶ 07/18 - 07/25 (4)
 - ▶ 07/11 - 07/18 (4)
 - ▶ 07/04 - 07/11 (5)
 - ▶ 06/27 - 07/04 (6)
 - ▶ 06/20 - 06/27 (7)
 - ▶ 06/13 - 06/20 (4)
 - ▶ 06/06 - 06/13 (6)
 - ▶ 05/30 - 06/06 (5)
 - ▶ 05/23 - 05/30 (6)
 - ▶ 05/16 - 05/23 (4)

Class of: 2023**Hometown:** Vacherie, La.**Undergrad/grad institution:****Degrees earned:** Bachelor of S**Interests, hobbies:** Playing with my puppy, binge watching TV shows and baking cookies**Something unique about me:** I have seen all 369 episodes of "Grey's Anatomy" (many of the episodes I've seen too many times to count!).**Three of my favorite things:** My family and puppy, shopping and food!

- ▶ 05/09 - 05/16 (3)
- ▶ 05/02 - 05/09 (7)
- ▶ 04/25 - 05/02 (5)
- ▶ 04/18 - 04/25 (3)
- ▶ 04/11 - 04/18 (7)
- ▶ 04/04 - 04/11 (5)
- ▶ 03/28 - 04/04 (5)
- ▶ 03/21 - 03/28 (6)
- ▶ 03/14 - 03/21 (4)
- ▶ 03/07 - 03/14 (7)
- ▶ 02/28 - 03/07 (6)
- ▶ 02/21 - 02/28 (6)
- ▶ 02/14 - 02/21 (5)
- ▼ 02/07 - 02/14 (5)

Virtual conference to focus on innovations in lear...

Meet a Med Student: Sydney Brown

Match Day 2021 to be held in person

Pathologist calls on scientific community to stand...

New report addresses challenges and needs of minor...

- ▶ 01/31 - 02/07 (4)
- ▶ 01/24 - 01/31 (5)
- ▶ 01/17 - 01/24 (6)
- ▶ 01/10 - 01/17 (6)
- ▶ 01/03 - 01/10 (5)

- ▶ 2020 (191)
- ▶ 2019 (245)
- ▶ 2018 (236)
- ▶ 2017 (231)
- ▶ 2016 (206)
- ▶ 2015 (205)
- ▶ 2014 (241)
- ▶ 2013 (232)
- ▶ 2012 (245)
- ▶ 2011 (262)
- ▶ 2010 (247)
- ▶ 2009 (88)

Match Day 2021 to be held in person



The USA College of Medicine Class of 2021 will celebrate matching into residency programs with a planned in person event following a year in which the event was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Match Day is set for Friday, March 19, in the Student Center Ballroom on the USA campus. The time of the ceremony has not been determined.

The event is approved to be held in person by the USA Reopening Committee on the condition that it be limited to the members of the Class of 2021 and the staff necessary to facilitate the ceremony. In addition, students will arrive and depart in groups of 10 in keeping with social distancing guidelines.

"We are glad that the class will be able to celebrate this important occasion together, even socially distanced," said Kelly Roveda, M.D., associate dean for student affairs at the USA College of Medicine. "In addition, the ceremony will be live-streamed so that family and friends will be able to participate virtually."

After interviewing virtually with residency programs across the nation, medical students rank their programs in order of preference. Training programs, in turn, rank the students who interviewed. The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) uses a mathematical algorithm to designate each applicant into a residency program with the results announced nationwide on March 19.

At the USA College of Medicine Match Day ceremony, the students will take turns announcing their placements and pin the geographical location on a map on

stage. Although no group photo is planned, students will be photographed individually as they pin the map.

In 2020, USA medical students celebrated virtually when they matched in 23 states, with 42 students matching out of state and 23 matching within Alabama.

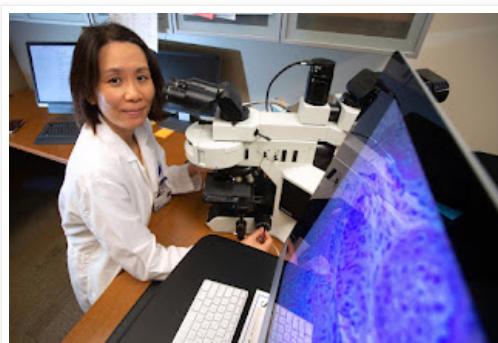
Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [10:28 AM](#) No comments: 

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Pathologist calls on scientific community to standardize naming of gene products

Ambiguous names for gene products have the potential to harm patients whose treatments rely on the results of laboratory tests, including molecular and genetic tests.

In an opinion article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, leaders in the field of molecular pathology advocate for the standardization of gene product naming among medical professionals and scientists.



Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of pathology at the USA College of Medicine and director of molecular genetic pathology and dermatopathology, is one of the paper's senior authors.

"Confusion and misrepresentation of gene product (biomarker) names could potentially lead to serious medical errors and/or errors in the scientific literature," Phung said.

A gene product is the RNA or protein that results from the expression of a gene. The problem is, at the present time, different names are often used for the same gene product. Adding to the confusion, the same name is sometimes used for unrelated gene products.

"At best, the current situation results in inefficient communication; at worst, it creates harm from misunderstanding test results and making inappropriate therapeutic choices," the article states. "Names matter. Clearly, a better naming convention that eliminates this type of ambiguity is necessary. Our goal is to prevent the harms caused by ambiguous gene product nomenclature."

To mitigate this confusion, Phung and other leaders in the field recommend standardizing human protein nomenclature through the use of a Human Genome Organisation (HUGO) Gene Nomenclature Committee (HGNC) gene symbol accompanied by its unique HGNC ID.

The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the official journal of the National Academy of Sciences, is an authoritative source of high-impact, original research. It is one of the world's most-cited and comprehensive multidisciplinary scientific journals.

Read the full article: ["Opinion: Standardizing gene product nomenclature – a call to action."](#)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [1:52 PM](#) No comments: 

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

New report addresses challenges and needs of minority communities amid the COVID-19 crisis



Errol Crook, M.D., and Martha Arrieta, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows Black, Latino and other minority communities have suffered greatly from the virus. Minorities experience more profound impacts in terms of disease severity and death if they contract COVID-19.

Researchers at the Center for Healthy Communities at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine explored this topic and have published a report to answer two critical questions:

- How have minority communities been affected by the pandemic?
- What are possible solutions to the problems?

The report, titled "Perceptions, Needs, Challenges and Insights of an Underserved Community in the COVID-19 Pandemic," addresses these questions through a research study conducted with members of minority communities in Mobile.

Martha Arrieta, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., associate professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine and director of research at the Center for Healthy Communities, is the author of the report. Arrieta, along with other researchers, found families with fewer resources affected by the pandemic are impacted by four main stressors.

The stressors are increased childcare needs, added responsibility of remote education, economic peril due to job loss, strained mental health and disrupted social network connections because of isolation and social distancing measures.

COVID-19 has killed more than 450,000 people in the United States to date. Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at an increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. Factors such as healthcare access, occupation, educational and wealth gaps and discrimination contribute to the growing issue.

"We understand the problem of health disparities, so what can we do next to offer resources to minority communities should be the ensuing question," Arrieta said. "We hope leaders in our communities will read this report and apply the strategies outlined to help people most impacted by the virus."

In the report, recommendations are provided to support minorities struggling with the pandemic. "Study participants emphasized that economic relief and food provision are key to shore up families, followed by increased access to technology, which was considered a lifeline to withstand the pandemic," Arrieta explained.

They stressed that the public needs to have clear and concise information about COVID-19, such as its course and complications, the way the disease is transmitted and the safety of vaccines.

Researchers also suggest there should be unified messages through varied media. The messages should be conveyed by community leaders, such as state and local politicians, public health officials, medical professionals, scientists and pastors.

"Overall, messages should convey the changing situation and acknowledge the lives lost, but also provide comfort through dissemination of positive stories of recovery," said Errol Crook, M.D., professor and Abraham A. Mitchell Chair of

Internal Medicine, director of the Center of Healthy Communities and co-author of the report. "We recognize there is fear with the virus and becoming exposed, but we have to make it our duty to encourage people to keep up with their routine appointments to be able to continue healthy living."


The study was conducted from April to May 2020. While the pandemic has evolved and people are adapting, a message has clearly emerged from the analysis that fundamental problems remain.

However, there has been an increase in help. Currently, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have been approved for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to help end the pandemic and bring relief to communities, specifically people in minority communities. People can demonstrate their desire to be vaccinated through the [USA Health vaccine registry](#). When they become eligible for vaccination and appointments are available, USA Health will contact them. Testing also has become more widely available.

Other co-authors of the report are Roma Hanks, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work and director of the Community Health Advocates program for the Center for Healthy Communities, and research assistants Lynette Parker and Mariah Carter.

To read the full report, visit the [Center for Healthy Communities](#) web page.

The Center for Healthy Communities provides education, research, public service and health activities to help eliminate health disparities, foster access to healthcare and enhance the capacity for people to make better decisions about their health.

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