

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, December 8, 2022

Disaster healthcare preparedness director retires from USA

After 19 years with the University of South Alabama, David Wallace, D.V.M., director of the Center for Disaster Healthcare Preparedness at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, will retire at the end of this year.

A reception in his honor will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 14, from 3 to 5 p.m. in the Center for Disaster Healthcare Preparedness, TRP III, Suite 1100. This drop-in reception is open to the entire university community.

"My time at South Alabama has been the most rewarding time of my career," Wallace said. "I've been very fortunate for the confidence the university, specifically the College of Medicine, has shown in me and the staff of CDHP. I ask every day how I got so lucky to have the team I do."

Funded by the Alabama Department of Public Health, the [Center for Disaster Healthcare Preparedness](#) provides comprehensive disaster healthcare preparedness training and continuing medical education for Alabama healthcare professionals, healthcare coalition partners, emergency management professionals, volunteers and public officials.

"We've been able to build a nationally recognized program from the ground up – only about 10 people came to our first class, and we're over 20,000 now," Wallace said. "With where we are today, I'm positively confident that CDHP will continue, and it will only get better as each year passes."

Wallace said the first class the center offered was a two-day basic course. At the same time, the team was developing the Alabama Incident Management System (AIMS) for the state health department, the state's online healthcare emergency response situational awareness tool.

"AIMS is still operating today with several thousand users and was the backbone of data collection in Alabama during COVID," he said. "Alabama, through AIMS, was one of very few states with 100% Alabama hospital compliance in reporting to the Department of Health and Human Resources during COVID, and is recognized nationally as one of the best situational awareness tools of its type."

Wallace has more than 25 years of experience in public health, emergency preparedness and disaster planning. Prior to joining USA in 2003, he worked 11 years at the Mobile County Health Department as the director of the Bureau of Environmental Health, emergency management and disaster preparedness coordinator, and bioterrorism preparedness coordinator.

He served in the United States Air Force and the Air Force Reserve as a public health officer, readiness officer, mobility officer, medical intelligence officer, WMD training officer and decontamination team chief.



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He earned a degree in veterinary medicine from Auburn University and spent five years in veterinary practice for small animal medicine and surgery.

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Meet a Med Student: Meagan Jones

Meagan Jones

Age: 23

Class of: 2026

Hometown: Hurley, Mississippi

Undergraduate institution and degree earned: University of South Alabama, B.S. in biomedical sciences

What do you enjoy most about being a medical student at the Whiddon College of Medicine?

I love being able to learn in such an uplifting and encouraging environment at the Whiddon College of Medicine. Our class works together and sends each other study materials, flash cards and practice questions; and I feel like I could go up and talk to anyone if I needed help on a subject, or just someone to talk to.

Our professors really care about our education and want to see us succeed and become successful physicians. Having such a great atmosphere surrounding our education and classes really helps me stay positive and encouraged, even when I'm five lectures and 975 Anki cards behind (LOL).



Are you involved in any research, organizations or other initiatives at the College of Medicine?

I am the Class of 2026's SGA representative, and I really enjoy getting to work with my fellow class officers. I am also a part of the Social Media Committee, who helps our awesome leader, Beth, come up with cool aspects to add to our social media accounts. In addition, I currently volunteer with the Student-Run Free Clinic in downtown Mobile, and I have really enjoyed being a part of that experience. I am a part of several specialty interest groups, and I hope to continue to be more involved as I continue my journey here!

What are your interests and hobbies?

One of my new interests that I have picked up while at the College of Medicine is watching football. I love having it on in the background while I study because it is great white noise, and when the crowd starts to get a little louder, I can look up just in time to see the best plays. I don't really have a huge affiliation to any college football team (except the Jags!), but I am a huge Dallas Cowboys and New York Jets fan. I also love to read during my study breaks, and I have a huge collection of books that I am working on reading. But, my absolute favorite thing to do is to spend time with my family, friends and my dog.

What is something unique about you?

Something unique about me is my extensive collection of cups, mugs, and water bottles. I don't know what it is about them, but I am obsessed! I have all kinds of water bottles, from glass to stainless steel, to huge one-gallon jugs. All of my classmates always like to see what bottle I bring to class that day, and I love having a fun way to stay hydrated. If you need a great bottle recommendation, don't be afraid to reach out! :)

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Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Graduate student to train in clinical and translational research program

Mary O. Haastrup, M.D., a Ph.D. candidate in the Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program, was selected to participate in the [Clinical and Translational Science Training Program \(CTSTP\)](#), a six-month certificate program that prepares participants to conduct clinical and translational research responsibly.

Organized by the [Center for Clinical and Translational Science \(CCTS\)](#), the program consists of approximately 50 hours of didactic lecture and interactive programming. Trainees will participate in two-hour class sessions each week for six months, beginning in January, as well as present their research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham campus in April.



Haastrup, who is in the graduate program's molecular, cell and cancer biology track, is studying the role of a mitochondrial protein in pancreatic cancer. She is conducting her dissertation research under Ajay Singh, Ph.D., professor of pathology and leader of the cancer biology program at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute, and Santanu Dasgupta, Ph.D., assistant professor of pathology and a cancer researcher at the MCI.

Originally from Oyo State in southwestern Nigeria, Haastrup earned her medical degree from Lugansk State Medical University in Ukraine. She said she decided to pursue a Ph.D. to better understand the pathological basis of chronic diseases, especially cancer.

After earning her doctorate, Haastrup intends to work as a clinical researcher "to integrate my knowledge as a physician and biomedical scientist in formulating better clinical research questions and execute clinical research projects, thereby bringing about novel discoveries that would be beneficial to patients and contribute to the advancement of science," she said.

Specialized training in clinical and translational research will prepare her to achieve this goal. "Participating in the CTSTP will equip me with critical knowledge about clinical trials, ethics and outcomes research, ultimately potentiating my transition into an excellent clinical researcher," she said.

The Center for Clinical and Translational Science was established in 2008 and is funded by a Clinical and Translational Science Award from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. The CCTS Partner Network comprises 11 academic research institutions across Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

MAA calls for 50 People of Influence Award nominations

The USA Medical Alumni Association is seeking nominations for the 50 People of Influence Award.

The award will recognize those who have significantly impacted the

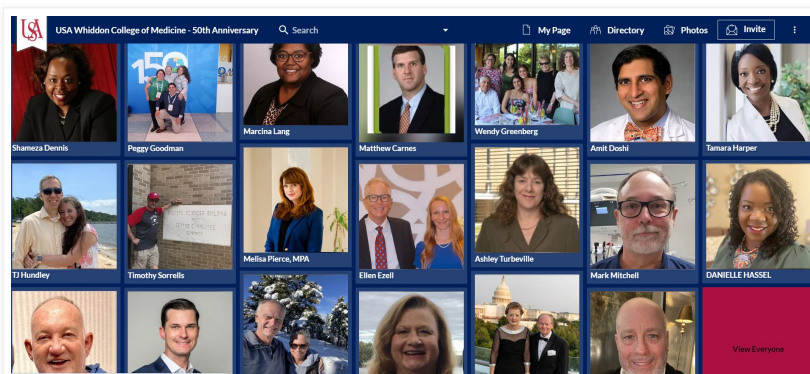


Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine throughout its 50-year history through their outstanding achievements, service, and/or leadership to the college and the communities they serve. Alumni, current and past faculty and staff, and friends of the college are eligible. Fill out the nomination form:

<https://forms.gle/HrA7tKsL9t2W59J16>. The deadline to submit nominations is **Jan. 31, 2023**.

Awards will be presented during the special 50th Anniversary Gala scheduled for Saturday, June 10, 2023, during the All-Class Medical Alumni Reunion Weekend at the Grand Hotel Resort and Spa in Point Clear, Alabama.

Also, don't forget to join your classmates by making a page in our 50th Anniversary Book! Visit southalabama.brightcrowd.com/maa-50th.



Monday, December 5, 2022

In Memoriam: Tony G. Waldrop, Ph.D. (1951-2022)



Dr. Tony G. Waldrop, who helped raise academic standards, elevate research and usher in a new era at USA Health as the third president of the University of South Alabama, died Saturday in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, after a long illness.

After leaving South in 2021, Waldrop, 70, returned to his native North Carolina with his wife, Julee, who became assistant dean of the Duke University School of Nursing.

"President Waldrop was a pivotal figure and determined leader for the University of South Alabama," said Arlene Mitchell, chair pro tem of the USA Board of Trustees. "He was instrumental in the extraordinary growth at USA Health and helped us develop and mature as an institution of higher learning."

His years at South, beginning in 2014, saw great change at the University and USA Health.

During his presidency, the University started an Honors College, developed the School of Marine and Environmental Sciences and constructed Hancock Whitney Stadium. South significantly increased retention and graduation rates, bolstered study abroad programs, added more than a dozen degrees to its offerings and launched the Pathway USA program for transfer students, increasing access to and affordability of a four-year degree.

It also completed an Onward & Upward comprehensive fundraising campaign that raised more than \$160 million for the University and USA Health.

Waldrop led dynamic growth of USA Health by hiring new leadership and developing a comprehensive strategic plan focused on being the only academic health system in the region. Research and education programs were expanded, as were primary and specialty care practices across the region. A new Fanny Meisler Trauma Center at University Hospital opened, \$50 million was secured from Gov. Kay Ivey to build a new College of Medicine, and work began on the Mapp Family Campus in Baldwin County and the freestanding emergency department on Hillcrest Road in west Mobile.

"Dr. Waldrop lifted research activity and academic standards at the University of South Alabama and set it on a course for future growth and success," said President Jo Bonner. "His legacy lives on in each of us through this commitment to education, research, service and healthcare. We will honor him as we build on his contributions at the Flagship of the Gulf Coast."

Waldrop was a quiet academic and disciplined administrator who often woke before dawn. He enjoyed morning walks with his wife. He refused to accept individual praise for University achievements, saying they were all group efforts.

"The goal has always been, no matter what the position I had in administration, to leave things better than the way they were," he said in 2021. "I really do think the University is better than what it was when we came here, and that gives me satisfaction."

At South, Waldrop was shy to speak about one of his most remarkable personal accomplishments. In 1974, as a track star at the University of North Carolina, he set a longstanding world record of 3 minutes and 55 seconds in the indoor mile. The next year, instead of preparing for the Olympic Games, he quit competitive running to focus on earning his Ph.D. in physiology.

Waldrop became a research fellow at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and then a professor of molecular and integrative physiology at the University of Illinois, where he was promoted to vice president of research and graduate studies. He returned to the University of North Carolina as vice chancellor and then became provost and executive vice president at the University of Central Florida.

In 2014, he was named the third president of the University of South Alabama, following the administration of Frederick P. Whiddon and V. Gordon Moulton.

Dr. Sean Powers, professor and director of the School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, considers Waldrop an important president in the history of South. After Whiddon, the founder of the University, and Moulton, the builder who revitalized campus, the University gained from the leadership of an academic researcher who could recruit professors and motivate faculty to improve standards.

"We needed Tony Waldrop for that stretch," Powers said. "He set the course for increasing the rigor of research and academic achievement here. I think that's his claim to fame at South."

Powers, like many on campus, had to learn from others that Waldrop had been a track star and world record holder. He became a friend of the Waldrops and often visited with them on Dauphin Island, where the Waldrops had a condominium. The couple's partnership and shared vision immediately stood out.

"From the faculty point of view, he was very interested in everything we and our students were doing as far as research and professional development," Powers said. "He was a traditional academic, and I think he enjoyed that part of his job the most"

Just six months after he arrived in Mobile, Waldrop announced five strategic priorities for South: student access and success, enhancement of research and graduate education, excellence in healthcare, University-community engagement, and global engagement.

"That was a pivotal moment in our history," said Dr. Julie Estis, president of the Faculty Senate at the time. "There was a lot of excitement and newness around that whole experience of inaugurating a new president. He laid out those five priority areas that really shaped his tenure here at South.

"We can look back and see how each area has grown. There were clear priorities."

In addition to Hancock Whitney, construction on the University campus during Waldrop's presidency includes the MacQueen Alumni Center, a Health Simulation Building for the healthcare professions, and the Camellia student residential hall.

Near the end of Waldrop's administration came the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought disruption and uncertainty. Waldrop assembled a University committee that included USA Health epidemiologists and infectious disease specialists to help in the decision making process.

"He looks at the situation through the lens of a researcher," said Estis, the University's COVID-19 response coordinator, [in a 2011 profile on Waldrop](#). "He finds out all the information about whatever topic or decision it is, and he will take time to consider it, carefully weigh it, and let that inform his decision making."

Tony Gerald Waldrop grew up in Columbus, North Carolina, south of Asheville in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. His father was an industrial machinery mechanic with a sixth-grade education, while his mother was a high school graduate and receptionist.

He was a track athlete who attended the University of North Carolina on an academic scholarship.

Waldrop became a six-time All-American, won a gold medal in the 1975 Pan American Games, and set his world record in the indoor mile. The Olympics beckoned, but Waldrop left the pressure of elite racing for the challenge of a new career.

"He had a decision to make," recalled teammate and longtime friend Larry Widgeon. "Do I become a scientist and pursue academic exploits, or do I train for the Olympics? So, he just said, 'I'm not going to run competitively anymore. I'm going to run for fun.'"

Funeral arrangements will be announced by the family. In addition to his wife, Waldrop is survived by the couple's two children, Cabe and Dallas, and extended family.

A guestbook for all who would like to send their sympathies to the Waldrop family is currently on a podium in the lobby of University Hospital until Thursday, Dec. 8. It will then move to the front desk in the lobby at Children's & Women's Hospital Friday through Tuesday, Dec. 13.

