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**Past to Present: School of Allied Health Professions to College of Health Sciences and Contributions to Health Improvement in the Local Community and Beyond.**

Mohamed Kanu, Ronald Barredo, Elizabeth Williams, & Revlon Briggs

Tennessee State University (TSU) has contributed to the health and well-being of Nashville residents for more than 40 years. Whether providing direct health services, training health leaders, or conducting cutting-edge research, TSU continues to be on the forefront of making health possible for diverse communities. The University's commitment to excellence in health is clearly reflected in the history of TSU's College of Health Sciences, its program areas, and the scholarship and service rendered by its faculty, staff, and students. This story begins in the 1970s with the development of the College.

The College of Health Sciences (COHS) was initially organized as a center in 1971 under an agreement between TSU and Meharry. Under this agreement, both institutions jointly operated the Health Care Administration and Planning (HCAP), Dental Hygiene (DHYG), and Medical Technology (MEDT) programs, bringing together resources of both institutions to educate students pursuing careers in the allied health professions.<sup>1</sup> In 1972, the agreement was expanded to include financial arrangements for the joint operation of DHYG, HCAP, and MEDT. Under the agreement, DHYG faculty and students moved from the MMC campus to a new facility on the TSU campus. At the same time, HCAP faculty offices remained on the Meharry Campus while HCAP students attended general education courses on the TSU campus and major field courses at Meharry. MEDT faculty and students also remained on the Meharry campus<sup>1</sup>.

In 1974, the Center was elevated to School status, and Dr. Andrew Bond was appointed dean until his retirement in 1999.<sup>1</sup> When school status was achieved, the TSU Nursing Program was merged under the School along with the three

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<sup>1</sup> A. Bond, (1978). History of School of Allied Health Professions. Meharry Board of Trustees Report. College of Health Sciences. (2011). Clinical Services. Retrieved from [http://www.tnstate.edu/health\\_sciences](http://www.tnstate.edu/health_sciences).

aforementioned programs. Later, a School of Nursing was established as a separate entity to administer the nursing programs. Under the direction of Dr. Bond, the following programs were added to the School of Allied Health Professions:

- 1978 – Bachelor of Science (BS) in Medical Record Administration established and renamed Health Information Management in 1991;
- 1978 – BS degree in Dental Hygiene established;
- 1980 - Speech Pathology and Audiology degrees moved from Department of Communications to the School of Allied Health Professions;
- 1981 - BS Respiratory Therapy established;
- 1990 - BS Physical Therapy established;
- 1991 – BS Occupational Therapy established; and,
- 1992 – RT degree renamed Cardio-Respiratory Care Sciences.

After Dr. Bond retired, an interim dean was selected to serve until 2001 when Dr. Kathleen McEnerney was appointed dean of the School. The School was elevated to College status in 2003, and the following program changes occurred under Dr. McEnerney's tenure:

- 2002, BS in Physical Therapy converted to Master of Physical Therapy degree (MPT);
- 2004, BS in Health Sciences (General, Physical Sciences, Public Health, and Therapeutic Studies Concentrations) established;
- 2006, MPT converted to Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT);
- 2006, BS in Occupational Therapy converted to Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT);
- 2009, Master in Public Health established;
- 2010, BS in Medical Technology and BS in Speech Pathology dissolved;
- 2010, BS in Health Sciences (Speech Pathology Concentration) established;
- and

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2011, College of Nursing and Human Performance and Sport Science  
merged under the College of Health Sciences.

In addition to the 15 degrees offered in the College, a Dental Hygiene Clinic and Speech Pathology and Audiology Clinic were opened to the public in 2011. Services at both are provided at a minimal cost to the public.

Ever striving to serve, the College continues to grow as a health services leader. That growth is reflected in several firsts which distinguish the College and its members locally and nationally. Striving for excellence in health, the Department of Physical Therapy (PT) and the Department of Public Health, Health Administration and Health Sciences (PHHAHS) are but two examples of how the COHS has contributed to TSU's 100 years of service.

The physical therapy (PT) program at Tennessee State University (TSU) began in the early nineties as an undergraduate entry-level program. The program was the *first* PT program in middle Tennessee, serving the needs of both the Nashville area and the state of Tennessee. When the undergraduate program closed in 2000, work began to offer the program at the graduate level in compliance with accreditation requirements and to offer entry-level PT at the post-baccalaureate level.

The first class of graduate PT students was admitted in 2002, graduating with Master in Physical Therapy (MPT) degrees in 2005. From 2005 to 2008, the program offered the MPT degree. In 2006, the program expanded to include the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree, admitting its first class in 2006, which graduated in 2009. The move to the DPT was a hallmark event for TSU by being the *first* clinical doctorate offered by the institution. The DPT program continues to grow in reputation, enrollment, and stature. With over 250 applicants annually for a cohort of 36 students, admission to the program continues to be highly competitive. In addition to offering the terminal degree, PT has further distinguished itself in teaching, research and service.

The DPT program is particularly proud of its teaching effectiveness. In the last five years, faculty members in the program have received institutional accolades for effective teaching, including the *TSU Teacher of the Year* and the *Blue and White*

*Engaged: The journal of Tennessee State University, Vol. 1 [2013], Art. 7 Award for Excellence in Teaching.* Additionally, research by faculty in effective pedagogy, curriculum development, curriculum content, clinical instruction and program outcomes have been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at national and international conferences.<sup>2-7</sup>

In addition to the faculty's teaching excellence and scholarship of teaching, the DPT program distinguishes itself through service learning (SL) courses it offers during the first two years of the program. These SL courses provide students enriched learning experiences, allowing them to translate academic training into meaningful community service. With an emphasis on improving public health, these learning experiences include:

- A partnership with Siloam Family Health Center, a multi-cultural, faith-based clinic that provides healthcare for the uninsured. DPT program first year students work with and are supervised by faculty members in delivering patient care to uninsured and underinsured community members.
- Students in the first year of the DPT program coordinate Senior Citizen Seminars on topics of interest for the older adults in the community.
- Second year DPT program students lead students at F. H. Jenkins Elementary School in activities to promote healthy lifestyle choices and prevent childhood obesity.

Through the work of its faculty and students, the DPT program has also been productive in its research and scholarly endeavors. DPT Program faculty members are successful researchers publishing in peer-reviewed journals and presenting at national conferences. They serve as reviewers for scholarly journals, state and federal grants, and national conference organizing committees. DPT program members also work on funded grants to help promote public health and safety through prevention and rehabilitation, including:

- The Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) grant from the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, which enables faculty and students participate in

service and training opportunities in developmental disability. It also allows DPT faculty to provide physical therapy training to program participants.

- The Southeast Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Training Center in partnership with Meharry Medical College provides public and continuing education about the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome for high schools, health professionals and the public throughout the southeast United States.
- In partnership with the Meharry Consortium Geriatric Education Center, DPT program faculty advance the consortium's mission to advance the clinical skills of health professionals and achieve positive health outcomes for older adults by serving as consortium faculty.

Training future generations of researchers is something the DPT program is also proud of. Recognizing the need for research evidence to justify assessment and treatment interventions used in clinical practice, the DPT program offers a five-semester research course sequence that enables students to conduct evidence-based projects in areas of research interest. As a program requirement, students present these papers at local, state, or national forums. Students also write manuscripts based on their projects. Since initiating this effort, more than 1/3 of DPT students graduate with an article published in a peer-reviewed journal.<sup>8-12</sup>

As a profession in the healing and helping arts, the DPT program fulfills the service mission of the institution through activities that benefit local and professional communities. In addition to efforts mentioned previously, DPT program faculty and students partner with local institutions to meet the health and healthcare needs of the Nashville area. For example, the program coordinates free one-hour professional continuing education (CE) lectures during the lunch hour every month at clinical facilities in the Nashville area, including Summit Medical Center, Saint Thomas Hospital, Skyline Medical Center, Baptist Hospital, and Donelson Place Healthcare Center. Attendees receive Continuing Education (CE) credit used towards license renewal.

The program also partners with the Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee annually during the Buddy Walk. Students in the program provide warm-

up activities prior to the walk, supervise participants playing with inflatables, and award medals and ribbons to participants and attendees finishing the walk. The DPT program has been working with the Buddy Walk for the last three years.

More recently, the program has participated in Access Nashville, whose goal is to gather information about “accessibility-friendly” restaurants, entertainment attractions, hotels and transportation services to inform consumer choices on where to go in Nashville. Trained DPT students gather data on accessibility in local establishments for individuals with disabilities. Collected data are included on Access Nashville’s website and linked to the Nashville Convention and Visitors’ Bureau for visitors and citizens alike.

Service to the community is a hallmark of the DPT program. Other ongoing service efforts include conducting Fall Prevention Screenings for the Middle Tennessee Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association; performing Ergonomic Assessments for the TSU Library; hosting the Clinical Instructor Education and Credentialing Program; and conducting the Senior Citizen Seminars every spring. In all of these ways and more, the Department of Physical Therapy is making a difference through health in Nashville.

The Department of Public Health, Health Administration and Health Sciences (PHHAHS) is one of the largest departments in the COHS. Currently, it houses two undergraduate programs (Health Care Administration, and Health Sciences), and one graduate program (Master of Public Health – MPH). A doctor of philosophy program in public health is also in development. The MPH program, the newest addition in the College, admitted the first cohort of students in the fall of 2009. With financial support from the state of Tennessee through the Geier Consent Decree, TSU became the *first* state institution in the Middle Tennessee area and the *first* Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Tennessee to offer the MPH degree.

Seated in the state’s capitol, the MPH program allows TSU and COHS to support state efforts to promote, protect and improve the health of all Tennesseans. With unprecedented access to the public health workforce, the MPH program offers an opportunity to train emerging leaders and support the practice of current public

health officials. The MPH program, designed to accommodate the learning needs of working professionals, further lends itself to improving health in the greater Nashville area. In May 2011, the program graduated its inaugural class. These new graduates are already making significant contributions to public health locally, including at Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, Meharry Medical College and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

PHHAHS, as other departments in COHS, has made notable contributions to further TSU's mission through excellence in teaching, research, and service in health. These efforts have come from faculty, staff and students alike. By working together, PHHAHS demonstrates that much can be done to support health.

The two undergraduate degree programs within the department (Health Administration and Health Sciences) each have a rigorous curriculum that includes courses offered only at the graduate level in some other programs. Examples include: Critical Issues in Health Care, Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Focused on training the best and brightest public health leaders, faculty members are committed to combining classroom instruction and knowledge dissemination through research. These attributes, which exemplify hallmarks of scholarly excellence, are demonstrated through co-teaching of courses, encouragement of student involvement in learning through teaching assistantships and faculty-student research collaborations.

PHHAHS faculty further promotes learning through Service Learning (SL) courses offered in its undergraduate and graduate programs. SL courses in the department are recognized by the TSU Center for Service Learning and meet criteria to be designated as such. Students in these courses have supported health promotion and disease prevention by:

- Providing health education workshops at Pearl Cohn High School in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Center.
- Aiding program planning and service implementation at Bethlehem Centers of Nashville and the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center.

- Leading public health training with middle and high school students at Metro Nashville Health Department; conducting cancer and nutrition research with the TSU Center for Prevention Research; counseling HIV+ individuals with Nashville Cares; coordinating program development with Hope Restoration Ministries; providing information referral through the United Way's 2-1-1 line, and others.

Students participating in these activities have developed Capstone Project papers for the MPH program and have presented their efforts as scholarly presentations at the American Public Health Association Annual Conference and the National Association of Allied Health Conference.

Faculty members have also partnered with faculty at Meharry Medical College and Vanderbilt University Medical Center to train local public health officials through the Public Health Training Collaborative. Offering sessions on program evaluation and cultural competency, local public health leaders are provided with skills to enhance practice. Faculty members also participate in similar training efforts for Tennessee Department of Health employees throughout the state as part of the Institute for Healthy Communities Webinar Series sponsored by TDH's Division of Minority Health and Disparity Elimination.

Research constitutes another area where PHHAHS strives to excel. Individually and collectively, faculty members in the department conduct health research that improves the lives of local citizens, adds to health scholarship and improves public health practice. Faculty members have been awarded the *TSU's Faculty Research Award*, the University's highest commendation for research, selected to participate as fellows in the Tennessee Board of Regent's Research Academy and selected to participate in training institutes sponsored by the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities and the National Institutes of Health (NIMHHD/NIH).

Department faculty members are also funded investigators through the Meharry-Vanderbilt-Tennessee State University U-54 Cancer Partnership Grant. The 5-year multisite award provided by the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health (NCI/NIH) focuses on addressing cancer health disparities in racial and ethnic

minorities in Tennessee and increasing the research capacity of investigators of color and HBCUs to conduct basic, behavioral and translational science on cancer disparities.<sup>13-14</sup> Graduate students, funded through U-54 research assistantships, will be exposed to cancer investigators and develop skills relevant to cancer disparities research. Faculty members have also been successfully awarded grants from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Women's Health, Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition to conducting research, PHHAHS faculty is committed to publishing and presenting their scholarly work. Their research interests cover a variety of health topics including: multiple sclerosis,<sup>15-18</sup> HIV/AIDS prevention<sup>19-20</sup>, youth injury prevention<sup>21</sup>, cancer research, seatbelt safety issues<sup>22</sup>, cultural competency<sup>23</sup>, hospital admission issues, and veterans' employment issues. PHHAHS faculty present regularly at local and national conferences and publish in peer-reviewed health journals.

Students and faculty in PHHAHS believe that health and service go hand in hand. Both provide service through service learning courses, memberships on boards and committees, as reviewers to professional journals, as participants in community outreach projects/programs, and as consultants to community-based organizations.

Students in the undergraduate degree programs have brought honor and visibility to the department through involvement in national professional events. For example, Health Administration and Health Sciences students' observances of National Public Health Week have been featured twice (2009 & 2011) in "The Nation's Health" published by the American Public Health Association.<sup>24</sup>

PHHAHS faculty members' service is no less visible than its students. Faculty dedicate hundreds of hours annually to serving the local Nashville community and beyond in health-related efforts. Proud of the service it provides, PHHAHS is equally as proud to work with:

- Center for AIDS Health Disparities Research Community Advisory Board, Meharry Medical College

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- *Journal of National Society of Allied Health; Journal of Public Health Management and Practice; Journal of Physical Activity and Health; and the Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved*
- Educational Booth Committee, HIV/AIDS Section American Public Health Association
- American Red Cross
- Street Works Incorporated
- WFSK, 88.1FM, Fisk University Radio Station
- Corris Boyd Scholarship Selection Committee, Association of University Programs in Health Administration
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure Multicultural Advisory Council
- Institutional Review Board, Tennessee State University
- Tennessee State University Alliance with the Green Hills Senior Health Center, Nashville, TN

For 40 years the College of Health Science (COHS) has rendered training, care, research and service to meet the healthcare needs of the Nashville community. This work has been inspiring and inspired. As TSU looks forward to its next 100 years, the College, its departments, faculty, staff and students will continue to embody TSU's motto of "Think, Work, and Serve" as it strives to achieve excellence in health.

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