

COLLEGE OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES | THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

# REUNION

2022



A Blueprint for Success

# MISSION STATEMENT



*The mission of the College of Human Environmental Sciences is to empower individuals with knowledge and skills to bring about positive change in our world. Across multiple disciplines, we conduct advanced research, provide outreach, and prepare a new generation of professionals with a shared goal of improving lives of individuals, families, and communities.*





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**ON THE FRONT COVER:** Plans for Drummond Lyon Hall  
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# DEAN'S MESSAGE

This year has been one of growth and change for the College of Human Environmental Sciences. We are expanding in ways that add value to the education our students receive. It's our job as a College to continually update, innovate and bring the best possible educational experience to our students both on campus and by distance.

I'm proud of the amazing things taking place in CHES and happy to share stories in this issue of Reunion about what our students, faculty and loyal supporters have been up to recently.

Thanks to our alumna Terri Drummond Lyon, the HES Leadership Board and a multitude of other benefactors of our College, we have broken ground on a new building to house our apparel and textiles program. It will also be the new home of The Fashion Archive, a masterfully curated collection of historical and couture clothing and textiles. With hands-on opportunities to examine exceptional clothing, work in classrooms equipped with the latest technology and exhibit their creations, we are providing a blueprint for success for both apparel design and fashion retail students. Learn more about Drummond Lyon Hall in the article "Growing our Footprint."

A loyal member of our CHES family, Dr. Judy Bonner, has made a lasting mark on our College through her leadership and continuing support of our faculty, students and mission over the years. We were so proud that The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees voted to rename one of our buildings in honor of our former dean. It was a pleasure to celebrate the newly renamed Judy Bonner Child Development Center with Dr. Bonner, her family, colleagues and friends this summer. "What's in a Name" will tell you a bit more about both Dr. Bonner and the work done at the Center. And in "Going Where the Data Leads," you will learn about how the research of a faculty member who works in this facility is helping our youngest develop to their fullest potential.

Another story, "The Evolution of a Program," highlights the growth and change in our hospitality management concentrations that teach students about the business of sports. And speaking of sports, we're thrilled that a faculty





member in athletic training is “Taking the Show on the Road” and helping Alabama high schoolers learn more about her profession while providing a unique learning experience for her own students.



A distance learner, who completed our master’s concentration in consumer quality management, is the subject of “From Start to Launch.” He puts his quality assurance skills to the test every day on high profile NASA space projects and now shares his knowledge with our students as an adjunct instructor.

These stories just scratch the surface of how students, faculty, alumni and CHES friends are furthering our mission of improving lives. As a College, we will continue to look to the future, growing and changing to meet the needs of our students and sharing our good news with you.

STUART USDAN, PhD





# THE RISING TIDE™

A CAMPAIGN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA\*

*[risingtide.ua.edu](http://risingtide.ua.edu)*

**T**HE RISING TIDE, a capital campaign that University of Alabama alumni, students, faculty, staff, patrons and supporters have embarked on, will transcend anything the University has previously experienced. With a goal of \$1.5 billion, the University will set the standard for transformative education as it pursues the most ambitious fundraising goal in the history of the state of Alabama.

For decades, The University of Alabama has attracted the best and brightest students from around the globe. UA is consistently a top choice for many of our nation's most academically distinguished students. They make their way to the Capstone to experience an unmatched campus environment, to engage with world-renowned faculty and to prepare for careers of service and leadership. This is why elite companies and organizations look to our university each year to recruit the next wave of leaders in every facet of modern society. The impact of The Rising Tide Capital Campaign will allow The University of Alabama to further elevate its students as future legends; to dominate the fields of research and athletics; to lift its alumni to new heights; and to develop the potential within us to serve, support and lead communities near and far. The Rising Tide is a multi-year campaign that draws us together in unified purpose.

Every college on UA's campus has a role to play. It is our responsibility and legacy to elevate the College of Human Environmental Sciences to its greatest heights and provide for future generations of our graduates. CHES has committed to meet our \$22 million goal and by doing so continue to fulfill our mission to improve the lives of those around us.

The campaign aligns with strategic plans of both The University of Alabama and the College of Human Environmental Sciences by carrying forward the tenets of excellence in teaching, research and service. In fact, The Rising Tide's campaign pillars of — — — **PROMISE, PROMINENCE, PRIDE and PASSION** are some of the greatest strengths our College possesses.

Our **PROMISE** is to increase access and achievement through scholarships, fellowships and programming for undergraduate and graduate students. By increasing scholarship opportunities, CHES will strengthen our recruitment and retention of a diverse and expanding student body. Because we learn by doing, our students complete, on average, over 150,000 hours of internship or practicum experiences annually. Expanded hands-on learning opportunities will prepare our students for excellence in their fields and continue to enhance the impact of our College. In keeping with University goals to increase graduate enrollment, CHES has expanded its graduate program offerings and increased recruitment of the best and the brightest by including student incentives. Since 2015, we have seen a 28% increase in graduate enrollment and today have more graduate students than ever before. Additional student support is imperative to continue our trend of increasing student enrollment moving forward.

UA continues to launch bold ideas for research that profoundly impact our state, nation and world, achieving **PROMINENCE** among the nation's top research institutions. CHES has elevated the success of faculty research projects by creating an environment of encouragement and support of faculty in their scholarly pursuits. That investment has paid off with external grant submissions by our faculty in 2019-2020 being \$3.5 million higher than in 2018-2019. Additional funds will only expand research capabilities within the College and enhance recruitment of exceptional faculty. We are committed to recruiting highly qualified educators and providing them the latest technology, materials, equipment and training they need to ensure both student and research success.

The University of Alabama boasts one of the most recognizably beautiful campuses in the country, serving as a point of **PRIDE** for our students and our state. The Rising Tide Capital Campaign will impact space across campus, perpetuating the tradition and excellence in the UA experience. At CHES, we are excited to embark on

construction of a new building. Drummond Lyon Hall will house our apparel and textiles program and will be the catalyst that will take our well-respected apparel programs to new heights. With the construction of this new facility near the CHES administrative building, we can provide much-needed space, equipped with new technology, that will enhance student, faculty and community experiences in fashion creation, history and retailing.

Through the commitment of our friends and donors, CHES will continue to lead the field of human sciences – growing, thriving and fulfilling our mission of improving lives. This is the **PASSION** and purpose of the College of Human

Environmental Sciences. Since our beginnings in 1914, CHES students have left The University of Alabama using what they learned in our classrooms to make their mark on the world. They shape communities through endeavors as business executives, entrepreneurs, scientists, counselors, artists, teachers and humanitarians.

With your support during The Rising Tide Capital Campaign, we will impart this same devotion to our students on a greater scale than ever before and increase our impact on our citizens, families and communities.

## Providing **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**



Experiential learning is a cornerstone of all CHES programs. By engaging in it, students connect classroom knowledge and theory to real-world situations, develop network connections and gain a broader view of the world.

CHES finds opportunities for experiential learning in a variety of places including community service, internships specific to our fields of study, undergraduate research, study abroad, capstone projects and industry conferences.

We are grateful to supporters like hospitality industry insiders, Greg Friedman and his parents Susan and Macon Gravlee, who provide connections and funding for students to enjoy unique learning experiences outside of the classroom.

Scan the QR code or visit [risingtide.ua.edu/ches](https://risingtide.ua.edu/ches) to learn more about giving opportunities and the efforts of our College during The Rising Tide campaign.

# THE RISING TIDE





*LaQuandra Samuel works as a student ambassador at the ALIS conference in LA.*



When LaQuandra Samuel walked into the JW Marriott in Los Angeles, she was nervous. This was her first professional conference, and it was a big one. Over the course of three days, Samuel would encounter thousands of delegates and leaders from the hotel industry at the American Lodging and Investment Summit.

The summit, referred to as “ALIS,” is the largest hotel investment conference in the world. For the past 21 years, the conference has connected young professionals to key leaders in the industry as they share their insight on a variety of hospitality industry topics such as innovation, technology and operations.

Samuel was not only a delegate at the 2022 conference – she was one of 65 students from 15 universities serving as a student ambassador. Samuel served alongside two other hospitality management students from the Capstone, Morgan Hixon and Sarah Kate Murray. Project administrator for the hospitality management program, Bethany Brendlinger, accompanied the students.

*Morgan Hixon mans one of the ALIS kiosks.*



*It's registration duty for Sarah Kate Murray.*



UA Hospitality  
Management  
Students Travel  
To LA For  
Hotel Industry  
Conference

# CROSS COUNTRY TRIP EXPANDS



## horizons



*Enjoying a little down time at the beach.*

As ambassadors, Samuel, Hixon, and Murray checked attendees in, worked the information kiosks and attended student sessions. During student sessions, they were able to directly connect with leaders at the conference, including CEO of the Peachtree Hotel Group Greg Friedman who provided support for their trip.

Samuel said the conference gave her greater insight into the industry.

"This is a valuable experience because I got to meet other students in the field," Samuel said.

Samuel was also able to perfect a variety of skills, including her three-minute pitch, and network with members of the industry, both in-person and on LinkedIn. Additionally, she was able to see how the industry was handling pressing issues, such as COVID-19 and social injustices.

"Being in the conference, I was able to get a first inside look at what matters most in the hospitality industry, what's affecting it right now," she said.

The conference also discussed women in the hospitality industry,

and Samuel was able to meet with other women of color in leadership positions at the conference, which was the highlight of the event for her.

"It was a wonderful experience, getting to talk to them and learn how they started in the hospitality industry from the bottom then rose to an executive position today," Samuel said.

Samuel found that the leaders were just as eager to speak with the younger generation as the younger generation were to speak to them.

"They said we need the younger generation to pass the torch on to," Samuel said.

Samuel found that the most important things she learned at ALIS were to keep up with industry trends and to stay in contact with leaders she met there.

"We all want to see each other succeed, and we need as many voices and minds together to achieve something greater," Samuel said.

• • • by Ceara Burden



# growing our footprint

## CHES to Construct Cutting-Edge Facility for Fashion and Design

**“This is a tremendous opportunity to provide our students with the best resources and facilities to create their pathway to success in fashion and design...” Terri Lyon**

On February 7, 2022, the College of Human Environmental Sciences announced plans for the construction of a new building to house its fashion retailing and apparel design concentrations. The building will be named in recognition of a commitment from 1986 alumna, Terri Drummond Lyon.

Located on Colonial Drive, Drummond Lyon Hall will become part of a CHES hub that includes nearby Adams and Doster Halls. Once complete, the 25,000 square-foot facility will provide space to conserve and celebrate fashion history and groom fashion trendsetters of the future. It will house The Fashion

Archive’s historical garment and textiles collection, a conservation laboratory, exhibition galleries, two cutting-edge studio classrooms, a flex space for receptions or lectures and offices for fashion retailing and apparel design faculty.

The new facility will give apparel and textiles students and faculty a specialized space that fosters critical thinking, creative design and presentation skills. Opportunities for experiential learning will be expanded as we find new ways to enrich skills learned in the classroom with hands-on experiences such as runway events, student exhibitions, textiles research and collaborative meetings between students and clients.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to provide our students with the best resources and facilities to create their pathway to success in fashion and design. It is my honor to be one among many who are answering the call to support CHES and the University, and to help bring their vision for the future of the apparel and textiles program from conception to reality,” said Terri Lyon.

By moving The Fashion Archive to this new facility, hands-on experiences with appropriate artifacts during the study of the history of costume, textile design and garment construction will flourish. With the inclusion of these collections, the building will be unique among SEC schools who offer apparel design and fashion merchandising programs. The classroom, research and experiential learning opportunities for students will rival any other nationally recognized fashion program.

“We have no doubt that when completed Drummond Lyon Hall will take our exceptional apparel and textiles program to even greater heights,” said Dr. Stuart Usdan, dean of CHES. “It has the potential to open minds to new experiences and influence students, alumni, researchers and entrepreneurs in a variety of fields – from fashion to marketing and history – creating leaders who make a difference in our world.”

CHES Director of Development, Amy Baker-Parton said, “Through the support of the University, alumni, the HES Leadership Board, parents of our students and other friends of the College, we secured funding that has allowed us to begin construction on the state-of-the-art facility, but opportunities remain to contribute to the growth of CHES by naming classrooms and other vital spaces in Drummond Lyon Hall.”

For naming opportunities, please contact Amy Baker-Parton at [aparton@ches.ua.edu](mailto:aparton@ches.ua.edu) or 205-348-4919 or visit [giving.ua.edu/drummond-lyon-hall](http://giving.ua.edu/drummond-lyon-hall).



Above: Drummond Lyon Hall will be the new home for the CHES apparel and textiles program.  
Below: Upon entering Drummond Lyon Hall, a welcoming lobby will lead to exhibit and lecture spaces.







# GOING WHERE THE DATA LEADS

CHES Professor Follows  
a Diverse Research Path

Armed with a degree in psychology from St. Thomas University in Miami and a desire to further her education, Maria Hernandez-Reif found a master's program in lifespan development that interested her. After just one class under Florida International University professor, Dr. Lorraine Bahrnick, she found her calling. Helping with research in the Infant Development Lab Bahrnick directed, Hernandez-Reif says, "I fell in love with babies. The idea that researchers had developed ways of asking babies questions and getting, from their looking behavior, what they knew, just hooked me. So, I completed my master's and my PhD with Dr. Bahrnick."

Hernandez-Reif's graduate work had focused mainly on how babies use their hands to explore the world around them, known as active touch. Dr. Tiffany Field, an infant researcher at the University of Miami School of Medicine, focused on passive touch which is the application of pressure to the skin. Hernandez-Reif thought doing postdoctoral work

become an associate professor in pediatrics and co-director of the Institute.

In 2006, Hernandez-Reif accepted a position as a professor in our department of human development and family studies and founded its Pediatric Development Research (PDR) lab where she has continued her love for researching and writing. Hernandez-Reif explains her passion for these scholarly pursuits, "Oh my goodness, I love every aspect of research, from brainstorming what should we study, to where are we going to find the individuals to study, to how do we collect the information? And then of course, doing the data analysis is very exciting. Did we get the answer that we wanted? Were we right in our assumption?" She adds, "And for me, one of the most interesting things is that we are rarely right. Oftentimes, we have surprising findings that then lead us down a new path to continue to investigate."

Hernandez-Reif has followed a divergent path in her 24-year career. She says, "I think I'm not traditional in the sense that many researchers focus on one or two lines of research and continue down that path. I take many turns and twists depending on what's interesting at the moment. Still, within my eclectic research programs, it is a focus

with Field, would complement her own research. Those initial instincts were correct and led to a lifelong interest in massage therapy and complementary and integrative medicine.

Hernandez-Reif became a research assistant professor in the school's department of pediatrics where she continued working in Field's Touch Research Institute. She went on to

on mothers and children that is key and [at the] heart of most of my studies."

One of the first studies Hernandez-Reif tackled after moving to Alabama involved pregnant women and depression. She noted research indicates that if a woman is depressed during pregnancy, it affects how the fetus develops and the

infant's attachment to the mother. Conducting the study in collaboration with Drs. April Kendrick and Dan Avery, Hernandez-Reif says, "We found in our sample of about 100 participants that almost half of the women we assessed were experiencing depression." The depressed mothers were less likely to read, sing or talk to their unborn child suggesting they were less engaged with their child.

Massage is the subject of much of her research. "I have probably collaborated on 75 to 100 massage therapy studies. And over and over and over again, we found pretty much the same thing. Massage reduces your stress level. And it reduces your cortisol, which is a stress hormone that we can examine in saliva, in urine and in blood. Because massage relaxes you, it helps the different systems in your body to better function or be better regulated," says Hernandez-Reif.

Following one of those research twists and turns, she found an unexpected positive effect of cortisol. Although high levels of this stress hormone have known negative effects, there are some indications that infants with high levels of cortisol actually sleep better at night. This finding has become the basis of an ongoing study conducted in the PDR lab.

Four years ago, she completed a program evaluation of Pre-K for a public city school system. Her findings indicated that Pre-K successfully prepared most students to enter kindergarten.

And another interesting study by Hernandez-Reif determined that infants learn a word more quickly if you sing the word to them. While the studies mentioned touch on the magnitude of her research, there are too many more to mention.

Combining a robust research agenda with her teaching duties seems to come naturally. Hernandez-Reif teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses on infant and toddler development. She explains how one feeds the other, "My lectures are research-based. So it's hard not to talk about research when I'm in the classroom. And I like to engage with undergraduate students in the same way that I engage with graduate students. I think maybe that's why I'm successful. I don't see myself as the lecturer. . .I'm there to facilitate learning." Hernandez-Reif's classes are presented as a seminar, where it's discussion-based and they have a topic of the day.

Hernandez-Reif gets great satisfaction from being in the classroom with 'young brains' and believes that it is her role to excite them about the material she delivers. She says, "The questions that students ask keep me thinking and keep me on my toes. I really appreciate learning from students as much as sharing information that I know with students."

And her students seem to appreciate her as well. In 2021, the family of a former student honored Hernandez-Reif and her colleague, Dr. Kimberly Blitch, by creating a scholarship in their names. The student, now a first-grade teacher, credits the passion these faculty members have for the welfare of young children with inspiring her work in the classroom.

A new multi-disciplinary collaborative, Partners for Alabama Families and Communities (PAFC), has captured Hernandez-Reif's heart recently. Maternal-child health outcomes in West Alabama were the driving force behind this initiative by UA colleagues, Drs. Jen Nicholson, Amy Lee, Holly Horan, Cathy Lavender, John McDonald, David Albright, Robin McWilliams and retired physician, Guillermo Godoy.

“MY LECTURES ARE RESEARCH-BASED.  
SO, IT'S HARD NOT TO TALK ABOUT  
RESEARCH WHEN I'M IN THE CLASSROOM.

MARIA HERNANDEZ-REIF

*Dr. Maria Hernandez-Reif and Dr. Holly Horan were invited speakers at the 32nd International Confederation of Midwives Triennial Congress in the Philippines. Delivered virtually, Hernandez-Reif presented "The Science of Touch. Benefits for Healthy Development and Potential Link to Immunity."*



*Dr. Hernandez-Reif demonstrates how she would collect saliva samples from a young volunteer.*

"Something I want people to know is that researchers have the unique honor of creating, discovering, and sharing new knowledge with the world. Most recently, through the collaborative work with PAFC, I discovered the true meaning of community-based research. This approach encourages researchers to turn to communities and partner with them to study topics and research questions that are generated by and of interest to the community," says Hernandez-Reif.

"For example, last year a non-profit Latin immigrant organization created and conducted a survey to ask about the needs of Hispanic immigrants living in Tuscaloosa. I analyzed the survey data and helped the Latin non-profit develop and submit a manuscript on the findings. As a result of these findings, the Latin non-profit organization is now focused on creating programs to promote youths to develop career or vocational goals. In addition, the Latin non-profit group in partnership with PAFC faculty members and a local center for sexual survivors, have written and submitted grant applications to create and assess bilingual services for Spanish speaking survivors of sexual violence," she continues.

In Hernandez-Reif's view, "Research is necessary to improve the human condition, and perhaps is best accomplished when academic or institutional silos are reframed to value communities, letting them guide and direct where research efforts should be focused."

What new research path will Hernandez-Reif follow? "In PAFC, we are very interested in implicit bias in the healthcare system. In fact, that's what we think may in part contribute to the poor maternal-child health." Hernandez-Reif looks forward to the next phase of her career as she continues to grow and learn about community needs, working to improve maternal and child health in Alabama.

As passionate as Dr. Hernandez-Reif is about finding ways to help mothers and children thrive through her work, what she prizes most is her own family. So it is no surprise that this loving wife and mother has positively influenced so many other families. And by training students to follow in her footsteps, her influence will expand exponentially throughout this community and others across our country.



# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Building Renamed to Honor Former UA President and CHES Dean



In February 2022, the UA Board of Trustees passed a resolution to rename the Child Development Research Center in recognition of the contributions of Dr. Judy Bonner. The Judy Bonner Child Development Center was dedicated to the University's 28th president and former dean of CHES on June 10.

A native of Camden, Alabama, Bonner earned her bachelor's degree in dietetics and master's degree in food and nutrition from our College before receiving her doctorate in human nutrition from The Ohio State University. Prior to embarking on a career as an educator, her research in the dietary needs of cystic fibrosis patients led to significant improvements in the treatment of the disease.

"In 1981, Mama called, and I came home," Bonner said referring to her return to UA as a faculty member. She began her distinguished career as an associate professor before taking several administrator positions including head of the department of nutrition and hospitality management, dean of CHES, provost and vice president of academic affairs, and provost and executive vice president.

In 2012, Bonner was named president of the University. As president, she is credited with strengthening the diversity and inclusiveness of the student body, achieving new enrollment records, and leading the Crimson Tide to thrilling championships in athletics as well as successes in the pursuit of academic excellence and research.

"If you count the number of years I was a student and the years I was a member of the faculty and an administrator, I have spent over 40 years here. I truly love the Capstone. And I am profoundly honored that The University of Alabama Board of Trustees approved President Bell's recommendation to name the Child Development Center for me," said Bonner.

The Judy Bonner Child Development Center is a leader in the study of young children. The state-of-the-art research facility is equipped with the latest multi-media research technology, seven large research suites and eight research rooms with adjoining observation booths.

The Center houses the Children's Program, a National Association for the Education of Young Children-Accredited laboratory school enrolling over 100 students ages two months to five years; Child Development Resources, which assists families across the state to provide a safe, loving and enriching life for their young children; Capstone Family Therapy Clinic, which provides the community with help in resolving family issues and trains graduate students specializing in marriage and family therapy; and the Pediatric Development Research laboratory.

"Important work takes place in that building. But, because the primary mission is to educate University of Alabama students, the expertise of the faculty and staff has an impact that is exponential. And, with their amazing success with contract and grant activity, they literally touch the lives of young children and their families throughout our great state and beyond. I am so proud to have my name associated with their work," Bonner added.

"It is fitting for the University to add the name of our former dean, dedicated faculty member and loyal friend to a CHES building which supports students, faculty, and their research into human development and family dynamics, and enriches the lives of community members and their children. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honor," said current dean, Dr. Stuart Usdan.



*Dr. Bonner (c) with teachers of our Children's Program.*

# THE EVOLUTION OF A PROGRAM

## *Demand Drives Change in Sport Hospitality at CHES*

Love sports? Fall in love with a career in the sport hospitality industry like many College of Human Environmental Sciences students have. It's a field that is growing in this country and throughout the world. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in entertainment and sports occupations is projected to grow 22 percent from 2020 to 2030, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Jobs in this field are incredibly varied and can be a good fit for anyone who is involved in or just loves to follow sports. Although graduates must be prepared to enter a competitive job market, there are opportunities to work in event management, facility operations, parks and recreation, athlete branding, sport marketing, team operations, sport tourism and more.

Our College has been in the business of preparing students to enter the workforce in sport hospitality for almost 20 years. A graduate sports management specialization was established under the leadership of Dr. Ken Wright in 2003 and he served as director of the program for many years. Another key player in our sport management efforts is Dr. Melvin Lewis who joined the faculty in 2015. Both men brought a wealth of industry contacts to the table, enriching student experiences by bringing engaging speakers to campus, coordinating sport facility tours, including an interim course at the U. S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center and helping to facilitate internship opportunities.

Three years ago, the graduate degree concentration was renamed sport hospitality and moved to the hospitality management program in the department of human nutrition and hospitality management. The undergraduate program is a hospitality management major with a concentration in sport, entertainment and event management.

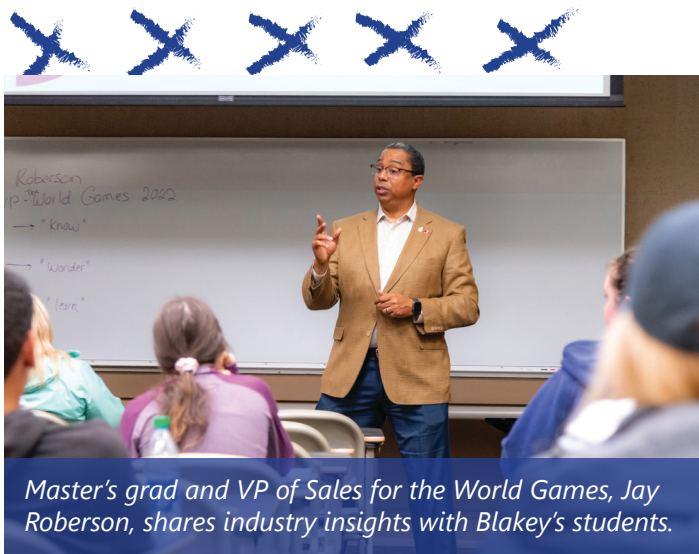
Both concentrations prepare students for careers in sport, hospitality, athletics, tourism and entertainment settings. Our alumni serve in a variety of industry settings throughout the United States.

Currently leading successful recruitment efforts for these programs is assistant professor Dr. Carla Blakey. Dr. Kimberly Severt, director of hospitality management programs, calls Blakey a strong advocate for the program, and says, "she has been instrumental in increasing student numbers. Sport hospitality is an exciting enrollment growth area for our department and our College."

Blakey earned her undergraduate degree in advertising and public relations at the University of Arkansas and caught the sports management bug while completing internship experiences at ESPN and Octagon College Game-Days and in Razorback Marketing. After graduation, she secured a position with Razorback Marketing where she headed marketing and game-day initiatives for a number of sports, managed an online auction and co-sponsored a cooperative health effort between the Athletic Department and northwest Arkansas elementary schools.







*Master's grad and VP of Sales for the World Games, Jay Roberson, shares industry insights with Blakey's students.*

For the next step in her career path, Blakey was recruited to LSU by a former colleague and accepted a position as an account executive in client services. According to Blakey, "it allowed me to gain corporate sales and partnership development experience. Also, I knew that working at another major brand, such as LSU, would only make me more marketable." There, she oversaw the activation of client assets, maintained relationships with corporate partners and oversaw gameday publications.

With a passion for learning and mentoring, Blakey realized that she wanted to teach. She found our master's concentration, enrolled and excelled. Named Outstanding Graduate Student in the sports concentration, Blakey completed her master's in 2016 and went on to earn a PhD in Instructional Technology at UA in

2021. Serving as a graduate research assistant throughout her studies at UA, Blakey co-taught courses at UA before accepting a teaching position at CHES as an instructor in 2017 and, in 2021, becoming an assistant professor of hospitality management.

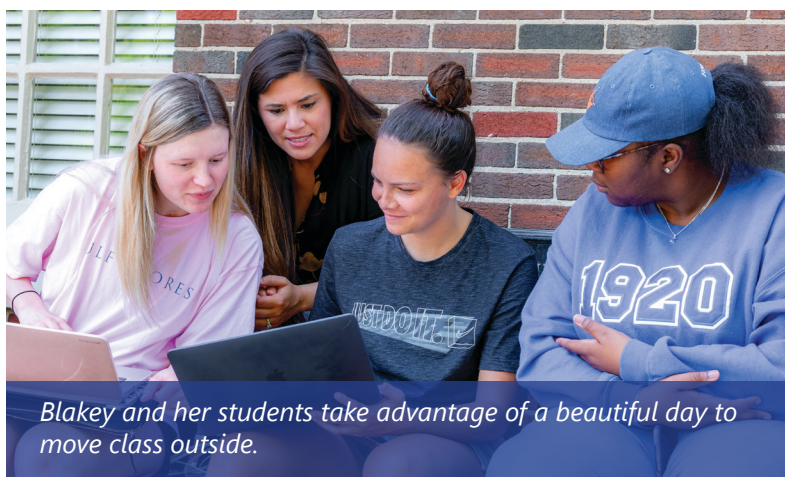
According to Dr. Blakey, "One of the most valuable classes for students is RHM 235 [Introduction to the Sport Industry]. It gives students the foundation for the rest of their courses and introduces them to facets about the industry that they likely did not know."

Blakey considers RHM 338 [Sport Marketing, Promotion, and Strategy] a must because sports marketing is intertwined into all elements of the industry. Concentration students (SEEM) are also required to have an internship or job prior to graduation. Blakey notes, "Industry professionals commend us for this requirement. I'm not naive enough to think that our program alone helps students secure employment upon graduation. Their hands-on experience and networking, paired with their education, is the secret to success."

Hands-on activities and opportunities for networking are embedded in courses. "For example, in RHM 337, we don't just talk about working a participatory sporting event – we do! We work the Tuscaloosa Half Marathon each year and are able to experience our lectures come to life," says Blakey.

To bring authenticity to the classroom, faculty frequently call on alumni to serve as guest speakers. They not only share experiences and tips for success, but they become a part of students' networks. According to Blakey, that is invaluable. Sport hospitality students recently heard from the vice president of sales for the 2022 World Games and CHES master's graduate, Jay Roberson. When asked about keys to success in the business, Roberson says, "Relationships are what it is all about, that's number one. And you have to keep those relationships intact throughout the years because you never know who will open a door for you or work with you."

During his talk, Roberson shared how his love for sports drew him to the industry. Even though he wasn't destined to play professionally, he found a place in the business of sports. He believes that the current generation has unlimited opportunity, in part, because of the rise in popularity of non-traditional sports like flag football, korfbal, tug of war, sport climbing, flying disc and many



*Blakey and her students take advantage of a beautiful day to move class outside.*



*A number of people from sport hospitality at UA volunteered for the 2022 World Games in Birmingham including Dr. Blakey and student, Brandon Zimmerman.*



others featured in the 2022 World Games. His advice to students, "Even if the first job opportunity you have isn't your dream job [like NFL football], get in where you can." Roberson added, "Relationships will get you to the next opportunity."

Blakey believes students in the program understand the value of having a competitive edge through experience, networking and applicable education. Experiential opportunities abound at Alabama with world class athletic programs and events. Students have satisfied required practical experiences in ticketing, marketing, trademark licensing, event management and compliance with UA's Department of Athletics and Alabama Gameday events. Outside of the University, fellowships have included ESPN, the PGA Tour, Lakeshore Foundation, Talladega Motor Speedway, the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee and many professional sport organizations.

Shakyia Grooms received an undergraduate degree in hospitality management and graduates in August with her master's in our sport hospitality concentration. She is interning in Boston this summer at the oldest Major League Baseball stadium in the U.S. and the experience has been over the top. "Working for Fenway Park Events has been a dream come true and honestly, I am still shocked. This internship has taught me several things, however the most notable would be to not hold yourself back. Kind of cliché, however so true, you must be willing to take chances on yourself. Since the other interns and I have started, it has been drilled in us to make the most of our time here at Fenway Park. We have all been able to share ideas about events. Seeing those ideas come to life is truly a joy but would have never happened if I sat in the room quietly," says Grooms. Her advice to others, "Do not allow fear to hold you back from anything you desire for yourself. Be respectfully outspoken and allow your voice to flow through the room."

CHES has built a thriving program that responds to changes in the business of sports and continues to grow. In 2021, faculty members Drs. Trevor Bopp from the University of Florida and Jinsu Byun from the University of Georgia joined the program and we are adding two UA tenured faculty in the fall, Drs. John Vincent and Dylan Williams.

Growing demand for a stand-alone undergraduate program has also led the College to propose a Bachelor of Science in Sport Management. CHES hopes to successfully complete the approval process for this new major soon.

There are more changes in the works as we evolve to meet the needs of our students and this exciting growth industry. Plans to offer an Accelerated Master's Program bridging the undergraduate and graduate programs are ongoing. Students who complete AMP can take up to 15 credit hours that count simultaneously toward undergraduate and graduate programs, saving time and cutting costs. Faculty are also working on a new proposal for a stand-alone graduate program – a master of science degree in sport management.

Visit our website at [sportmanagement.ches.ua.edu](https://sportmanagement.ches.ua.edu) to check out the exciting opportunities developing at CHES for students interested in the business of sports.



*With an undergraduate degree in hospitality under her belt, sport hospitality grad student Shakyia Grooms is enjoying an internship at Fenway Park.*



# Taking the Show on the Road

*Athletic Training Program Hosts Traveling Camps at High Schools in the Black Belt*

Throughout its history at The University of Alabama, the athletic training or AT program has been committed to partnering with nearby high schools to advocate for and provide athletic training services. Faculty member Dr. Jessica Wallace found a way to enrich those relationships by providing a unique learning experience for CHES students and high school students alike. Wallace secured a Diversity Enhancement Grant from the National Athletic Trainers' Association Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee for "The

Traveling Athletic Training Experience: Increasing Awareness of Athletic Training in the Alabama Black Belt."

The grant has enabled Wallace and her students to deliver a traveling workshop with hands-on skill development, mentorship and exposure to the academic environment in this health care profession. Our students run stations covering basic first aid and splinting, taping techniques, icing, sports nutrition and concussion basics. Each participant receives a course kit

with workshop supplies that reinforce what they learned and include college success tips.

"The purpose of these camps is to increase the exposure of athletic training throughout the state of Alabama. We are targeting the Black Belt counties where there is reduced access to athletic trainers. So, [we're] working with communities that may lack access to an athletic trainer to educate kids about what AT is, teaching some basic athletic training skills. And then, ultimately work to diversify the field of athletic training," says Wallace.

Taylor Johnson, a junior in her second year of the program, enjoyed engaging with high school students and having an opportunity to pay it forward through the camps. She says, "My love for athletic training and sports medicine started in high







*Central High School students learn taping techniques.*



*Learning the importance of stretching at Central.*



*Students at Aliceville High School get a taste of the sodium supplement given to dehydrated athletes. Yuck!*

school but I didn't have an outlet like this to show me what athletic training really was. So, it is nice to come back and share my knowledge with high school students who are interested in athletic training. I see them in my shoes basically."

Third-year athletic training student and graduating senior, Cameron Handley was pleased to pass along information about the profession that he loves. He says this, "At their age, I was looking for something [to study in college] that was fun. I think it is cool for us to show them a career you can do, you can love and you can use to make an impact on people."

Central High student Jakhiya Smith who wants to pursue a career in sports medicine or athletic training says, "I know a bit about how they help athletes and that's something I want to do because I am an athlete myself." She continues, "Today, I learned how to wrap. I also learned about stretching and foam rolling and why it is important to get the knots out of the muscles, so your muscles aren't as tense and tight. I learned through nutrition about sodium and dehydration, how you always have to stay hydrated so you can perform at your best." Through UA's traveling camp, Smith gained knowledge about a career she is considering, and she also discovered things that will help her performance in sports.

Blake Easterwood of Central signed up for camp "to get a better understanding about what an athletic trainer does" because he is considering the program at Alabama. When asked about the most fun thing he did at camp he replies, "I liked the parfait and even tasting the sodium supplement that athletes need when they get dehydrated!"

For Zaharria Fowler of Aliceville High School, the camp was an opportunity to learn new things. Although she was





*Another give-away from AT camp.*



*Dr. Jessica Wallace (c) and AT students enjoy their time with Alabama high school students.*

aware that athletic trainers attended football and basketball games and supported injured players, she didn't realize they were needed in so many sports including gymnastics and soccer.

Jeremiah Brewer of Aliceville says, "I signed up because I've been around football all my life and I want to be around athletic things all my life." Although he is leaning towards a degree in sport management when he attends Lindsey Wilson College in Kentucky, Brewer picked up skills that may serve him well as an athlete. He says, "I learned a little more about pre-taping today, how to make it 'tight and

right.' I learned more about nutrition and about stretching your body out."

Coach Grady Griffin, teacher, athletic director and head football coach at Aliceville High School was grateful for the opportunity his students had to develop a better understanding and appreciation for the world of athletic training. Griffin who participated alongside his students says, "Anything I ask them to do, I try to do it with them."

Like his students, he had some personal take-aways from the camp. Griffin appreciated the information about nutrition which he says will help him personally, "When I go to the gym, I'm shaking the shaker with the protein

shake before I work out. They were saying how I should do that after. I'm going to take that with me."

With a smile on her face, Wallace says, "The most satisfying thing about doing these athletic training camps is really working with all of the people in each community – the coaches, the principals, the athletic directors and the kids. It's fun to watch these projects come full circle. We have great relationships already, so being able to offer a product through The University of Alabama and the athletic training program to communities that I have an ongoing relationship with is really the most fun and rewarding part of this."

In the 2021-2022 school year, traveling camps were held at Selma High School, Aliceville High School, Fairfield High School, Hale County College and Career Academy in Greensboro and Central High School in Tuscaloosa. In the coming years, Dr. Wallace's goal is to deliver future workshops or health-related activities in the high schools related to community needs and community interest. She ultimately wants to transport high school students to campus to check out the athletic training program and the facilities in which our students get to practice their craft.



*Aliceville students nail Q&A questions.*





Sara Denton Cox



Justin Davis



Sheriah Gibson



Andrew Gipner

# WHAT SETS A DEGREE FROM CHES APART?

## SUCCESS STORIES HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD EDUCATION

According to a group of successful alumni, hands-on learning experiences, dedicated faculty and a solid educational foundation provided stepping stones to their careers. With great pride in their accomplishments, the College of Human Environmental Sciences honored ten outstanding alumni with Jack Davis Professional Achievement Awards during its Homecoming 2021 festivities.

This year's honorees included Sara Denton Cox, Justin L. Davis, W. Sheriah Gibson, Andrew Gipner, Amy K. Jean, Anne Frances Lipscomb, Ryan Martin, Sara Ann Sitsch, Alison Sizemore and Sydney Wallace.

The Jack Davis awards have been given since 1986, and were named to honor the first man to graduate from the College with a degree in nutrition, Dr. Lewis Clifton "Jack" Davis, Jr.

Sara Cox accepted the Jack Davis Professional Achievement Award for apparel design. The creative director of The Southern Shirt Company in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Cox is responsible for the design aesthetic of all company products from concept to marketing content to launch. By identifying emerging trends, she helps the company develop direction for its merchandise which include unique t-shirts, classic button-downs, loungewear, outerwear and accessories like belts, hats and even blankets and coolers. Along with other duties, Cox makes sure timelines are met, and works with manufacturing partners to ensure products meet Southern Shirt Company quality and profitability standards.

Justin Davis received his award for achievement in fashion retailing. He is retail operations manager for Van Cleef & Arpels, Richemont NA in New York. After graduating in 2010, Justin began his retail management career with Belk in Columbus, Mississippi. Next, Justin secured managerial positions first with Macy's, then Hugo Boss before he joined Van Cleef's team in 2019. Davis is tasked with implementing operational initiatives that propel his company forward. Among other responsibilities, he has restructured the supply ordering process for boutiques in the North America markets, launched a communications portal to centralize documents and reduce paper use, and opened or renovated five boutiques within the span of eight months.

Sheriah Gibson, who earned both undergraduate and graduate degrees from CHES, was recognized for her success in the field of hospitality management. In accepting her award she said, "I was able to walk away with hands-on learning so in every profession and activity I've been a part of, I felt very prepared and I don't think you can get that anywhere else." Gibson's event experience included

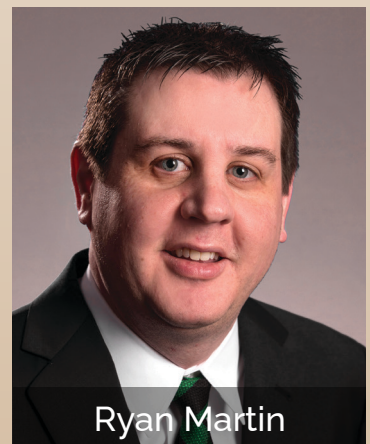
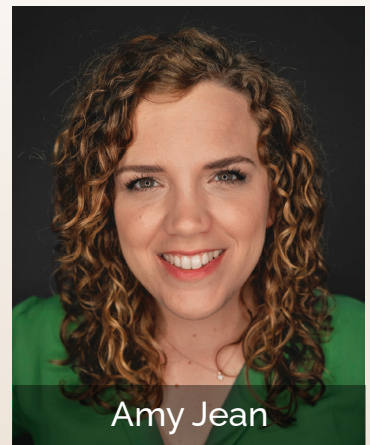
positions in Tuscaloosa with Dixie Pulp and Paper, Embassy Suites and Tuscaloosa River Market before she opened her own event business, Posh Occasions by Sheriah. Crafting unforgettable events that reflect the personalities and lifestyle of their hosts is her passion. She orchestrates weddings and other events – by offering clients a combination of fresh ideas, flawless attention to detail and logistical expertise to create memorable events for her clients.

Andrew Gipner, CFP®, AEP®, was chosen for his accomplishments in the field of family financial planning and counseling. Andrew, a two-time graduate of The University of Alabama, got a BS in education before earning his master's from CHES in financial planning and counseling in 2011. That same year, Gipner joined Longview Financial Advisors, Inc. in Huntsville, Alabama. There, he helped create the Cornerstone Service Model that focused on serving young professionals and has successfully brought clients to Longview under this model. He became an officer of the company in 2020 and serves as its secretary. Gipner is also a leader in his volunteer efforts having served as chair for the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors (NAPFA) Genesis board and been selected for the 2020 class of Leadership Greater Huntsville.

Honored for outstanding professional achievement in athletic training, Amy Jean, PC-A earned a Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training at CHES in 2008. After working for DCH Sports Medicine and Elite Sports Medicine in Nashville, she completed a master's as a physician assistant and began a new career in family practice. About her time at UA Jean said, "CHES laid a foundation that was so solid. The things I learned on a daily basis in the program, I use on a daily basis in my career." In 2014, she joined Southern Joint Replacement Institute in Nashville, bringing her mix of general medicine and athletic training skills to the practice. Next, Jean worked with hip arthroscopy specialist, Dr. JW Thomas Byrd, and advocated for the practice to hire their first athletic trainer in a clinical assistant role. In April 2020, she went to work at Harlem Hospital during the pandemic, helping to meet the increased need for healthcare professionals on the front lines in New York. Jean returned to Nashville in a new role as a physician assistant at Elite Sports Medicine and Orthopedics.

Anne Frances Lipscomb, RD, LDN, CNSC was selected for a Jack Davis Award for her professional accomplishments in nutrition. Because of her passion for providing the best possible medical nutrition therapy to her patients, Lipscomb strives to keep up-to-date on the latest evidence-based practices and is quick to implement new strategies to ensure care. Her colleagues lean on her for input on the most current recommendations and to draw insight from her years of experience. In caring for the most vulnerable of patient populations, the critically ill, Lipscomb knows it is crucial that her patients get the precise amount of energy and protein to optimize recovery and prevent deterioration. Her attention to detail and extensive knowledge in nutrition support are invaluable. Currently, she works as the Nutrition Support Service Team Leader at DCH Regional Medical Center.

The department of health science recognized Ryan J. Martin, PhD, of Winterville, North Carolina with a Jack Davis Professional Achievement Award. A professor of health science in East Carolina University's College of Health and Human Performance, Martin teaches and serves as the program director for the Master of Arts in Health Education. Prior to this appointment, he taught at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana where he got his master's. Earning his PhD at







Alison Sizemore



Sydney Wallace

CHES APPLAUDS EACH OF OUR JACK DAVIS PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS. WE ARE PROUD OF THEIR SUCCESSES AND APPRECIATE THE EXAMPLE THEY SET FOR STUDENTS WHO FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS.

UA, Martin served as an instructor in the department of health science. He has a robust research program that centers around gambling behavior and alcohol disorders. With a book he co-authored, "Change Your Gambling, Change Your Life: Strategies for Managing Gambling and Improving Your Finances, Relationships, and Health," Martin has increased knowledge on a recent and emerging gambling type – fantasy sports gambling.

Sara Sitsch received a Jack Davis Professional Achievement Award for her work in the field of sport hospitality. Upon graduation, she accepted the marketing coordinator position for The University of Houston Athletics Department, and soon after was promoted to assistant director of athletic marketing. In 2018, she brought her marketing expertise to the Academy Sports + Outdoors Headquarters in Greater Houston, Texas. As the company's corporate event and engagement planner, Sitsch created and executed events, including company givebacks, intramural leagues, holiday celebrations, health initiatives, veteran recognitions and community service outreach. Recently promoted to regional marketing manager, she now develops partnerships with local community influencers, partners with store directors to create and execute marketing plans and supports new stores' marketing efforts.

Alison Sizemore was recognized for her achievements in early childhood education. Alison graduated from the department of human development and family studies in 1999. After teaching in other programs in Birmingham and Vero Beach, Florida, Sizemore returned to Tuscaloosa and became a lead teacher in UA's Children's Program. She has served in this role for almost 20 years, promoting the physical, cognitive and social-emotional development of over 280 young children through a play-based approach. She has partnered with faculty doing conference presentations on collaboration in the classroom, partnering with parents and creative thinking in early childhood education. The Children's Program is a lab school for the department of HDFL, so in her role as lead teacher, Sizemore has also served as a mentor for hundreds of students pursuing a focus in early childhood education.

Sydney Wallace was selected for achievements in interior design. Sydney is associate project manager for CBRE Commercial Real Estate Services and is assigned to their Google account. After graduating from UA in 2011, Wallace earned a Master's in Architectural Studies, Urban Design from Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow, Scotland. She has worked as an urban planner, interior designer and project manager in Baltimore and San Francisco. Joining CBRE in 2019, her responsibilities range from budgeting, scheduling and overall execution of projects from conception and design through closeout. Projects for Google include tenant improvement and ground up developments with programs focusing on team space, food, fitness, wellness and outdoor amenity spaces. Wallace appreciated the support system from CHES faculty who encouraged her to enter competitions, apply to graduate school and elite firms. "This program gave me the confidence to try new things and follow my passion," said this graduate that Google now looks to for space designs.

SARA DENTON COX | JUSTIN DAVIS | SHERIAH GIBSON | ANDREW GIPNER | AMY JEAN | ANNE FRANCES LIPSCOMB | RYAN MARTIN | SARA SITSCH | ALISON SIZEMORE | SYDNEY WALLACE

# FROM START TO LAUNCH

## CQM Alum Helps Assure Mission Success

In the launch control center at Vandenberg Space Force Base, mission assurance manager and CHES graduate, Dr. Luke Becker, watched over NASA's November DART launch from behind an Alabama face mask. Sending a photo of himself to his advisor, Juanita 'Dr. Mac' McMath, he quipped "Look, a CQM alum is saving the planet!"

That Becker would eventually find himself in that control room wasn't always a given. Joining the Navy right out of high school, he first worked on radar systems and their associated power equipment. He received two years of advanced electronics training during his six years of service which would lay the foundation for his future career path. After leaving the Navy, Becker took a job in telecom, but found it unfulfilling saying, "I was looking for more." Encouraged by his wife, he decided to take a chance on pursuing his interests and challenging himself within the workforce.

Leaving telecom behind, Becker landed his first aerospace job at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C. working on a project for the International Space Station. During his three years there as a contractor he would often hear about "this applied physics laboratory," at Johns Hopkins University. He was told, "It's great, you need to get in there." In 2001, he did indeed 'get in there' and has been working on NASA

missions since. Over the years, Becker has worked his way up to become a member of APL's principal professional staff serving in his current role as a Mission Systems Assurance Manager.

Though by 2012 Becker was well-established in his quality assurance role

at JHU APL, he decided to set out on a mission of his own – in higher education. After years of taking selective engineering, computer programming and writing courses imparting an immediate benefit on his job, he finally collected enough credits and earned his bachelor's degree in 2014. Upon completing that milestone he began searching the internet for online graduate level programs in quality management. A Google search led him to Alabama and the CHES master's concentration in consumer quality management. Having been a fan of UA and seeing that he could earn the degree completely online, he took the plunge.

Of the curriculum he says, "[It] was geared towards everything I was already doing," adding, "One thing that really, really helped me was learning about all the theory that I had already, unknowingly, been putting into practice." His advisor, Dr. McMath says, "CQM provides not just the theory but also the application of knowledge through action research projects and assignments, preparing students to be leaders in quality management." Becker, noting a big difference from his undergraduate work adds, "You're not just being tested on knowledge, but are being challenged to really expand your thinking, you know, to be able to read something, synthesize it and articulate your takeaway on [a topic]."

He remarked that while most people get a degree first and then go into the workforce, he was established first in the workforce and followed that with a degree that helped him fine-tune his work methods through empirical research. He credits learning the theory behind the approaches he was taking with boosting his confidence in his role and confirming that he wasn't just "winging it."

In his capacity as a mission assurance manager, Becker has worked on several major NASA missions such as the Parker Solar Probe ([parkersolarprobe.jhuapl.edu](http://parkersolarprobe.jhuapl.edu)), DART ([dart.jhuapl.edu](http://dart.jhuapl.edu)) and Dragonfly ([dragonfly.jhuapl.edu](http://dragonfly.jhuapl.edu)). Launched in 2018, the Parker Solar Probe is currently making ground-breaking discoveries and shattering previous records in its study of the sun. Its closest pass to the sun will occur in 2024 and promises



*Credit: Carrie Becker*



even more new discoveries. Becker spent 10 years as the assurance manager for that program carrying it, as he says, "from cradle to grave."

His current mission, Dragonfly, is scheduled to launch in the summer of 2027 and will utilize data gleaned from the 13-year mission of NASA's Cassini spacecraft to further the study of Saturn's moon, Titan. Considered an analog to the very early Earth, Titan could provide clues to how life on our planet began. The Dragonfly craft, with its eight rotors, flies like a drone and resembles its insect namesake. This project marks

**...IT HAS TO BE PERFECT WHEN WE LAUNCH THIS THING. WE CAN'T GET THEM BACK AND FIX THEM ONCE THEY'RE IN SPACE.**

**LUKE BECKER**

the first time NASA will fly a multi-rotor vehicle on another planet. Thanks to Titan's dense atmosphere, it will also be the first craft that can fly to new places repeatedly to access surface materials.

But it was the DART, or Double Asteroid Redirection Test mission, that landed Becker in the launch control room that day last November. Though Becker was already working on Dragonfly, he was approached about a new technology NASA was going to fly. The team working on the DART mission called him and said they were struggling with the supplier who was building the roll-out solar arrays that would power the spacecraft. They asked if he could spare some time to go to California and help them get the solar arrays fabricated, tested, qualified and delivered. Thinking he might be out there a few weeks, he ended up spending every other month

over the course of eight months working on the project. Once the solar arrays were delivered to APL, he helped integrate them onto the DART spacecraft. At that point he assumed he was finished, but a few months later the mission systems assurance manager for the project realized she was going to have a conflict for the launch campaign. As her section supervisor and the person with the most experience sitting on a launch console, Becker was asked to support the launch of the DART spacecraft. That is how he came to be in the control center for NASA's first ever planetary defense campaign.

DART is the world's first full-scale mission to test current technology aimed at preventing an asteroid or comet from hitting Earth. The spacecraft will make a one-way trip to the binary asteroid, Didymos and its moonlet, Dimorphus. On a collision course with the smaller body, Dart will 'nudge' Dimorphus, to assess if a kinetic impact is able to redirect an asteroid. Thus, Becker's quip about helping to save the planet might one day be spot-on.

Scientific operations like these are shepherded by mission assurance teams from start to launch. From making a proposal for a mission, to design and development, to procuring components, to assembly, to testing and through the launch, these teams are at hand every step of the way to help ensure success. Becker likes to use systems-thinking when describing what he does, "there's a lot of engineering disciplines that participate, a lot of subsystem leads. They develop their subsystem, they test it, they deliver it and then they're done, where we stay on from start to finish. So, we really have that system-level view of the entire project." Becker continues, "We have open access to everyone on the project, regardless of organization. [Our role] spans hierarchical and organizational bounds. It's a unique role but to me, it's fun."

Distilling the process down to this, Becker says, "The system engineer wants to make sure they're building the right system while the mission assurance managers want to make sure they're building the system right." According to him, these nuances of the mindset and the approach to problem-solving while leading and managing the mission assurance effort help resolve issues during the project life-span.

Part of Becker's job requires frequent travel to procure flight hardware from all over the world and includes trips to assist with testing hardware during the manufacturing process. A task made difficult, he explains, because a company may build hundreds of something a day, but when his team requests only one or two pieces that are unique to a particular mission, some companies balk. He says, "They're not going to make a lot of money because we're asking them to change their process, do something special. You know, we need it done this way. . .it has

*Wearing Bama gear, Becker sits in Launch Control Center during DART launch. Image via NASA TV.*





to be perfect when we launch this thing. We can't get them back and fix them once they're in space." The need for perfection is why mission assurance teams adopt a zero-defects attitude. Becker continues, "We spend a lot of time testing all of the flight hardware individually and then as a system, as we integrate everything together before we even think we're ready to launch."

Zero-defects doesn't mean zero problems however, and Becker has several tools to facilitate solving those problems when they inevitably arise. "When we do have issues," he says, "the big thing for us is really understanding why it happened." Using root cause analyses, Ishikawa (fishbone) diagrams and the 5 Whys can help his teams better understand the exact circumstances surrounding an issue so they can preclude it from happening or put barriers in place so it won't happen again. His bottom line, "We can't have anything fail." With missions costing in the billions of dollars, the need for perfection is paramount.

While Becker is passionate about his work reaching for the stars at JHU APL, he has found time to push the envelope in education as well. After earning his MS in 2015, Becker went on to get his doctorate in organizational leadership at which point Dr. Mac, who had kept in touch with Becker, reached out to him about restructuring and teaching one of the master's level classes in the CQM program. "Taking a customer-centric approach to quality studies," says McMath, "we also include courses in leadership and facilitation skills."

Teaching the facilitation skills class allows Becker to share his knowledge of and appreciation for quality assurance with online students from across the nation. While he admits most students looking into the CQM program will not end up building spaceships for NASA, he believes the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills learned can be applied anywhere. McMath agrees saying "CQM would be beneficial for any student's professional pursuits because quality is a focus in all work environments, regardless of field."

Summing up his appreciation for the CQM program, Becker says, "I think it's just such a well-rounded skill set that students would get, because all of these skills are going to make you a more informed employee and a better critical thinker. Someone who's been exposed to this theory is just going to be more valuable to an organization."

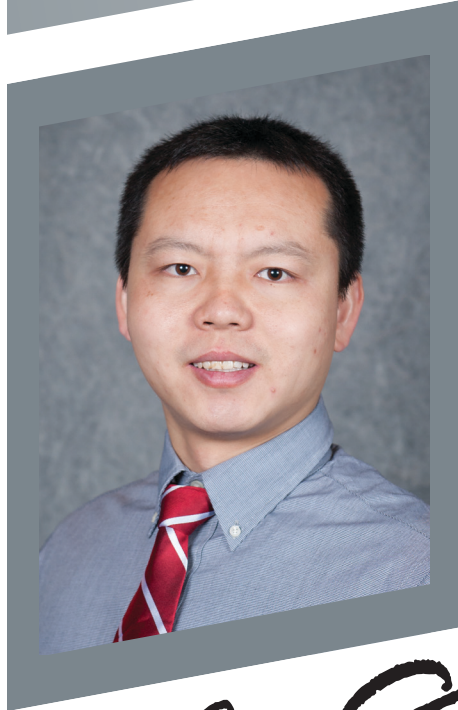
For those interested in this area of study, reach out to Dr. Juanita McMath at [jmcmath@ches.ua.edu](mailto:jmcmath@ches.ua.edu) or visit the program's website at [online.ua.edu/degrees/ms-in-hes-consumer-quality-management](http://online.ua.edu/degrees/ms-in-hes-consumer-quality-management) and start on a mission of your own!

• • • by Rosemary Klein

*Becker in front of the DART Spacecraft.  
Credit: Johns Hopkins APL/Ed Whitman*







# Faculty & Staff ACCOLADES

Celebrating the accomplishments  
of our CHES colleagues.

College of Human Environmental Sciences faculty and staff members continually strive to excel and serve with distinction, giving our students a rich academic environment in which to learn. We love to share their accomplishments.

Annually, the College recognizes faculty and staff members who are nominated by their peers or by their students for outstanding work. The following awards were presented at a faculty-staff meeting in late spring.

CHES recognized **Lori Greene's** teaching skills by giving her the 2021 Joseph S. Rowland Teaching Excellence Award. Greene has served as the director of our coordinated program in dietetics for nine years and an instructor in the department of human nutrition and hospitality management for 11 years. Every year, she supervises 25 nutrition students as they complete 1400 hours of practice in health care settings. Colleagues praise her efforts

to prop up her charges when they feel the pressure of the rigorous program and her commitment to ensure their success. In addition, she teaches NHM 101 in a stadium-sized classroom and somehow holds the attention of the 340 students sitting there. Beyond these roles, Greene volunteered her time to serve as a faculty mentor of the Student Dietetic Association.

The 2021 recipient of the HES Leadership Board Excellence in



**Pictured from left to right:** Lori Greene, Lingyan Kong, Beth Sherman, Melinda Lake, Casey Faulkner and Shirley Foster.

Scholarly Research Award was **Dr. Lingyan Kong**. Kong excels at securing external funding for his research and eagerly collaborates with interdisciplinary teams, including faculty from such diverse fields and departments as chemistry, biology, hospitality management and clothing, textiles and interior design. He also supports the success of and helps mentor investigators across multiple divisions and departments. Through his research, Kong works to improve food and nutrient delivery methods, enhance nutrient quality and the marketability of food products, develop innovative uses for food byproducts to address a wide range of nutritional needs, enhance quality of life and improve human health.

Receiving this year's CHES Distinguished Service Staff Award for non-exempt staff was **Beth Sherman** who has served the College for 10 years as an administrative specialist in the finance office. She is self-motivated, conscientious and takes great pride in her work. Sherman has

always performed the duties of her position in an exemplary manner but goes beyond what is required in her loyalty and dedication to our College. She continually seeks out ways to improve the work environment, encourage cohesiveness and create a positive work culture at CHES.

Academic advisor and program assistant for the athletic training program, **Melinda Lake**, received the 2021 CHES Distinguished Service Staff Award for exempt staff members. Lake is the initial point of contact for all students interested in athletic training. According to her nominator, she is intelligent, organized, passionate and kind-hearted. These characteristics, along with an ability to establish relationships with prospects and their families, have been incredibly important during AT's transition to a professional master's program. As an advisor, she is responsive to the students, available and compassionate.

Organizations outside our College acknowledge the exceptional

performance of our faculty and staff with awards, honors and appointments. Congratulations to these CHES notables.

Teachers, staff and REACH employees of **RISE Center** were honored with a Sam S. May Commitment to Service Award at UA's Fall Campus Assembly. The group was chosen for their creativity, innovation and commitment to providing early intervention and early childhood preschool services to the children at RISE.

Congratulations to **faculty, staff and department chair Dr. Robert Laird of our human development & family studies bachelor of science program** for receiving the UA's 2021 Provost's Assessment Award. A special thanks to assessment coordinator **Dr. Casey Totenhagen**.

A number of faculty and staff were recognized for providing outstanding academic guidance to our students. Each was nominated by students to receive UA's Outstanding Commitment to Advising award. Hats off to **Karen**





**ALVIN NIUH**

**Carpenter** and **Jennifer Humber** in student services, **Jason Blumenthal**, **Diana Garrett**, **Chartis Ivy-Rush** and **Martha Sears** from the department of human nutrition and hospitality management, **Melinda Lake** and **Jen Nickelson** from the department of health science, **Juanita McMath** from the department of consumer sciences and **Brian Taylor** from the department of clothing, textiles, and interior design.

**Casey Faulkner**, interior design senior instructor, was named the Dr. Mary Ann Potter Outstanding Educator of the Year for 2021 by the Alabama chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID.)

The Alabama State flag was flown over the State Capitol on February 11, 2022 in honor of **Dr. Shirley Foster** and to celebrate her retirement from service to the State. For the past thirteen years, department of clothing, textiles, and interior design chair Foster has helped to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historical places, as part of the Alabama Historical Commission. Interior design faculty **Ian Crawford** will be stepping into Foster's place as a commissioner.



**JAMIE GAGOS**

Hospitality management assistant professor, **Alvin Niu**, was honored with a Trailblazer Award by Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports. Recognized for his dedication in teaching and mentoring the next generation of hospitality and tourism leaders, Niu received the award at the inaugural Tourism Bash in November 2021.

**Dr. Jaye Thiel**, assistant professor in the department of human development and family studies, was invited to participate in a Global Symposium on Post-Pandemic Play hosted by the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education in March. This consortium of 11 leading researchers in play and learning was designed to stimulate conversation and change in how play can be incorporated in global post-COVID work for young children and their families.

Associate dean, **Dr. Deidre Leaver-Dunn**, was the first UA faculty member selected for an EAB Rising Higher Education Leaders Fellowship. Leaver-Dunn's participation will support professional development, provide opportunities to network with other educational leaders and generate ideas for EAB's ongoing research.



**AMANDA WILKERSON**

Assistant dean, **Dr. Melissa Wilmarth**, was selected for the 2021-2022 cohort of Leadership U at UA. She will also participate in the Southeastern Conference's Academic Development Leadership Program.

CHES research faculty have been busy advancing our mission of improving lives. Here are just a few highlights of interesting projects that have been funded this year.

**Dr. Jamie Gajos**, assistant professor in the department of human development and family studies, received a federally-funded early-career investigator award that will provide her with the support to establish an independently-funded, interdisciplinary research program focused on reducing substance use and related health-risk behaviors in criminal justice and other high-risk populations, and to disseminate the research findings to inform future interventions.

**Dr. Amanda Wilkerson**, assistant professor in the department of health science, has been named associate editor of the American Journal of Health Promotion. Wilkerson will join a team of five other Associate Editors who review research manuscripts, field peer reviewer inputs and make final determinations about the readiness of

articles for publication in the scientific periodical for research promoting healthy behaviors.

Research partners, **Dr. Jen Nickelson**, associate professor from our department of health science and Dr. Joy Bradley from UA's College of Community Health Sciences, have joined with community partner Felecia Lucky from the Black Belt Community Foundation to explore the intersection of racism, rurality and childhood obesity. Their project, funded over the course of three years, will examine the experience of children in Wilcox County Head Start programs with a goal of raising awareness, building coalitions and developing policies to modify causes of childhood obesity.

**Dr. KT Kim**, consumer sciences associate professor, received a Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation grant to examine Asian Americans' financial capability. According to Kim, "This study will expand our currently limited understanding of the financial capability of Asian Americans. Gaining insights into the financial capability of Asian Americans is critical for effectively addressing the needs of this growing and diverse community. It will provide a robust empirical analysis that can

inform programs and policies designed to help underserved populations."

Consumer sciences assistant professor **Dr. Madelaine L'Esperance**, along with researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Howard University, secured funding for a study titled, "Social Security Interactions with Child Tax Credit (CTC) Expansion." The project will examine how the expansion of the Child Tax Credit has affected low-income and vulnerable families. L'Esperance has also been named a research fellow at UWM's Center for Financial Security.

The National Football League (NFL) partnered with four research universities including The University of Alabama to expand its collection of data regarding on-field head impacts. **Drs. Lizzie Elder and Ryan Moran**, athletic training professors, are collecting data from mouthguard sensors used by UA football players to determine the frequency and severity of impacts for specific sessions, drills, plays, equipment choices, impact sources, and player behaviors. A secondary research goal will be the identification of potential interventional measures related to equipment, training or behavior that reduce head impact exposure.

The Alabama Department of Human Resources awarded **Drs. April Kendrick and Kim Blitch** (both faculty with HDFS) a grant for 2022-2024 to create and build an Infant Toddler Professional Network for the state of Alabama. This network will provide opportunities for specialized training, technical assistance and coaching with highly skilled specialists, and professional enrichment to infant and toddler educators in childcare settings. It is a collaborative effort utilizing numerous partnerships throughout the state to help support and strengthen the workforce serving children from birth to age three and elevate the standards of care for our youngest population in Alabama. The network will also develop a credential recognizing educator expertise with regards to infant and toddler development.

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees has endorsed the appointment of **Dr. Michael Stellefson**, professor in the department of health science, as the Academic Chair in the College of Human Environmental Sciences. This 3-year appointment will strengthen his research efforts which focus on COPD in disadvantaged adults with low socioeconomic status.



**JEN NICKELSON**

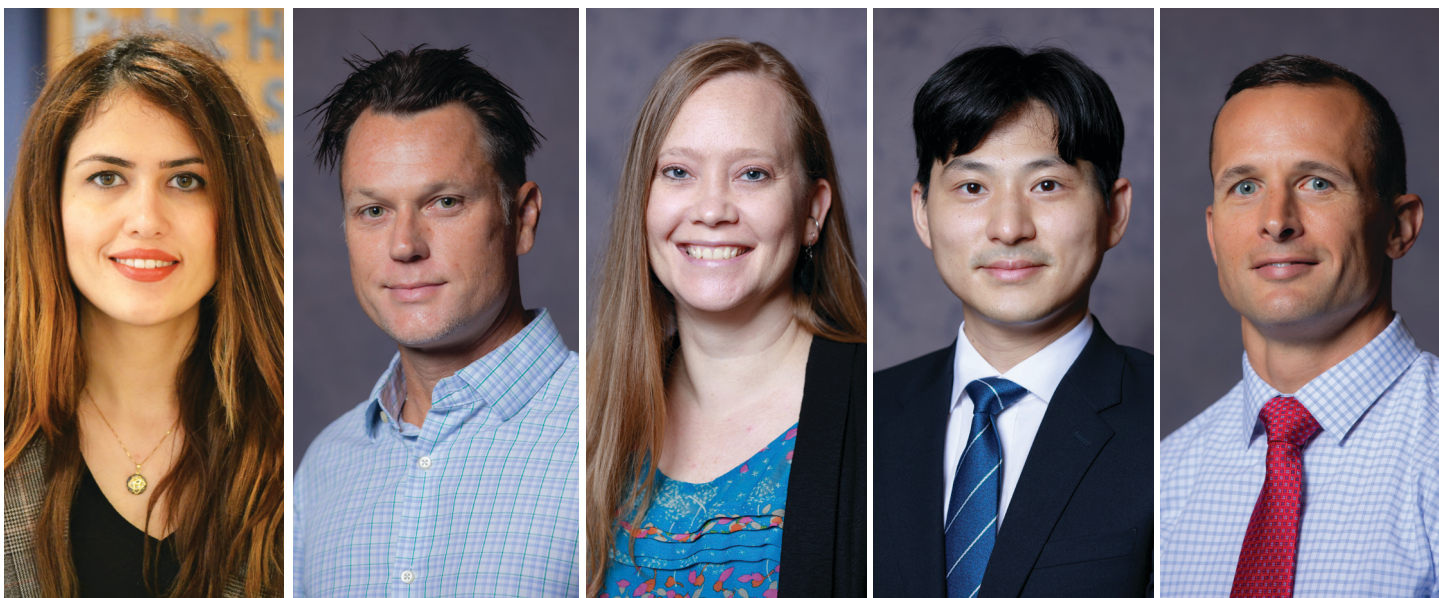


**MADELAINE L'ESPERANCE**



**MICHAEL STELLEFSON**





## NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

**Dr. Deniz Azarmanesh** is an assistant professor in the department of human nutrition and hospitality management who teaches lifecycle nutrition. She earned both her master's in nutrition sciences and doctoral degree in public health, with a major in nutrition and a minor in epidemiology, from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Dr. Azarmanesh completed her dietetic internship through Illinois State University and is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). Her current research focuses on the efficacy of nutrition assessment tools in evaluating the inflammatory potential of diet, and the role of nutrition on inflammation, allostatic load and mental health in women at different stages of life.

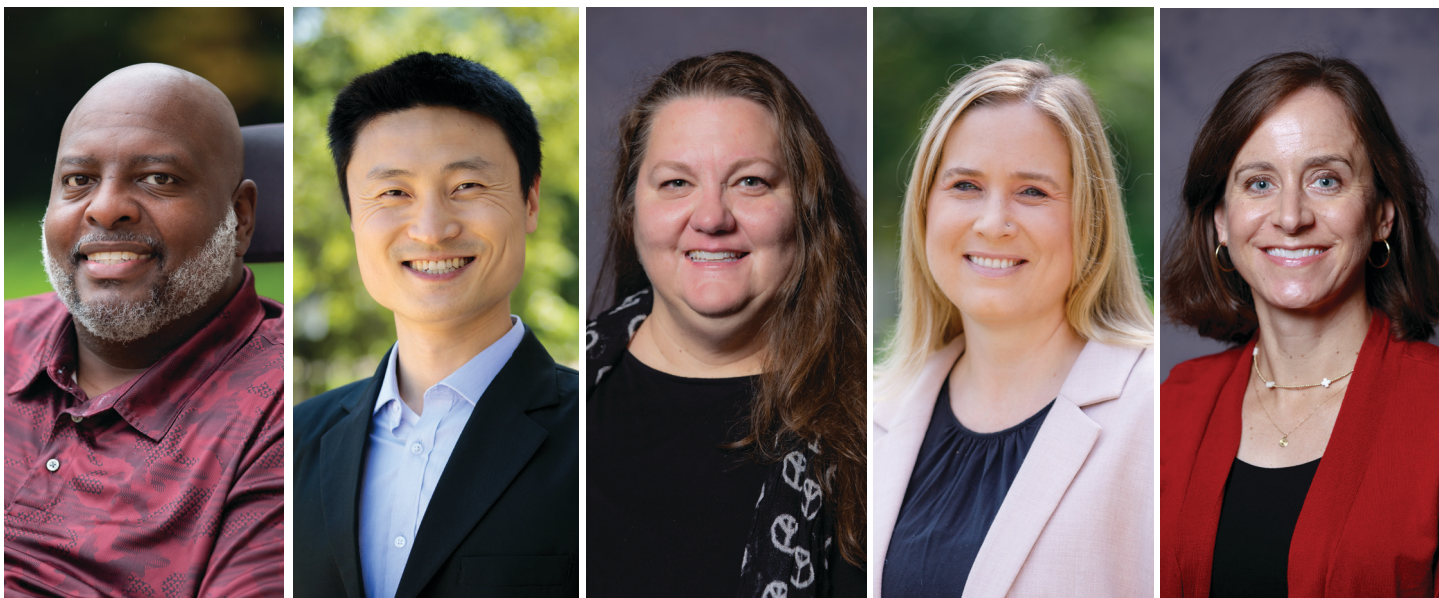
**Dr. Trevor Bopp** is an assistant professor in the department of human nutrition and hospitality management teaching sport hospitality. Prior to joining CHES, Dr. Bopp was a faculty member at the University of Florida where he earned both a master's in sport management and a PhD in health and human performance with a concentration in sport management. He earned a second master's in business technology from Marymount University. His undergraduate degree in psychology is from the University of Mary Washington. His research focuses on the influence of race and identity on access, opportunities and experiences across the sport and physical activity landscape.

**Dr. Sarah A. Burcher** is an assistant professor in human environmental sciences who teaches the HES compass course required of all freshmen, a 300-level course on professionalism and multidisciplinary collaboration, and

volunteerism and civic responsibility. Dr. Burcher earned a PhD in family social science at the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in business administration with a focus in nonprofit management from Lipscomb University, and a bachelor's degree in human development and family studies from the Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on economic justice by exploring the intersection of family, work and finance.

**Dr. Jinsu Byun** is an assistant professor teaching in the department of human nutrition and hospitality management. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and an Master of Science in Sport Sociology from Seoul National University in South Korea. He completed his doctoral degree in kinesiology with an emphasis of sport management and policy at the University of Georgia. Dr. Byun's primary research goal expands our knowledge of sport governance, organizations and sustainable sport event management.

**Dr. Justin Goins**, an assistant professor in human environmental sciences, teaches a research methods course required of all graduate students, a 300-level course on professionalism and multidisciplinary collaboration and also teaches in the athletic training program within the department of health science. Dr. Goins received his Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training from The University of Alabama, his master's degree in physical education with an emphasis in athletic training from the University of South Carolina, and his doctoral degree in exercise science from UA.



**Pictured from left to right:** Deniz Azarmanesh, Trevor Bopp, Sarah Burcher, Jinsu Byun, Justin Goins, Kareem McNeal, Fei Men, Jaye Thiel, Leah Tompkins and Kelly Wingo.

**Kareem McNeal** is a health promotion instructor in the department of health science. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Human Performance in 1996 at The University of Alabama and, while here, was part of the 1992 National Championship football team. McNeal earned his Master of Arts in Health Education/Promotion from UA in 1999. He became a wellness instructor at Shelton State Community College, and for over 20 years, taught weight training and general conditioning as well as personal health, stress management and care and prevention of athletic injuries. Although McNeal joined the CHES faculty in 2021, he worked for our College at the RISE Center while earning his master's degree from 1996 - 1999.

**Dr. Fei Men**, an assistant professor in the department of consumer sciences, earned a PhD in consumer science at University of Wisconsin-Madison after obtaining a bachelor's diploma in business in Brazil. He received postdoc training from University of Toronto and the Institute for Research on Poverty. Fei is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional who teaches Retirement Planning, Public Policy and Consumer Economics. Men's latest research projects used population surveys and administrative data in the U.S. and Canada to study food insecurity, health inequality and social policies. His work has been featured in national and international media outlets including U.S. News and World Report, Reuters, CBC and Al Jazeera.

**Dr. Jaye Thiel**, assistant professor in the department of human development and family studies, earned her doctoral

degree in language and literacy education at the University of Georgia with a focus on early childhood studies and qualitative research, her undergraduate and master's degrees in communication sciences and disorders are from UGA. Early in her career, she taught in public school systems then at UAB, UGA and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She has received several awards at the local and national level for her teaching, research and writing. Committed to issues of social class and educational equity in the context of early childhood studies, Dr. Thiel conducts research and teaches a graduate course, curriculum planning in early childhood education II.

**Dr. Leah Tompkins** received her undergraduate degree in health promotion from Emporia State University in her home state of Kansas. She went on to earn a Master of Science in Health Education from Texas A&M University and a Master of Education in Student Personnel Administration from UNC-Greensboro. Dr. Tompkins completed her EdD in student affairs leadership at the University of Georgia in 2020. Tompkins joined the department of health science to coordinate the master's level programs and to guide students through their culminating experience requirements.

**Kelly Wingo**, who served for more than seven years as an academic advisor and adjunct instructor for the department of health science, has joined CHES as a full-time faculty member. Wingo earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Berry College and Master of Arts in Health Science from The University of Alabama. She is also a Certified Health Education Specialist, CHES®.



# Of Note

Proud of the work that CHES graduate **Geron Countess** is doing as a first-grade teacher at the York Day School in their Pennsylvania hometown, parents **Rebecca and Frank Countess** expressed their appreciation in a meaningful way by creating two scholarships for future students. A number of people were instrumental in their daughter's successful collegiate career. HES Leadership Board member, Millie Chastain, played a role in Geron's decision to come to The University of Alabama and now has an endowed scholarship named in her honor. Once Geron got to campus, human development and family studies faculty shared their knowledge and passion for the welfare of young children, instilling in Geron a love for her chosen field. Two faculty members hold a special place in her heart. To honor them, the Dr. Kimberly Blitch and Dr. Maria Hernandez-Reif Endowed Scholarship was created.

**Dr. Erin (Patenaude) McKinley** received an outstanding dietetics educator award from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the world's largest organization of nutrition and dietetics practitioners. Presented the award in the didactic program category for the South Central Region in April 2022, she was recognized for her outstanding teaching, mentoring and leadership skills. In addition to this award, she was also granted status as a Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FAND) in May of 2022.

In 2021, McKinley was also honored by the Louisiana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as the Outstanding Dietitian of the Year.

McKinley is an associate professor in the LSU School of Nutrition and Food Sciences and director of the didactic program in dietetics. She also serves as graduate coordinator for the school. In addition to her administrative and teaching duties, she hosts a podcast focused on student success titled "Geauxing All In: Get the Edge You Need to Succeed" on YouTube.



*Dr. Erin McKinley*

A two-time graduate of CHES, McKinley completed a master's in human nutrition in 2013 and a doctorate in health education and health promotion in 2017. Congratulations Dr. McKinley, we are proud of the work you do!



**CHES alumni and friends, please help us stay in touch!**  
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With the construction of Drummond Lyon Hall, the College of Human Environmental Sciences will provide space to conserve and celebrate fashion history and groom fashion trendsetters of the future. Work on the new home to the College's clothing and textiles program and The Fashion Archive is set to begin in the Fall.

