2015 State of the College Address

Dr. Andrew Balas, Dean
College of Allied Health Sciences
Augusta University
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Thanks to the creativity and hard work of our faculty and staff and to our many talented students, the College of Allied Health Sciences is making great progress and completed an excellent academic year:

- We launched new programs
- We grew our enrollment
- We increased our research
- We expanded our practice plan

The university moves forward. We welcome our new president, Dr. Brooks Keel, who has and continues to serve academia with great leadership, distinction and integrity. We thank him for the many positive initiatives he is already implementing. We also appreciate the unwavering support and leadership of Provost Gretchen Caughman.

Our college is benefiting tremendously from the university leadership support. We also want to do our best in supporting the strategic initiatives of the university and in serving the people of Georgia.

We appreciate excellent new colleagues in our college:

- New assistant professors: Rachel Addy (HIA part time), Gina Besenyi (MPH), Emily Greene (PT), Stephanie Johnson (OT), Jeffrey Swift (OT)
- Part-time Instructors: Regina Garrard (NMT), Jack Hanson (PT), Meghan Hall (OT), Lara Ann Lott (DH), Megan Mobley (PT), Rafael Salazar (OT), Sakunthala Sundaram (PT), Benjamin Thomas (PT)
- Welcome back (part time): Malorie Novak (PT), Mimi Owen (NMT)
- Dean’s Office: Aubre Keenan, Director of Business Operations/Practice Plan; CharAnne Powell, Administrative Associate
- Greenblatt Library: Ansley Stuart, embedded Allied Health Librarian

We welcome our new name, Augusta University. As one of our students, Will Jackson (DPT ’18), wrote me, “...we look forward to seeing the name change come to fruition and its effect on us and the surrounding community.”

Health care is a team sport. Five million clinicians, therapists, managers, technicians, administrators and assistants keep it all going. Demand for these practitioners is expected to grow nearly 25 percent by 2025. Through 2022, job growth in allied health continues:

- much faster than average for medical records and health information technicians, medical and clinical laboratory technologists, radiation therapists, dental hygienists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and physician assistants, and
- faster than average for nuclear medicine technologists.
It is worth noting as the numbers are growing, there are 15 educational programs in CAHS.

- Undergraduate: Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS-BS), Dental Hygiene (DH), Health Information Administration (HIA), Nuclear Medicine Technology (NMT), Radiation Therapy (RadT), Respiratory Therapy (RT)
- Doctoral: Applied Health Sciences (PhD-APH), Physical Therapy (DPT)
- Master’s: Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS-MS), Medical Illustration (MI), Occupational Therapy (OT), Physician Assistant (PA), Public Health (MPH)
- Post-baccalaureate: HIA certification, Augusta Area Dietetic Internship (AADI)

CAHS leads enrollment trends (2011-15). Due to consolidation, demographic trends and other factors, there has been a decrease in GRU enrollment in recent years. During the same five years, enrollment in the College of Allied Health Sciences grew by 26 percent.

For example, the public health program has grown from an enrollment of about 20 students to 74. Four years ago the program had one concentration. Today it has four with more to come. Additionally, the program achieved successful reaccreditation for the maximum of seven years. We appreciate the good work of the program leaders and faculty.

**CAHS means success!** In AY15, we had a 94 percent retention rate and 90 percent first-pass licensure rate. With the leadership of our new department chair, Gianluca De Leo, and faculty members, the respiratory therapy program completed a curriculum review to further strengthen retention rates and student success.

We welcome our newest department, the Department of Clinical and Digital Health Sciences. It comes from the merger of Clinical and Environmental Health Sciences with Health Management and Informatics. The department offers clinical and educational programs in respiratory therapy, health information administration and nutrition (AADI), supports college-level public health initiatives, provides vision for research and commercialization opportunities in health technology, and develops new models and technologies related to personalized, precision medicine.

Let me mention a few faculty accomplishment highlights:

- Dr. Michael Iwama, chair of Occupational Therapy: invited speaker at OT conferences worldwide, from the United Kingdom to Japan, California to Kenya
- Dr. Pavani Rangachari, interim associate dean for Practice/Community Health: appointed standing member of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Health Information Technology Research Study Section through 2018
- Assistant Professor Sharon Chestnut (RadT): appointed vice-chair of the Medical Dosimetry Chapter of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists 2015-16 House of Delegates
- Assistant Professor Krishnan Prabakaran (NMT): president-elect of the Georgia Society of Nuclear Medicine Technologists
- Dr. Greg Passmore, NMT program director: given $10,000 Program Grant from the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging to support development of a graduate program in molecular imaging
- Dr. Charlotte Chatto (PT): one of just two GRU faculty members named a 2015-16 Faculty Development Fellow
Transitioning in our college:
- Amanda Behr, Interim Chair of Medical Illustration
- Mimi Owen, Professor Emerita of Nuclear Medicine Technology
- Art Taft, Professor Emeritus of Respiratory Therapy

We’re number one! In 2015, CAHS graduated more students, 229, than any other college in the enterprise, including MCG. With 14 more graduates counted from The Graduate School in CAHS programs, our total reaches 243! Our college may not have the highest enrollment, but we have the not-secret recipe that graduates almost every student we admit.

For the second time in three years, the recipient of the prestigious John F. Beard Award for Compassionate Care – the university’s highest student accolade – came from the College of Allied Health Sciences! The Physician Assistant program showed the power of its excellent educational model yet again. Congratulations to Jenny Dickson (’15).

CAHS students are diverse. We are very proud that our student body is comparable with the state of Georgia in the ratio of white, African-American, Hispanic and other minorities. The diversity in our learning environment and in the leadership of our college should be the foundation of further successes.

- Tasha Obrin (MI): Student Best of Show Award, AADI 69th annual meeting
- Ibsa Abdi (CLS-MS): top honors, Graduate Student Poster Competition, ASCLS 2015 Annual Meeting
- Ariel Benton (NMT): Regent’s Presidential Scholarship Award
- 31st annual GRU Graduate Research Awards: James Viebrock (MPH), Excellence in Public Health Research; Brittany King (MI), Excellence in Educational Multimedia; Jeremiah Marshall, Olivia Crosby and Ashley Moore (CLS), CAHS Excellence in Research

We are also proud of the leadership and active involvement of our students:
- CAHS Student Advisory Group established
- Muslim Student Association, led by Asheeba Baksh (PT) – GRU’s best new student organization
- HIA seniors traveled to Washington, D.C. for Hill Day activities
- PT and OT students went to Atlanta during legislative days at the Capitol

In Uganda on clinical rotation, three PA students – Lauren Beatty, Shelby Boggus, and James Torell – met a teenager in dire need of surgery to correct a congenital heart defect. They took it upon themselves to get him to a specialist and then raised $30,000 to fund the surgery.

Our progress is not slowing down as we are moving forward. Program development plans for this academic year include:
- Bachelor of Science in Health Services
- Master of Health Sciences in Athletic Training
- Master of Health Science with a Major in Health Informatics
- Clinical doctorate in Occupational Therapy
- Certificate Program in Public Health
Thanks to the leadership of our Academic Associate Dean Lester Pretlow and our program directors, the student recruitment efforts have been elevated to a new and higher level:

- Increased search ability on the Web: targeted programs with ReachLocal, Inc.
- Relationships forged with Georgia Military College, Georgia Perimeter College and Aiken Tech
- Participated in as many statewide recruiting events as possible
- Increased focus on historically black colleges

Augusta University needs to grow its undergraduate student enrollment. CAHS wants to be an active and effective member of the team that achieves success. Our college is committed to grow undergraduate enrollment and support other colleges in increasing theirs.

- Management by objectives
- Family model of education
- Program specific plan for growth
- Bachelor of Science in Health Services
- Cyber Security Certificate program
- Undergraduate to graduate initiatives

We had many remarkable academic successes, with new programs attracting more students:

- Ph.D. in Applied Health Sciences fields first class
- M.D.-M.P.H. dual degree accepts first student
- 120 applicants for 12 slots in Augusta Area Dietetic Internship program
- Physician Assistant bridge program graduates first students Dec. 2015

Today is a fitting opportunity to recognize one of our longest-serving colleagues, someone who has led a premier educational program to unparalleled success, Bonnie Dadig. Bonnie started to lead our Physician Assistant program in 1984. According to several rankings, this program has achieved great national success. The ranking is very high in *U.S. News & World Report* and in the feedback of students and graduates. It is the strongest and most successful contributor to our clinical practice plan. The PA department is one of our most successful extramural fundraisers. Bonnie Dadig’s leadership style is very unusual, very family oriented and very successful. A few months ago, she completed her 30th year of service in leading the program to outstanding accomplishments.

We had successful reaccreditation visits. The MPH program was reaccredited through 2022 and the CLS program through 2020. Our rankings were strong: Graduateprograms.com ranked the PA program #1 by and PT #18. As part of our international initiatives, CAHS Department of Physical Therapy offered the first TCM course.

We are grateful for the excellent support by the CAHS Advisory Board members: Board Chair Dr. Elizabeth Leibach, senior research scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Jim Bernstein, managing partner of Milton Ruben Chevrolet; Brett D. Brannon, co-owner of Georgialina Physical Therapy; Dr. Paul Fischer, owner of the Center for Primary Care; Col. Michael Weber, Commander of Eisenhower Army Medical Center; Bellinger Moody, chief executive officer of Medac, Inc.; Dr. Fred Mullins, medical director and president of the Joseph M. Still Burn Centers; Dr. Jan Scholer, chief executive officer of Xytex Cryo International; and Dr. Dennis Skelley, president of Georgia Rehabilitation Institute.
There has been a remarkable growth in research productivity since 2013: the number of grants submitted quadrupled, number of awards received went up 41 percent, funds received doubled, publications are up 62 percent, new research faculty and a grant development specialist have been hired, intramural grant program and international research collaborations were established, and laboratory space for CAHS researchers increased. Let me also add that the number of awards received showed a more favorable trend than the university’s average. We appreciate the tremendous work of our research faculty and the leadership of our Associate Dean for Research Abiodun Akinwuntan.

Success happens in our very collaborative research laboratories. Many of our college's accomplished faculty are recognized experts in numerous health care fields. They engage in creative, innovative research with fellow expert researchers and clinicians with similar interests. Our laboratories are clustered in three core concentrations: rehabilitation, injury prevention and quality of healthcare.

We are proud to mention several faculty research highlights:

- Dr. Nasrul Hoda (MLIRS) received two NIH R21 grants and one R43 grant, plus funding from KACST-NSTIP of Saudi Arabia for research on remote ischemic conditioning and stroke
- Associate Professor Mohan Wakade (PT) received a four-year, $1,058,000 VA grant for research into the role of niacin in Parkinson’s disease
- Dr. Raghavan Raju (MLIRS) was appointed to a four-year term on the standing NIH Aging Systems and Geriatrics Study Section in the Center for Scientific Review
- Dr. Hannes Devos (PT) partners with University of Georgia to study ability to drive after concussion
- Two Pilot Study Research grants from the Intramural Grants Program went to PT faculty members Dr. Raymond Chong, for the study of niacin supplementation in Parkinson’s disease, and Dr. Miriam Cortez-Cooper, for examination of aldosterone in hypertension

We are sources of research innovation. Just announced! The Kinesiology Pro-Consult app created by Assistant Professor Jason Hughes has won the Golden Award in the USA App Design competition from Design100. The program helps students quickly learn range of motion and patient positioning with 3D anatomical models and video. There were nearly 7,000 downloads in 25 countries in just five months. The award selection was made by a panel of industry experts as well as public ratings.

Our research success would not be complete without offering opportunities and sharing accomplishments with our students. Here are a few student highlights:

- PT student Lisa Marie Cundley received a research fellowship from the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Rehabilitation
- CLS graduate students presented research posters at the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Sciences Annual Meeting
- NMT students received three poster awards at the Georgia Society of Nuclear Medicine Technologists Annual Meeting
- MPH students submitted abstracts to the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting
- MPH, MI and CLS students were honored at 2015 GRU Graduate Research Awards

The Dean’s Seminar Series plays a key role in bringing high-profile speakers and great discussions to our college. Let me highlight the next event on Thursday, Oct. 22 at noon, "Neurorestoration after Stroke: A Vascular Perspective,” by an outstanding researcher and accomplished academic leader, Susan C.
Fagan, PharmD, BCPS, FCCP. Dr. Fagan is professor of pharmacy at University of Georgia, adjunct professor of neurology at Augusta University, and founding director of our MCG Center for Pharmacy and Experimental Therapeutics.

Our college supports the Cyber Institute, a major nationally significant initiative of Augusta University. CAHS contributions include Cyber Security in Health Care Settings course, participation in the advisory board, joint peer-reviewed publication on privacy and access of electronic health records (MEDINFO), joint NIH grant application, collaborative development of the cyber security certificate program, support for the faculty search

**Our college also offers excellent faculty practice opportunities** through Georgia Regents Health Professions Associates, Inc. Numerous practice opportunities are available on campus, in the community and across the state. Service models include a Supplemental Income (SI) Model, Clinical Educator (CE) Model, Salary Recovery (SR) Model and Extramural Project Model. This past year, our clinical services further expanded to Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital, where we provide inpatient rehab service for patients from all over Georgia.

GRHPA successfully increased its overall revenues in addition to launching significant new services. Direct contributions to faculty members’ pay came to $194,527 and support for CAHS activities was $74,700. The most active departments were Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy. Congratulations, and we are looking forward to another successful year.

**The good news is that our strategic plan is on the right track** towards successful completion. Applications are up 24 percent, acceptances are up 18 percent, research funding is up 82 percent, clinical revenue is up 5 percent, and tuition revenue is up 3 percent.

Our FY15 budget shows that we essentially cover our expenses of operation from tuition revenues, about $10 million each. We also recognize that the university receives state appropriations support in return for controlling its tuition rates and providing valuable services, primarily education. Based on university-wide ratios, the work of our college attracts considerable state support needed to run the many valuable and much appreciated infrastructural services of our university.

**In moving forward we need to see the big picture.** Let’s make the connection between our daily responsibilities and their overall link to the college and the institution’s goals. There are some challenges waiting for us that I have no doubt we will meet successfully:

- Refining plans and charting our course for further growth
- Linking revenues and expenses in budgeting
- Service expansion and administrative simplification in the practice plan
- Generous data sharing (SCH, research, fundraising, etc.)
- Friend-raising and fundraising strengthened
- More emphasis on research innovation
- Expanding community and industry partnerships
We are proud that the many small actions we take in our everyday work continues to lead us to the realization of our CAHS Vision:

*To be a nationally and internationally recognized leader in applied health sciences education, research, innovation and service.*

Thank you! It is all made possible by you, our dedicated faculty, staff, students, university leadership and community supporters. We have every reason to look forward to another great academic year.