

# PARTNERS

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR RURAL HEALTH

SPRING 2022

- Rural Health Scholars
- Rural Medical Scholars
- Rural Alabama Health Alliance
- Rural Minority Health Scholars
- Rural Community Health Scholars
- Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Marinex E. Heersink School of Medicine
- Auburn University Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Alabama A&M Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program
- Medical Association of the State of Alabama
- The Area Health Education Centers Program
- Alabama Academy of Family Physicians
- Board of Medical Scholarship Awards
- Alabama Health Professions Advisors
- Alabama Rural Health Association
- Alabama Farmers Federation
- AgroMedicine Policy Board

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**

College of  
Community Health Sciences  
Rural Programs

# PARTNERS

SPRING 2022

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 DIRECTOR'S TAKE
- 2 TUSCALOOSA RURAL PRE-MEDICAL INTERSHIP
- 3 CONVOCATION WILL CELEBRATE RURAL MEDICAL SCHOLARS/ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
- 4 SNAPS ROUND-UP

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## OUR MISSION

Recruiting and  
preparing rural  
Alabama students for  
health careers.

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# DIRECTOR'S TAKE



*“Trust that the treasure we look for is hidden in the ground on which we stand.”* – Henri Nouwen

In this edition of *Partners*, I want to update you about yet another new program that we are piloting in summer 2022. As you are aware, our pipeline begins in high school and extends through residency, with the purpose of producing physicians for underserved areas of rural Alabama. The Rural Health Scholars Program and Rural Minority Health Scholars Program bring high school students from rural Alabama with an interest in a health-care career to the UA campus. These students come and live on our campus for 5 weeks during the summer and attend classes at UA for college credit. They also travel to rural hospitals, listen to seminars on careers in health professions, and participate in hands-on-workshops to help demonstrate what a career in medicine might look like. The Rural Medical Scholars Program provides an avenue to medical school admission for students from rural areas who wish to return to rural Alabama to practice primary care medicine. In the last edition, I described a new program that links our students to The University of Alabama Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency Program, which we hope will keep more of our rural students who are interested in family medicine in our state to practice.

We have noticed with some alarm that our applicant pool over the past 5-10 years seems to be shrinking. Indeed, it is a national trend that there are fewer medical students with rural backgrounds. A 2019 study led by Dr. Scott Shipman, the Association of American Medical Colleges director of Primary Care Initiatives and Clinical Innovations, showed that the number of students from rural areas declined by 28% between the years of 2002 and 2017 while the overall number of medical students increased by 30%. Rural students made up only 4.3% of the student bodies of our allopathic medical schools in 2017, and most alarmingly students from underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups with rural backgrounds made up less than 0.5% of new medical students in 2017.

In response to our decline in applicants, this summer we will be adding a piece to the Rural Health Leaders pipeline, targeting students who are in college or newly graduated. With grant support from the Family Medicine Department at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine, we are piloting the Tuscaloosa Rural Premedical Internship. Based on the successful program run by our colleagues in Huntsville, this internship will target college students who are interested in practicing rural primary care medicine. They will come to the UA campus to participate in seminars, field trips and workshops, and shadow primary care doctors in Tuscaloosa. They will then travel back home to shadow for two weeks with a physician in their rural community. The Huntsville program has been successful in guiding students to our programs for medical school admission, and we are hopeful that our internship will do the same.

Another change that we are making has to do with our program personnel. LaKeshia Whigham, our long-time program assistant, has been promoted to program coordinator to run the new summer college internship. She will also coordinate our undergraduate recruiting efforts, building relationships with health professions advisors at colleges around the state. We want to make sure that rural pre-medical students across Alabama know about our program, and one of the best ways to make ourselves known is to have a close connection with their health professions advisors. We will focus not only on the major universities in our state, but also smaller four-year institutions, with an emphasis on HBCUs, to help expand the diversity that we so desperately need in medicine. We will also focus on community colleges, where many of our eventual candidates start their academic careers. We want to connect with these students early, before they decide to go to another medical school or give up on their dream of medicine altogether. We know that the physicians of the future are in the colleges and universities of our great state, but they need to know we are searching for them. You can help us by speaking about our programs in your local communities and pointing students with a desire to practice rural medicine to us. Thank you all for your continued support.

**DR. DRAKE LAVENDER**  
DIRECTOR OF RURAL PROGRAMS

# TUSCALOOSA RURAL PRE-MEDICAL INTERNSHIP

The College of Community Health Sciences began a new program this year for college students in pre-medical studies who are interested in rural primary care. The first class of students in the Tuscaloosa Rural Pre-Medical Internship begin this summer.

The internship is a seven-week program that provides opportunities for students to learn about the health needs of rural Alabama residents, particularly in the fields of family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics, and gain a better understanding of the day-to-day life of family medicine doctors. The program also seeks to enhance students' understanding of medical school and increase their competitiveness for medical school admission.

The Tuscaloosa Rural Pre-Medical Internship is part of CCHS Rural Programs and its Rural Health Leaders Pipeline. The

pipeline is a sequence of programs from high school through medical school that recruit students from rural Alabama interested in working as future doctors and other health-care professionals in rural communities.

This year's internship is May 31-July 15. Students will spend five weeks at CCHS and two weeks with a family medicine physician near their hometown.

To be eligible for the internship, students must have completed four semesters of undergraduate coursework, obtained an overall GPA of a B range or higher and scored at least a 22 on the ACT or a 1200 on the SAT. Only rural Alabama residents are accepted.

# MOORE RECEIVES PROMINENT UA AWARD

By Leslie Zganjar



Cynthia Moore, assistant director and founder of the Rural Scholars Program at the College of Community Health Sciences, received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, a prestigious University of Alabama award that recognizes excellence and service to humanity.

In 1993, Moore helped establish the Rural Health Scholars and Rural Minority Health Scholars programs, which are designed to expose rural high school students to health-care professions and to encourage them to consider careers in health and return to rural Alabama communities to practice. These two programs are apart of Rural Programs.

In addition, Moore has been the advisor to the UA Afro-American Gospel Choir for more than 25 years, creating

bonds across campus and the state. She recently partnered with Auburn University to host the annual Unity Concern, which benefits a philanthropic cause in either the Tuscaloosa or Auburn community. The mission of the choir is to provide a home for students interested in performing gospel music and dance specific to African American culture.

During fall 2020, Moore assisted with COVID-19 testing efforts on campus, helping to make testing more accessible to faculty, staff and students.



# CONVOCATION WILL CELEBRATE RURAL MEDICAL SCHOLARS

The College of Community Health Sciences will celebrate its 2021-22 class of Rural Medical Scholars on April 24, 2022, during a convocation ceremony at Hotel Capstone on The University of Alabama campus.

The ceremony begins at 5 pm in the Ballroom of Hotel Capstone. Student poster presentations and dinner will precede the ceremony and will be held from 4 pm to 5 pm. The event provides an opportunity for Rural Medical Scholars to showcase their achievements during their pre-matriculation year at CCHS.

The Rural Medical Scholars Program was founded in 1996 to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama's rural communities. The program works to recruit and assist rural Alabama college students who want to become physicians and practice in the state's rural communities, where they are most needed. It includes a year of study, after students receive their undergraduate degree, that leads to a master's degree in Rural Community Health and early admission to the University of Alabama at Birmingham Marjorie E. Heersink School of Medicine.

For more information, call (205) 348-1300.

## HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM LEADS TO A PROFESSION IN NURSING

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

By Emily Safron



“I think of my town as something you would see in a Hallmark Christmas movie. It is quaint. We all know which families own the local restaurants and shops on the square and throughout town, like Mrs. Ruby Lawrence and her southern home cooking restaurant that is run by her and her family, or Beth Holmes, owner of the popular Jimmy's Pizza and BBQ.”

That's how Logan Broxton describes her hometown of Abbeville, Ala. A 2017 graduate of Abbeville High School, Broxton is the oldest of three brothers.

With plans to attend The University of Alabama, Logan's high school counselor suggested she apply for the Rural Minority Health Scholars Program, which is operated by UA's College of Community Health Sciences. The program provides educational opportunities and other support

for high school graduates from rural Alabama who want to pursue careers in medicine and other health-care professions.

“This program really helped seal the deal on my decision to pursue nursing,” Broxton shared. Some of the friends she made through the program became her sorority sisters at UA and she was also able to be in some of their weddings.

Broxton lived near Dothan and was close to a few decent-sized hospitals, but while participating in the Rural Minority Health Scholars Program received the opportunity to visit many rural hospitals she didn't even know existed. On weekends, program participants partook in fun activities like going to Alabama Adventure water park, Bama Lanes bowling and the Human Bodies exhibit in Atlanta. Upon finishing the program, Broxton was offered a job as a student assistant for Tina Whatley Adams, an accounting specialist for CCHS Rural Programs. Braxton began working in this role in her freshman year, later transitioning to work for Cynthia Moore, assistant director and founder of the Rural Scholars Program at CCHS, which includes the Rural Health Scholars Program and the Rural Minority Health Scholars Program.

Broxton enjoyed the Rural Health Scholars Program so much that she went on to be a program counselor in summer 2019. “The program is a great opportunity for the students because they have contacts whether they choose to stay here or go to another school, and it gives them a head start on preparing for life in college. I loved watching the students become friends with one another, discuss their future plans and grow academically.” She had planned to return as a counselor in the summer 2020, but unfortunately did not get to do so due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



to seize every opportunity. “I did not think I was going to get into the (UA) Capstone College of Nursing on my first attempt. I had counted myself out. I am now graduating cum laude from a nursing program ranked in the top 5% of schools in the country. A girl from the small town of Abbeville, Ala., finished one of the toughest nursing schools out there.”

Looking forward, Broxton plans to move back home to Abbeville to begin her career as an obstetrics nurse on a postpartum unit at Flowers Hospital in Dothan. She would like to pursue a master’s degree in Education or Leadership once she has more experience in her profession. “So many people from my community have supported me through

Now a recent graduate of UA with a bachelor’s degree in Nursing, Broxton shared that her biggest takeaway is

college and I feel like this is one big way I can give back to them.”

## SNAPS ROUND-UP

1. Colton Clayton (right), Rural Medical Scholar, and hometown best friend watching movies on Christmas morning



2. Belle Louallen (middle right), Rural Medical Scholar, with her brother(left), sister in-law(middle left), and boyfriend(right), on Christmas Eve



3. Daniel Lynn (left), Rural Health Scholar, Nealy Wiggins (middle), Rural Health Scholar, and Cynthia Moore (right)



4. Venu Reddy (left), Rural Medical Scholar, visits Monterey Bay, CA, with family



# SNAPS ROUND-UP



5. Sherea Bowden Rachel, DDS, Rural Health Scholar alum (right) and Cynthia Moore

6. Philip Hensley (left), Rural Medical Scholar, and friend at Pittsburgh Steelers game

7. Kalin Lewis (RHS), Cynthia Moore, Lilly McCauley (RHS), Bobby Skelton (RHS) (Left to Right)



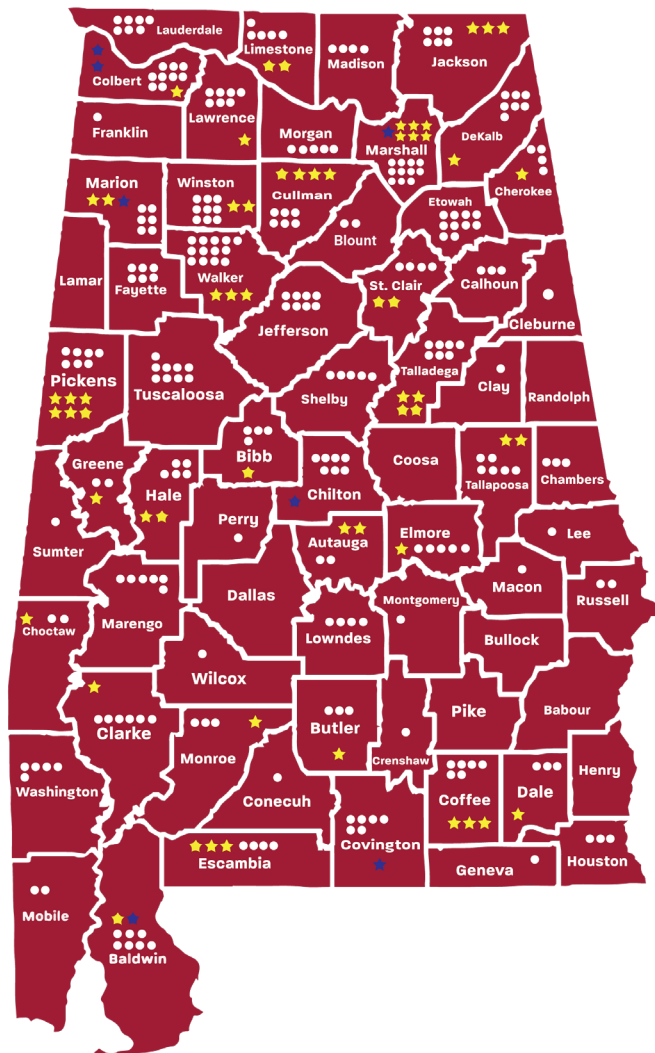
8. Emma Anne McKinley, Rural Medical Scholar, with toy soldier in New York City at Christmas

9. Rural Medical Scholars Christmas tree decorating

10. Veronica Cooper (right), Rural Health Scholar, and Cynthia Moore



RURAL PROGRAMS  
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## Rural Medical Scholars 1996-22 Home Counties and Rural Practice Sites

- Rural Medical Scholars Home County.
- ★ Rural Medical Scholar entered primary care practice in this rural county.
- ★ Rural Medical Scholars entered a specialty practice in this rural county.