

PARTNERS

WORKING TOGETHER FOR RURAL HEALTH

2023 - 2024

Rural Health Scholars

Rural Dental Health Scholars

Rural Medical Scholars

Rural Dental Scholars

Rural Alabama Health Alliance

Medical Opportunities and Outreach in Rural Education Scholars

Rural Community Health Scholars

Tuscaloosa Pre-Medical Internship Program

Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board

University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine

Medical Association of the State of Alabama

Alabama Academy of Family Physicians

Board of Medical Scholarship Awards

Alabama Health Professions Advisors

Alabama Rural Health Association

Alabama Farmers Federation

AgroMedicine Policy Board

Alabama Board of Dental Scholarship

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry

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University of
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA

College of
Community Health Sciences
Rural Programs

PARTNERS

2023 - 2024

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OUR MISSION

Recruiting and
preparing rural
Alabama students for
health careers.

DIRECTOR'S TAKE



"The only constant is change." – Heraclitus

Many things have happened in Rural Programs since our last newsletter. The Rural Health Leaders Pipeline is constantly welcoming new faces to our programs, but we have new programs to discuss and new faculty and staff to welcome in this edition.

We are excited to welcome Dr. Antonio Gardner in the role of Director of Education and Evaluation. This position, long held by Dr. Jim Leeper, had been vacant since his retirement in 2020. Gardner is a graduate of our programs (Rural Health Scholars, Medical Opportunities and Outreach in Rural Education Scholars and Rural Community Health Scholars) and comes to us from his faculty position at Mississippi State University.

We are also happy to welcome Ashley Wilder in the role of Administrative Assistant. She worked with us while a student at The University of Alabama and comes into this role with a wealth of knowledge after working closely with the McCollough Scholars undergraduate pre-medical group on campus.

Our programs have again expanded, this time into the world of pre-dental education. As most of you are aware, the shortage of rural dentists in Alabama is just as much a crisis as the shortage of rural physicians. In partnership with the UAB School of Dentistry, we have developed the Rural Dental Scholars Program. Students spend a year on the campus of UA obtaining a master's degree in Rural Community Health alongside our Rural Medical Scholars prior to matriculating into the UAB School of Dentistry. The curriculum is very similar to the RMS curriculum but with particular elements specific to dentistry, including shadowing dental providers in rural areas. The first class of RDS was four students, and the incoming second class will have five members. The UAB School of Dentistry and the Alabama Board of Dental Scholarships also partnered to support five rural high school students with interest in dentistry in our Rural Dental Health Scholars program this summer.

You will also find in this edition two sections focusing on our alumni. Dr. Rick Jotani presented our programs with a generous gift, honoring his parents with an endowment in their names. We are also starting an alumni highlight section in our newsletter and the inaugural honoree is Dr. Carl Shamburger.

All of the other programs in the pipeline continue to flourish, with increased interest in our high school summer programs this year. We had almost 100 applications for 25 positions in the Rural Health Scholars Program this summer. The third class of the Tuscaloosa Rural Pre-Medical Internship had a productive summer shadowing rural physicians and learning more about medical school. We expect many of those students to become Rural Medical Scholars in the future, as former TRPI students have done.

As always, we thank you for your continued support of our programs and our students.

DR. DRAKE LAVENDER
DIRECTOR OF RURAL PROGRAMS

RURAL PROGRAMS STUDENT ASSISTANT COMPLETES INTERNSHIP WITH CONGRESSWOMAN TERRI SEWELL

Kasia Nicholson, a Rural Programs student assistant with the College of Community Health Sciences, spent the summer as an intern in the Washington, D.C., office of Congresswoman Terri Sewell, who represents Alabama's 7th District. The internship provided Nicholson with opportunities to observe federal policymaking and the legislative process.

As part of her internship, Nicholson answered constituent phone calls, researched legislation, drafted response letters and compiled media clips to keep Sewell and her team informed of relevant news. Nicholson also attended virtual hearings, legislative briefings and seminars, providing her with a firsthand look at the inner workings of the federal government. She said these experiences deepened her



understanding of the legislative process and have inspired her future aspirations in public service.

The internship program is highly selective and ideal candidates are those with a strong interest in federal policy and the legislative process. The internship is open to college students, with a preference for rising juniors and seniors, or those who have recently graduated.

CCHS Rural Programs was created to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama's rural communities. A sequence of programs from high school through medical school recruit students from rural Alabama who are interested in health-care careers and working as health-care professionals in rural communities.

RURAL DENTAL SCHOLARS INAUGURAL CLASS

The College of Community Health Sciences Rural Programs welcomed four Alabama students who want to one day practice dentistry in rural communities to the 2023 inaugural class of the Rural Dental Scholars Program.

The program is a separate admissions pathway to the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry exclusively for students from rural Alabama. To be eligible for the program, students must have either lived in rural Alabama for eight years or have graduated from a rural Alabama high school. The program includes a year of study and a master's degree in rural community health at CCHS, after students receive their undergraduate degree, as well as early admission to the UAB School of Dentistry.

During the year of study at CCHS, students engage in biomedical science courses designed to adequately prepare scholars for a rigorous dental school curriculum, as well as seminar courses in rural health. They also have community

engagement experiences and shadow dental providers. After completion of the master's degree, students spend the next four years at the UAB School of Dentistry. The program is modeled after the College's successful Rural Medical Scholars Program.

"The Rural Dental Scholars program is a partnership between CCHS Rural Programs and the UAB School of Dentistry to recruit students who are interested in practicing dentistry in a rural area of our state," said Dr. Drake Lavender, associate professor of family medicine and director of Rural Programs. "Oral health is a huge component of the overall health of an individual. We are mindful that there is a lack of access to dental care in our rural areas, so this program fits in well with our other programs, as well as with the overall mission of CCHS."

The 2023-24 class of Rural Dental Scholars are: Landon McCardle of Dothan; Catherine Hill of Grant; Joshua Perry of Guntersville; and Aubrey Stewart of Dothan.



2023-24 Rural Medical Scholars, Rural Dental Scholars and Rural Community Health Scholars

From left to right: Ikeyreiah Harris (RCHS), Landon McCardle (RDS), Maycie Edmondson (RMS), John Ellis Kuykendall (RMS), Aubrey Stewart (RDS), Joshua Perry (RDS), Morgan Bowman (RMS), Griffin Howard (RMS), Raneisha Lee (RMS), Kayla Edwards-Harris (RMS), Arianna Oliver (RMS) and Catherine Hill (RDS)

RURAL MEDICAL SCHOLARS CLASS

Seven students from around the state were welcomed to the Rural Medical Scholars Program Class of 2023-24. The program is operated by the College of Community Health Sciences Rural Programs.

The Rural Medical Scholars Program is exclusively for rural Alabama students who want to become physicians and practice in rural communities. The program is part of the CCHS Rural Health Leaders Pipeline created to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama’s rural communities.

The Rural Medical Scholars Program is a five-year medical education program that leads to a medical degree. It includes a year of study and a master’s degree in rural community health from CCHS, after students receive their undergraduate degree, as well as early admission to the University of Alabama at

Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine.

Rural Medical Scholars spend their first two years of medical school at the UAB Heersink School of Medicine’s main campus in Birmingham and return to CCHS for their third and fourth years of medical school, which are known as the clinical education and training years.

“We have a long track record of success but realize there is still much work to be done with regard to the primary care physician shortage in rural Alabama,” said Dr. Drake Lavender, associate professor of family medicine and director of CCHS Rural Programs. “These students are beginning their long journey through medical school and residency, and we want to make sure they are as prepared as possible for the challenges ahead.”

SIDEBAR: Rural Community Health Scholars

Like the Rural Medical Scholars Program, the Rural Community Health Scholars Program is part of the Rural Health Leaders Pipeline, a sequence of programs created to prepare students to become health care providers and community health leaders in rural Alabama communities. The Rural Community Health Scholars Program is for rural Alabama graduate students not enrolled in the Rural Medical Scholars Program but who are interested in rural health care careers. Rural Programs welcomed Ikeyreiah Harris of Gordo in 2023 for her second year as a Rural Community Health Scholar.

RURAL PROGRAMS ORIENTATION

An Orientation Day was hosted in August 2023 by the College of Community Health Sciences Rural Programs. Rural Medical Scholars, Rural Community Health Scholars, Rural Dental Scholars and CCHS faculty and staff were welcomed for a day of conversation about improving and promoting the health of Alabama's rural communities. Students learned about rural community needs and collaborated with health care professionals to learn about rural opportunities. The students were encouraged to get involved in community engagement activities and to pursue professional shadowing opportunities.

RURAL DENTAL HEALTH SCHOLARS

Rural Programs at the College of Community Health Sciences partnered with the Board of Dental Scholars and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry to develop a new summer high school program.

Modeled after the College's successful Rural Health Scholars Program, the Rural Dental Health Scholars Program recruits rural Alabama students between their junior and senior years of high school who have an interest in practicing rural dentistry. The program pays for students to complete classes during the summer at The University of Alabama, and also pays lodging and living expenses.

In addition to allowing students to experience what it is like to be a college student, the program includes community engagement projects, trips to rural health facilities and sessions about health care topics. Five students participated in the Rural Dental Health Scholars Program inaugural class in summer 2024.



From left to right: Front row: Jack Moss, Pickens; Megan Giles, Tallapoosa; Andrea Pelico, Marshall; Olivia White, Lauderdale Brantlee Strong, Lawrence
Back row (Counselors): Edwin Olea and Austen Wilson

RURAL HEALTH SCHOLARS

Twenty-four Alabama high school students participated in the summer 2024 Rural Health Scholars Program. The program is part of the Rural Health Leaders Pipeline at the College of Community Health Sciences created to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama's rural communities.

The Rural Health Scholars Program is exclusively for high school juniors from rural Alabama communities and provides students with opportunities to pursue careers in health care professions while experiencing college firsthand.

Students spend five weeks in the summer at The University of Alabama taking college courses for credit, attending tutorials and seminars, shadowing physicians and other health-care professionals and participating in field trips to rural medical facilities.



From left to right: Row 1: Abbigal Peek, Blount; Tiana Thrasher, Franklin; Omar Juan, Dekalb; Angeliqve Hervert, Morgan; Diamond White, Greene ; Magaly Chacon, Blount; Tegan Gurlter, St. Clair; **Row 2:** Avery Goodman, Mobile; Zoa Mussard, Dekalb; Kendi Price, Marshall; Bralan Ethridge, Lauderdale; Alyana Santora, Geneva; Sawyer Williams, Coffee; David Paschel, Chambers; **Row 3:** Savannah Gaskins, Talladega; Sariyah Dickerson, Butler; Blanca Alacron, Marengo; Rowan Hines, Cullman; Riley Mason, Marshall; Alesia Black, Monroe; Aiden Knapp, Washington; Constance Armstrong; Walker **Row 4:** Cynthia Moore, Director; Sandra Hall, Crenshaw; Alyssia Smith, Sumter; **Row 5:** John Ellis Kuykendall, Counselor; Maycie Edmondson, Counselor; Dr. Norman Golar, English Instructor; Morgan Bowman, Counselor; Malyk Hayden, Counselor

MEDICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTREACH IN RURAL EDUCATION SCHOLARS

Eleven Alabama high school students participated in the summer 2024 Medical Opportunities and Outreach in Rural Education Scholars Program. The program is part of the Rural Health Leaders Pipeline at the College of Community Health Sciences created to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Alabama's rural communities.

The MOORE Scholars Program is exclusively for rural Alabama high school students in 12th grade who plan to enter college in the next academic year.

Students spend five weeks in the summer at The University of Alabama taking college courses for credit, attending tutorials and seminars, shadowing physicians and other health-care professionals and participating in field trips to rural medical facilities.



From left to right: Row 1- Danya Jones, Marengo; Anija Jemison, Shelby; Lily Nguyen, Dale; **Row 2-** Whitney Gholston, Coffee; Amy Zheng, Escambia; Cynthia Moore, Director **Row 3** Kerington Davis, Chilton, Julian Soto, Coffee; Mahgonai Evans, Talladega; Jakayla Kirk, Walker; **Row 4-** Jakelvin Jones, Counselor, Zameria Richardson, Marengo; Camren Price, Colbert; Kasia Nicholson, Counselor

TUSCALOOSA RURAL PRE-MEDICAL INTERNSHIP

The Tuscaloosa Rural Pre-Medical Internship, designed for college students in pre-medical studies who are interested in rural primary care, welcomed its third class in 2024.

TRPI is a seven-week summer program, operated by the College of Community Health Sciences Rural Programs, that provides students insight into the primary health care needs of rural Alabama, particularly in the fields of family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics, by providing a variety of learning activities, discussions and shadowing opportunities.

Students also gain a better understanding of the day-to-day life of family medicine physicians. In addition, the program

enhances students' understanding of medical school and increases their competitiveness for medical school admission.

Students spend five weeks at the university and two weeks with a family medicine physician near their hometowns. TRPI is exclusively for rural Alabama residents.

TRPI is part of the College's Rural Health Leaders Pipeline. The pipeline is a sequence of programs from high school through medical school that recruits students from rural Alabama interested in working as future doctors and other health care professionals in rural communities.



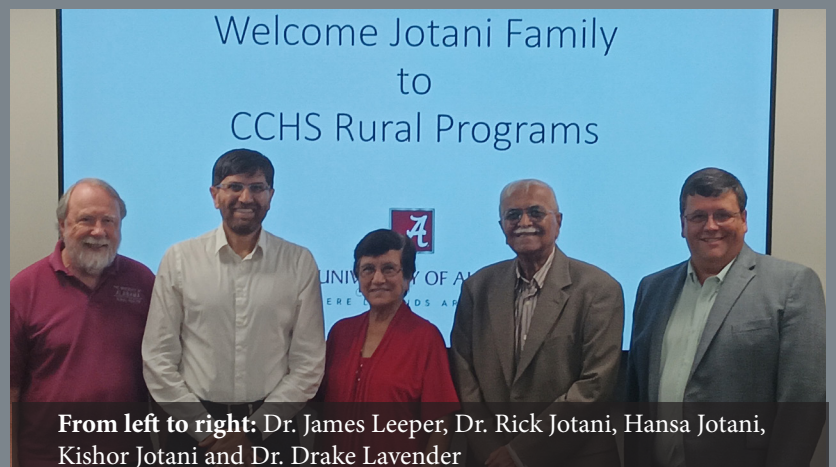
From left to right: Row1: Valencia Bryant, Dallas; Augusta Arnold, Hale; Ali Sanders, Coffee; Madilyn Webb, Coffee; Erica Doss, Covington; Caroline Ricks, Chilton; Row2: Nia Jones, Etowah; Alex Davis, Shelby; Matthew Merritt, Jackson; Harrison Dial, Mobile; De'Von Benjamin, Dallas; Salil Kumar, Colbert.

**THANK
YOU!**

Dr. Rick Jotani, an alumnus of the College's Rural Medical Scholars Program, generously donated funding to Rural Programs for an endowed research scholarship.

Named in honor of his parents, the Kishor and Hansa Jotani Endowed Research Scholarship will be awarded to students from rural underserved and medically underrepresented backgrounds to promote community-based research.

Rural Programs welcomed Jotani and his parents for a special recognition ceremony on Aug. 4, 2023, to commemorate his gift. Jotani is a family medicine physician in private practice in Pell City, Ala.



From left to right: Dr. James Leeper, Dr. Rick Jotani, Hansa Jotani, Kishor Jotani and Dr. Drake Lavender

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Carl Shamburger grew up in Wilcox County, Ala., and was inspired early on to pursue a career in health care.

While in high school, he helped manage care for his grandmother, which instilled a desire in him to help and serve others. After being exposed to different medical professions, Shamburger decided that dentistry was his passion and thus began his journey to become a dentist.

After participating in the College of Community Health Sciences's Rural Health Scholars Program while in high school, Shamburger attended Alabama A&M University in Normal, Ala., graduating summa cum laude in 2008 with a bachelor's

degree in chemistry. He earned his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry in 2012, finishing among the top of his class. He currently practices dentistry in Montgomery, Ala.

Continual learning is a core value for Shamburger, and he has completed advanced training in cosmetic and reconstructive dental procedures, including placement and restoration of dental implants, root canals, crowns, cosmetic veneers, surgical procedures and design of custom esthetic dentures.

He is a member of the American Dental Association, Alabama Dental Association 2nd District, Academy of General Dentistry, National Dental Association, River Region Seattle Study Club and is an active member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He is a volunteer adjunct faculty member at the UAB School of Dentistry. Shamburger has been recognized for his achievements as a dentist and a leader, receiving the Emerging Leader Award from the Elite Lindenite Organization in 2014.

His background and experience in non-profit settings provided Shamburger with the opportunity to address a wide range of needs for both children and adults. He and his wife, Dr. Dominique Askew Shamburger, launched Montgomery Dental Arts based on their shared vision to provide comprehensive dental care for families in the greater Montgomery area.

Shamburger and his wife are active members of Reaching the Remnants Ministries. They enjoy spending time together as a family with their three sons. An avid sports fan, Shamburger follows football, basketball and anything on ESPN. He loves to cook and travel with his family.

FACULTY AND STAFF NEWS

Dr. Antonio Gardner joined the College of Community Health Sciences as associate professor in the Department of Community Medicine and Population Health and as director of Education and Evaluation for Rural Programs. In the roles, he teaches courses for the Rural Medical Scholars Program, the Rural Community Health Scholars Program, the Rural Dental Scholars Program and the Master of Science in Population Health Sciences degree program.

Gardner received his doctorate in Health Education and Health Promotion from The University of Alabama. He received his master's degree in general human environmental sciences with a specialization in rural community health from UA, and a bachelor's degree in biology from Alabama A&M University in Normal, Ala.

Gardner has interests in health equity with a specific focus on improved quality of life of rural and African American populations.

Ashley Wilder joined the College of Community Health Sciences as an administrative assistant for Rural Programs in 2023. Prior to joining the College, she worked for 13 years as a consumer and commercial loan analyst and for seven years as a billing and coding specialist in the health-care industry.

Wilder earned a bachelor's degree in commerce and business administration from The University of Alabama and a master's degree in health administration and education from the University of Phoenix. As an undergraduate student at UA, she worked as a student assistant for CCHS Rural Programs and with UA's McCollough Pre-Medical Scholars Program.

SNAPS ROUND-UP

1. 2024
Presentation Day

2. RMS and RDS UA
Graduation 2024

3. 2023 Halloween
Potluck

4. MOORE Summer
Health Fair 2024

5. RHS Study Time

6. MOORE and Dr.
Deanah Stafford

7. TRPI Mini Golf



SNAPS ROUND-UP



8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



13.



14.



15.

- 8. TRPI Lake Trip with Dr. Lavender
- 9. TRPI Blood Pressure Training
- 10. RHS Summer Health Fair 2024
- 11. TRPI Faculty and Residents
- 12. Six Flags Trip
- 13. TRPI Suture Training
- 14. TRPI CPR Training
- 15. Field Trip to Bibb County

Dee River Ranch



In fall 2023, Rural Medical Scholars and Rural Dental Scholars, along with Rural Programs faculty and staff, traveled to Dee River Ranch in Southwest Pickens County, Ala. Scholars were able to speak with ranch owner and managers Annie and Mike Dee about the day-to-day operations of a cattle and row crop ranch in rural Alabama. While at the ranch, scholars were exposed to large equipment, grain storage, row crops and large animal care and handling. This included watching a veterinary dentist provide a routine check-up for several of the horses. There was time for questions and answers and a tour of the ranch.

Fayette Field Trip



Students of the Rural Medical Scholars Program and the Rural Dental Scholars Program traveled to Fayette, Ala., in 2023 to speak with Donald Jones, administrator of Fayette Medical Center, and Owen Sweatt, a local farmer. Students toured Fayette Medical Center, met other administrators and clinicians and participated in a Q&A session. Afterward, students went to the farm to learn basic information about farm life and medical experience.

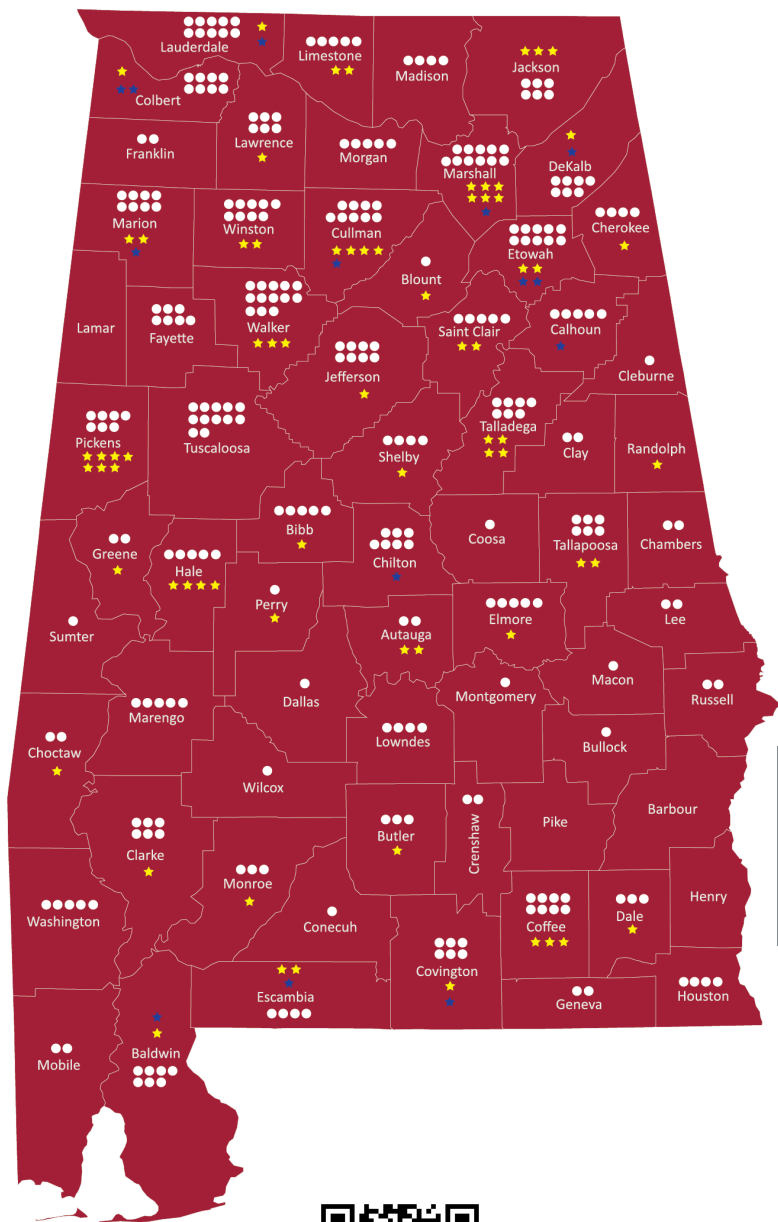
UA vs. Chattanooga Tailgate



2024 Rural Programs Convocation



Rural Programs
Box 870327
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487



Rural Medical Scholars 1996-2024 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.



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