



Photo By Sarah Pack

Construction workers get ready to place the last beam atop the new home of the College of Pharmacy in what's called a "topping out" ceremony. Work on the site is expected to end this August.

## Celebration as College of Pharmacy moves a step closer to shifting to heart of campus

By HELEN ADAMS

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James Hodges made history at MUSC more than five decades ago by becoming the College of Pharmacy's first Black graduate. He recently witnessed another milestone for the college: the "topping out" ceremony marking the placement of the highest beam on the pharmacy school's new facility. It's under construction in the heart of the MUSC campus.

"I think if anyone is still living and able to come, they should come. This will never happen again. Not for me,

anyway," the retired pharmacist said.

Hodges was one of dozens of people who turned out to watch as the beam, decorated with a small tree and an American flag, was hoisted atop the site on Feb. 1. It was a symbolic moment for a college ready to shift from an 80-year-old building on Calhoun Street, on the fringe of the MUSC campus, to a new location closer to its practice pharmacy and the Drug Discovery Building, where pharmacy research takes place.

Before the beam was hoisted, so many people wanted to sign it that College of Pharmacy Dean Philip Hall

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## Best, worst-case scenarios for COVID as cases are 'dive-bombing'

By HELEN ADAMS

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The seven-day average number of new COVID cases for the Charleston Tri-county area is dropping with stunning speed. "It's dive-bombing low," said Michael Sweat, Ph.D. He leads the MUSC's COVID-19 Epidemiology Intelligence Project.

His team found that as of Feb. 15, that seven-day average was 44 cases per day per 100,000 people in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties combined. Just a month ago, the area's Omicron-driven surge peaked at 416 cases per day per 100,000 people.

And the percentage of positive test results reported to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has plunged, too. "At DHEC today, the state positivity rate was 11%. It was around 30% for a while."

COVID hospitalizations are falling as well. In late January, there were about 180 COVID patients in MUSC Health's Charleston hospitals. That number was down to 140 on Feb. 14.

But we've seen dramatic declines before. A graph of the pandemic's progress shows the virus falling to low levels three other times — only to roar back. "I don't think this is going away."

However, Sweat, a professor in the College of Medicine at MUSC, an adjunct professor in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a former research scientist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, does see a way forward. It involves mapping out best- and worst-case scenarios so

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cracked a joke about it. "Like the guys in 'Jaws' said, 'We're going to need a bigger beam,'" he said, to appreciative laughter from the audience.

Then, he got serious. "What a wonderful problem to have. This beam symbolizes our people. We wanted to connect the physical facility to the people who made it possible and to the people who make MUSC pharmacy programs so special. Our alumni, our donors, friends, family, faculty, students, staff are all represented on this beam. And they will always be there as the strength and structure of the building."

The new space will cover 24,000 square feet and is part of a larger \$58 million construction project that includes a total renovation of the Colbert Library and Education Building as well as renovations to the large basic science shared classrooms and auditorium to provide state-of-the-art learning environments for students across all colleges. Construction started in April 2021. It's expected to end this

**MUSC Employee Engagement survey continues until Feb. 21**

MUSC's annual Employee Engagement survey is open from Feb. 7-21. Eligible employees (those hired before Nov. 7, 2021) should have received an email invitation to take the Press Ganey survey. Check your email to open the confidential survey link. Your thoughtful, constructive feedback is needed.

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August.

MUSC President David Cole, M.D., called the pharmacy students who will use the site among the best and brightest in the country. "They deserve to have the best facilities that have the best learning opportunity to meet the future. This facility elevates our future together."

Provost Lisa Saladin, Ph.D., said the ceremony marked a transition and symbolized growth and opportunity for the College of Pharmacy. "And while there is a long way to go, this is a moment to celebrate and to savor."

Terry Blackmon, chairman of the Building Leadership Committee and a 1980 graduate of the College of Pharmacy, addressed the meaning behind the topping out. "Today's ceremony is a ritual that dates back hundreds of years. In the eighth century, Scandinavians used to place bundles of grain on top of newly built structures. Eventually, it became common to place a tree at the top," he said.

"There are many theories about the origin of this tradition. It may have been to appease the tree spirits or to seek the blessings of the forest gods to ensure fertility of the land and of the home or to show humility before nature by elevating it above the highest manmade point or to make an analogy between the raising of a building and the growing of a tree."

He noted that the College of Pharmacy has a tradition of its own: educating pharmacists for more than a century.

Hodges is proud to be one of them and pleased to be part of such an important moment for his alma mater. "I can say I was present. I was there. I witnessed it."



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we can have an idea of what might lie ahead.

**BEST-CASE SCENARIOS**

Sweat laid out five best-case possibilities for COVID.

The first looks to the past, to the most famous pandemic of the 20th century.

"Like 1918 flu pandemic, we could see the coronavirus



**Sweat**

mutate to a seasonal variant that, most years, isn't too deadly."

And that ties into his second best-case possibility. "We'll be able to adapt the vaccines as we go forward, just like we do with the flu."

Third: "We'll have nasal and pan-coronavirus vaccines. Scientists are very optimistic, particularly when it comes to the pan-coronavirus one." There are multiple nasal vaccines in the pipeline. Sweat said they could prevent COVID infections by producing antibodies in the nasal passages, as opposed to the current vaccines that attack the virus once it's in the body. Pan-coronavirus vaccines, also in clinical trials, would work against multiple variants and other coronaviruses.

Fourth: More people could decide to get vaccines and booster shots. That's no simple matter, though. Just over half of all eligible South Carolinians are fully vaccinated. Sweat said a study in the medical journal The Lancet found that people's trust in government, and each other, was an important factor in determining how well a society fared in the pandemic. "The U.S. actually has a very low level of trust right now. We're a very divided country. I think it's a public health intervention that we need to pursue to try to increase people's trust in science."

Finally, he said medications could play a key role in tamping down the

virus' impact. "Oral antivirals could suppress things."

**WORST-CASE SCENARIOS**

Sweat also laid out four worst-case possibilities. First, more variants emerge. "They could show up quickly and be highly transmissible. They could be highly transmissible but not very virulent, but they could be highly transmissible and virulent. That's a risk."

Second, the coronavirus could follow in HIV's footsteps and figure out how to evade antiviral treatments. But if it does, there's another option. "It was discovered in the HIV world that if you combine the antivirals, different classes of them, it overcame that problem. So I think that may be the future. Right now, we have very potent antivirals, and that could really save the day."

Third, time may not be on our side. "There's this issue of should we adapt our vaccines to the variants? And the problem is it takes a while to do that because you have to do clinical trials and produce them. And by the time you do that, you get another variant."

Fourth, a problematic new coronavirus could crop up. "Not many people are talking about it, but we've had three coronavirus pathogens, SARS, MERS and SARS-CoV-2, within a fairly short time. SARS was around 2002, 2003. MERS was 2014. Then in 2019, we got this. So another one could come along too." He said coronaviruses's ability to spread, not only in humans but also in animals, increases the odds of that.

All of those things could happen, Sweat said. But he's taking an optimistic overview. "I lean toward the best-case scenario. I don't think the worst case is as likely. Only time will tell."

For now, he's happy to see the numbers going down. "Maybe this will just be the end of the disruption of our lives. I hope so. I think we'll only know when it happens."

**Lowcountry Heart Walk is Feb. 26**

Walk, join or support any of MUSC's 34 teams and 180 walkers signed up for the Feb. 26 event at Riverfront Park. Visit [https://www2.heart.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=6429&pg=company&company\\_id=324569](https://www2.heart.org/site/TR?fr_id=6429&pg=company&company_id=324569).



# MUSC awarded \$1M grant for community violence prevention program

By LESLIE CANTU

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Homicides in the City of Charleston doubled from 2019 to 2020.

MUSC Health's Adult and Pediatric Level 1 Trauma Centers in Charleston saw a 30% increase in 2020 in firearm assaults and injuries.

And the numbers have only continued to rise, said Ashley Hink, M.D., a trauma surgeon who also serves as medical director of MUSC's Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program.

Turning the Tide is a hospital-based program that aims to reduce the odds of revictimization and improve physical, social and mental health outcomes after a young person is shot. But there are many more young people at risk than are treated at the Trauma Center, said Hink and Christa Green, injury prevention coordinator for pediatric trauma with MUSC Children's Health.

"MUSC and our team, we understand that we can't just tackle this from within the health care system," Green said. "There is a very significant portion of this work that has to be community-based and community-driven."

To that end, Hink led an effort that resulted in MUSC being awarded a three-year, almost \$1 million grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within the U.S. Department of Justice.

"To get this award, you had to demonstrate need," Hink said. MUSC worked with the Charleston and North Charleston police departments to gather data and used its own data to demonstrate an ample need here, she said. She noted that MUSC Health evaluated more than 260 gunshot wounds in 2020. Half of the victims were under age 25.

The grant will enable MUSC to partner with Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) Inc., which has a successful 46-year

history working with the highest risk young people and families, to implement Lowcountry Rising Above Violence.

This community violence intervention program will offer wraparound services to young people ages 14 to 25 in the cities of Charleston and North Charleston who have been identified as at highest risk by schools, community groups, the juvenile justice system or other partners.

"These are the individuals who are causing those statistics to go up — those individuals who are carrying guns, creating crime situations," said William Cameron, a YAP community relations/program development specialist in the Upstate who is helping to get the Charleston program started.

Lowcountry Rising Above Violence will also include violence interruption, which seeks to mediate conflicts that might otherwise erupt in violence and to prevent retaliation.

Hink said the program will focus on two peninsular neighborhoods — the Eastside and the Westside — and the crossover that happens between those neighborhoods and North Charleston.

"For community violence intervention programs to work, they have to be very targeted to high-risk neighborhoods and schools, really at the block level," Hink explained.

A single person can't effectively work across multiple far-flung neighborhoods — it wouldn't be effective to expect someone to work on the peninsula in addition to Summerville, West Ashley and James Island, for example. Instead, the YAP team members will focus on developing deep, meaningful relationships in the targeted neighborhoods.

"The key to all this working is relationships," Cameron said.

Hink pointed to St. Louis as an example of a midsize city that has bucked the national trend of increased



Photo by Sarah Pack

From left, Keith Smalls, Donnie Singleton and Dr. Ronald Dickerson, of the MUSC Turning the Tide program, and William Cameron of YAP, in Charleston's Westside neighborhood, just blocks from the MUSC campus.

*"For community violence intervention programs to work, they have to be very targeted to high-risk neighborhoods and schools, really at the block level."*

Ashley Hink, M.D.

homicides. St. Louis, which deployed violence interrupters in a program similar to YAP's, saw a 25% decrease in homicides in 2021. Similarly, Dallas, which has employed a strategy that includes micro-targeted policing, community outreach and violence interrupters from YAP, saw a 13% decrease in homicides in 2021.

to begin developing relationships with community and church members, schools and law enforcement officers who serve the Eastside and Westside neighborhoods.

Though he's getting the program off the ground, he won't be the one running it. The team members will come from and be part of the communities. Possibly the most important step will be the upcoming hiring of the site supervisor, who will oversee the Charleston

program.

From there, the program will add credible messengers — people hired from the community who receive ongoing training in first aid; crisis intervention; and healthy relationships, communication and conflict resolution in order to provide intensive and tailored services. The credible messengers will serve as connections to resources that include help for mental health, job training, education, housing, parenting skills and more. This is similar to the hospital-based violence intervention program model that the MUSC Turning the Tide program uses, but with the emphasis on addressing these needs before violence occurs.

The credible messengers work "nontraditional hours," Cameron said, to coincide with when young people are out and about in the community. They will also work as violence interrupters, springing into action when a shooting or other violence occurs, to calm the situation and hopefully prevent retaliatory action.

The funding will also allow MUSC to add another position to its Turning the Tide program. The program currently employs client advocates who connect with young people hospitalized for

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# From Team USA Skater to standout surgeon

By HELEN ADAMS  
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As a colorectal surgeon, Colleen Donahue, M.D., stands out in a field traditionally dominated by men. But she's used to being in the spotlight. Donahue is a former synchronized ice skater with Team USA.

"I think it completely shaped everything I am today. Being an athlete, especially at that level, at that caliber and the time commitment that went into it — the whole idea of working with the same girls, the practicing, the hours, constantly on end, having a common goal," she said.

Synchronized skating, which supporters hoped would be part of the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, involves teams of eight to 20 skaters performing challenging routines on ice. Donahue got her start as a child in Newburyport, Massachusetts, a coastal city near Boston.

"I did synchronized skating from when I was around five up until I went to college. There's a small team in my town, and my sister skated for them. So that's how I got started. And then I ended up moving to a more nationally known team and kind of just moved up the ranks with them. We were on Team USA. It was awesome. Those are still my best friends

to this day."

Her team placed fifth in the 2007 World Championship in England. And Donahue managed all of that while juggling other sports. "I was playing high school field hockey and lacrosse and then driving two hours to skating practice. I practiced till midnight and did my homework in the car with a flashlight."

It was good preparation for the busy days ahead in medical school and beyond. "Had I not learned those skills, those things you have to learn when you're young, and if you do, if you're busy enough and you figure it out, it just sticks with you forever. You have to have that organizational ability. I was forced to, otherwise you weren't going to succeed at anything."

She cut back on skating after high school to focus on her future. After earning her undergraduate degree at the College of the Holy Cross, Donahue went to medical school at Tufts University and did her residency at Lahey Hospital and Medical Center. Then it was on to Chicago for fellowship training at the John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County.

Donahue is now an assistant professor in the College of Medicine at the MUSC and the only woman on MUSC Health's



Photo by Sarah Pack

**Dr. Colleen Donahue wears scrubs instead of a skating costume these days, although the former synchronized skater still has her skates.**



**Dr. Donahue says her synchronized skating experience helped shape who she is today.**

Photo Provided

team of colorectal surgeons. "When they were looking to hire someone, they wanted a woman. Women in general, when you're talking about a sensitive subject like incontinence, the anus, the rectum, prolapse, the pelvic floor, it's uncomfortable. And so I think a lot of them want a woman surgeon."

She's happy to meet that need. "A lot of people ask, 'Why the heck did you go into this? Who would ever want to be a colon surgeon?' Because a lot of the people I see have hemorrhoids or fissures or fistula. There's nothing glorious about this. But the reality is that even for those small anal rectal procedures, or even for prolapse surgery, just fixing that for a patient gives them a completely new lease on life."

And Donahue works to help patients feel at ease. "The first thing I tell them is I look at butts all day. There's nothing to be

embarrassed about here. So let's just get past that right now."

Her straightforward but kind approach to communication, which she applies to both patients and colleagues, is a skill she's been honing since her days on the ice. "I think some of the best surgeons are the ones who have had some type of athletic career. They either know how to lead and be the captain-type person or even just how to make all the personalities work together and bring out different people's strong suits because that's what it's really all about."

And she hasn't forgotten the girls — now women — she learned that from. "I still have my skates. All my skating friends are coming down to visit me in March. We do a weekend somewhere every year, because we're all kind of spread out now. So I'll be the spot this year."

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- March 4
- April 1
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## MEET PHIL



Phil the Pill

**College; Years at MUSC** *College of Pharmacy; Debuted October 2019*

**How are you changing what's possible at MUSC**

*I'm shaping the future by helping to get the word out about the MUSC College of Pharmacy, established in 1881 and going strong!*

**Pets and their names** *A goldfish, Princess Diuretic, and a tabby cat, Tablet*

**Favorite winter Olympics sport**

*Curling – Those frantic sweepers remind me of pharmacists filling scripts!*

**Best thing about COP students**

*They fill me with joy – and sometimes, themselves. A few of the chosen elite have actually “worn the bottle” at college events.*

**A milestone you're looking forward to**

*The opening of the new pharmacy facility. This August – Mark your calendars!*

**Favorite quote** *“Wherever the art of Medicine is loved, there is also a love of Humanity.”*

– Hippocrates

Ask Me About



**Allison Broomall, OurDay Change Champion and Nursing Professional Development Specialist II**

**What is the hardest part about a change like this?**

With anything new, there is a learning curve. For those who have been working at MUSC for a long time, there may be grieving over the familiar systems even though it may have been fragmented. I have been at MUSC for over 20 years and have learned to be a novice over and over again when it comes to improving our processes. Be patient as change and comfort with a new system will take time. Keep in mind how this will improve our processes once we learn to navigate the system.

OurDay will become a hub for many of our needs, allowing staff to go to one system to access resources and systems related to finance, human capital, and supply chain. It will improve day-to-day tasks to have a one-stop shop in place of our current, disparate systems.

### Recycling Report: FY 2021

View or print  
our recycling  
guide here:  
[tinyurl.com/RG-2022](https://tinyurl.com/RG-2022)



42 Tons of  
Plastic, Glass, Cartons, & Metal



280 Tons of  
Office Paper



607 Tons of  
Cardboard



46 Tons of  
E-Waste, Toner, & Batteries



75 Tons of  
Food Scraps



(FY 2021: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

[recycle@musc.edu](mailto:recycle@musc.edu)



[musc.edu/gogreen](https://musc.edu/gogreen)

### 2022 Black History Month Early Graduates



In honor of Black History Month, the Wilkner Historical Library is compiling a series dedicated to highlighting a handful of the extraordinary Black graduates, faculty, and staff at MUSC, starting at the designation of MUSC through today. This edition of the series focuses on a few of the first African American graduates and their lived work.

**Bernard W. Deas, Jr., M.D.**  
First male African American graduate, College of Medicine

Born on July 12, 1944, Dr. Deas graduated valedictorian from Burke High School in 1961. He earned his undergraduate degree in 1966 at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, where he was named a Distinguished Military Graduate and commissioned a second lieutenant. After receiving his Medical Degree, Dr. Deas enlisted in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, and served until his retirement at the rank of Colonel in 1994. He received many awards and citations from the Army and MUSC. In 2006, MUSC established the annual Bernard W. Deas, Jr. Diversity Award, which is given to a deserving medical student. He died on June 29, 2012.



**Dr. George C. McTeer, Sr., M.D.**  
First male African American graduate, College of Dental Medicine

Before attending MUSC, Dr. McTeer taught math and science at several Lowcountry high schools and adult education programs. After earning his degree in dental medicine, Dr. McTeer ran a general dentistry practice in Charleston, where he promoted good oral health among his patients and advocated for access to care, especially for underserved populations. In 2002, the College of Dental Medicine faculty, the college's Office of Diversity, along with members of the Palmetto Medical Dental Pharmaceutical Association, established the Dr. George C. McTeer, Sr. Scholarship to provide support to minority students studying dental medicine at MUSC. Dr. McTeer died on December 27, 2018.



**Rose Delores Gibbs, M.D.**  
First female African American graduate, College of Medicine 1973

Born in Moncks Corner, SC, in 1948, Dr. Gibbs graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1969. After earning her medical degree, she completed her residency in Internal Medicine at Howard University Hospital and earned a Certificate in Tropical Medicine from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in DC. She worked as a Peace Corps Medical Officer for a decade, was appointed Chief of Medical Operations for the United States Peace Corps, and accepted the director position for the Office of International Health at Charles Drew Post Graduate Medical School in Los Angeles. Dr. Gibbs returned to Moncks Corner and started a private family practice in 1998. She retired in 2021.



# Nursing program helps give gear, books (and this student) a second life

By Bryce Donovan

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It was the worst month of Blake Marsh's life. But it also might have been the most important one. In the span of 30 days last year, COVID would take the lives of his aunt, his grandmother and his great-grandmother.

"That was really hard for me and my family," he said. "But something shifted in me after that."

The 24-year-old Pawleys Island native, who had just earned a degree in health care administration, decided to follow a different path. Instead of working behind a desk in a hospital, he wanted to work on the front lines, to give a more "hands-on level of care," as he put it, to fight this horrible virus. So back he went to school – this time to become a nurse.

"I was like, 'I want to help,'" the first-year MUSC College of Nursing student said. "Plus, I thought my personal qualities could shine better as a nurse. It requires critical thinking, and it's fast paced. In nursing, you never know what to expect each day."

It probably didn't hurt that he grew up in the shadow of a big sister who is an oncology nurse. Over the years he had heard all of her stories – uplifting and harrowing. And now, he wanted to make some of his own. Mid-twenties, living alone and enrolling in a post-graduate program, Marsh knew things would be rough financially for a good chunk of his early life. So when he got an email from instructor Amy Smith, R.N., talking about a new resource that provided nursing students in need with free supplies, he didn't hesitate in contacting her.

The very next day, Smith met with Marsh, and they got him two pairs of scrubs, all the textbooks he'd need for his first year and a scientific calculator – all for free – thanks to a new College of Nursing program called the "Giving Closet," a play off the classic Shel Silverstein book, "The Giving Tree."

"It's actually just a cabinet in the student lounge," Smith said with a laugh.

But for students like Marsh, it's so much more.

"I'm going to come out of nursing school with debt, so I'd love to minimize that as much as possible," he said. "I just feel really fortunate that something like this exists."

The idea came from Smith's previous job, teaching in Peoria, Illinois. There, students and faculty would donate old supplies for anybody who needed them. And it was a huge success. So when Smith floated the idea here, it didn't take long for the College of Nursing Student Government Association to take the idea and run with it.

For nearly three semesters, the SGA collected supplies – anything a nursing student might need: scrubs,



*Photos by Sarah Pack*

**First-year College of Nursing student Blake Marsh studies at the MUSC Harper Student Center. Taking advantage of the school's new "Giving Closet," Marsh was able to get secondhand textbooks and scrubs for free.**



**Marsh leaves the Harper Student Center after a workout squeezed in between study sessions.**

books, stationery – and stored them up until they had an adequate stockpile. Finally, this semester they did.

"We have students who struggle simply getting their own textbooks," Smith said. "So to be able to offer those things to people who need them is very rewarding."

The cabinet is located in a spot where any student who wanders into the lounge can see it. So they know what's available, and now that the ball is rolling, they know it's OK to ask for things.

Smith said that if anybody requests an item, they get it – no questions asked. Right now the Giving Closet is limited to books, uniforms and lab supplies, but she said there are plans to open it up to other things, like

diapers, groceries and gas cards – the sorts of things young families might need at a time in life when money is tight.

She hopes this inspires some of the other colleges to do the same thing.

"If you boil it down to its most elemental form, it's simply students helping students," she said.

Which means a lot to somebody like Marsh, who says free anything is hard to come by these days.

"Old textbooks might not be worth much to other people, but they mean hundreds of dollars to me – and that's huge," he said. "Not to mention, I really like the idea of a second life for things."

Marsh could just as easily be describing himself.



# Employees recognized for excellence with President's Values in Action awards

By CINDY ABOLE

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As the COVID pandemic continues into its third year, MUSC employees are working smarter to put their best feet forward.

For the sixth year, MUSC President David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, and first lady Kathy Cole are recognizing employees for their resilience, commitment and leadership with the President's Values in Action awards. The awards pay tribute to outstanding women and men who personify MUSC's five values: compassion, innovation, integrity, collaboration and respect.

For the second year, the Coles honored an employee in a special Values in Action category – the Impact award. This award was originally intended to be reserved for a rare situation in which an individual's contributions to the institution and/or community he or she serves go above and beyond, encompassing all of the values. But, not only is this the second time it will have been awarded, it follows on the heels of last year.

## The 2021 President's Values in Action winners:

- ❑ **Compassion** – Brittany Hempton and Marie Nelson
- ❑ **Innovation** – Erik Modrzynski
- ❑ **Integrity** – Frankie Wilhoit
- ❑ **Collaboration** – Christine Holmstedt, D.O.
- ❑ **Respect** – Elizabeth Brown
- ❑ **Impact** – Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D.

In recognition and appreciation, the 2021 awards salute employees who model the institution's values for their significant contributions, integrated work and leadership. The category of Compassion resulted in two awardees this year.

"All seven of these award winners represent the heart and soul of MUSC, and we're all very grateful for the work they've done and impact that they have had," said Cole. "I look forward to seeing more examples of the significant, creative and innovative work of our team members throughout 2022. Thank you



*Photo by Sarah Pack*

**MUSC Libraries' Marie Nelson, second from left, received the 2021 Values in Action award for Compassion.**

for all the work that you do to change what's possible for those we serve."

## COMPASSION

Two employees were recognized for Compassion. Brittany Hempton is a family nurse practitioner working in the hematology/oncology office, infusion and inpatient areas at the MUSC Health Florence Medical Center. Her competence and the compassionate care that she provides to oncology patients is said to be "remarkable." The recipient of numerous compliments from patients and care team members alike, Hempton is known for her excellent communication skills, knowledge base to navigate around inpatient and outpatient services and dedication to cancer patients, exemplifying MUSC's mission and values.

David Mahvi, M.D., chief of the Oncology Integrated Center of Clinical Excellence (ICCE), had high praise for Hempton's work ethic. "Brittany embodies a spirit to persevere and improve each patient, family and care team member's experience at MUSC Health Florence. We are excited to formally recognize her hard work and dedication through this award."

Marie Nelson was also awarded the Values in Action award for Compassion. A resource management services assistant for the MUSC Libraries, she

has served MUSC for 39 years and has won the respect and hearts of her fellow employees. During the pandemic, she served a valuable role for faculty and staff, donating her time, talent and personal resources to sew and create more than 500 face masks to ensure the safety of the library staff, faculty and their families, wrote MUSC Library colleague Brooke Fox, university archivist and associate professor.

And as new library staff joined the ranks, Nelson gifted each of them with masks, lifting the spirits of her fellow colleagues. "The Values in Action award recognizes those, who through small acts, make significant contributions to MUSC. I believe Marie is deserving of this nomination for her ongoing service through a difficult time," Fox wrote.

## INNOVATION

Erik Modrzynski, who was honored with the Values in Action award for Innovation, has been extremely busy since spring of 2020 and has been responsible for MUSC Health's operations and response since COVID affected the Lowcountry and state. Modrzynski, Ambulatory EHS and emergency manager at MUSC, and his team have been involved in testing and vaccinating thousands of patients. The



**MUSC Health's Erik Modrzynski, third from right, receives the Values in Action award for Innovation.**

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VALUES *Continued from Page Seven*

team also manages the design, setup and management of drive-through COVID testing sites and collaborates with students from Clemson’s School of Architecture in the design of mobile testing sites located around the Palmetto state.

“Everyone has been in our corner since the beginning. We want to make sure our care team and students are prepared for anything by giving them the tools and support they need. Thank you so much and thank you for letting me innovate,” he said.

Modrzynski also serves as a member of MUSC’s academic affairs faculty – readily sharing his innovative ideas and experiences teaching courses to interprofessional groups of students.

Mary Mauldin, Ed.D., professor and executive director of the Office of Instructional Technology and Faculty Resources, praised Modrzynski for his inventiveness and dedication. “Erik’s ability to think, plan and deliver experiences to help our students learn inside, outside and all around ‘the

box’ has created tremendous interest from students that leaves them wanting to know even more about emergency response management and leadership in planning,” wrote Mauldin.

INTEGRITY

Frankie Wilhoit was recognized with the Values in Action award for Integrity. As business and clinical operations manager in the Office of Clinical Affairs in the James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine, Wilhoit has been a model for integration and collaboration with others. At a time when the pandemic challenged departments and colleges in difficult ways, Wilhoit and leaders were busy creating sustainable goals and a roadmap for supporting a safe and sustainable re-entry path for education and clinical services.

Wilhoit led planning for the first dental clinic embedded in the MUSC Health system located at the MUSC Health West Ashley Medical Pavilion and opening of the Ryan White Dental Clinic – a collaboration with Roper St. Francis Hospital. Both projects address the Lowcountry’s dental care needs.



*Photo by Sarah Pack*

**Department of Neurology’s Dr. Christine Holmstedt, third from right, accepts the Values in Action award for Collaboration from the Coles and rehabilitation colleagues.**

“Frankie’s pleasant and impeccable work attitude reflects on everyone who surrounds her,” wrote Sorin Teich, D.M.D., associate dean for Clinical Affairs within the college. “She is appreciated by her peers, supervisors, faculty and students who interact with her. She is the soul of this team, and I am confident that she will continue her

high level of performance in all of its ramifications.”

COLLABORATION

The Values in Action award for Collaboration went to Christine Holmstedt, D.O. A professor of

*See VALUES on page 11*

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Photo Provided

David E. Rivers was an effective leader and strategist committed to improving the quality of life of underserved communities.

# Health care disparities advocate, organizer praised and remembered

By CINDY ABOLE  
 aboleca@musc.edu

David E. Rivers, a professor in MUSC Academic Affairs Faculty and director of the Public Information and Community Outreach Initiative (PICO) program in the MUSC Libraries, died at his home on Feb. 4.

A U.S. Army veteran who grew up in Charleston, Rivers joined MUSC's faculty in 1995, serving in multiple capacities that focused on promoting partnerships between academic institutions, government agencies, elected officials, business industry, faith-based groups and community activists to

build healthier communities. He was co-principal investigator (PI) of the EXPORT Center on Metabolic Syndrome in Minority Health, a collaboration between MUSC and South Carolina State University, a program to foster partnerships between majority- and minority-serving institutions.

Sabra Slaughter, Ph.D., interim director of the MUSC Center for Health Disparities Research and co-PI of the EXPORT Center, was a longtime colleague, collaborator and fellow health care disparities advocate.

"At MUSC, David was dedicated to broadening access to health care to all the citizens of South Carolina,

See **ADVOCATE** on page 10

## Remembering David E. Rivers:

"At MUSC, David Rivers was dedicated to broadening access to health care to all the citizens of South Carolina, especially the underserved. Recently, I participated in a Zoom call with a group of David's loving admirers from across the country. We were asked at the end of the call to share one word to describe him. I chose the word "real." David knew himself and was comfortable in his own skin. He acted according to his

values. He was true to himself and others."

—Sabra C. Slaughter, Ph.D.  
 MUSC Center for Health Disparities Research

"I worked alongside Dr. David E. Rivers for 12 years as well as being a mentee under his leadership. As a mentor, he was tough but understanding. He was a master at identifying strengths in those

See **ADVOCATE** on page 10



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3				9		4		7
	1	7	6	2				
	5		8					4
			9	7				
		2				1		6
5	4			6	1			
	3				2	5		9

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ADVOCATE *Continued from Page Nine*

especially the underserved. He used his phenomenal community organization, policy making and networking abilities to achieve this goal. David was both an esteemed colleague and, more importantly, a friend. His creative leadership was fundamental to the success of the center’s programs,” said Slaughter

Rivers directed the EXPORT Center’s Outreach program that coordinated the creation of the educational video package, “Our Health Programs,” in collaboration with South Carolina State University and South Carolina Education Television. That series reached more than 25,000 households throughout the state, Georgia and North Carolina.

Under Rivers’ leadership, the PICO Initiative conducted nationwide community leader institutes to address the impact of health disparities and environmental justice issues in low-income ethnic-minority communities and other underserved populations.

The success of the institutes garnered statewide, regional and national attention through South Carolina Education Television. In recognition for his work on climate change and its impacts across the United States, Rivers received a Bronze Telly Award for highest viewership of a televised program produced by Educational Television.

Rivers led, for nearly two decades, the

planning and execution of the National Conference on Health Disparities, which provided a national dialogue to share progress in building healthy communities. The conference explored social determinants of health, including the impacts of environmental justice, poverty, educational attainment, housing quality, public safety, as well as mental health, substance use and human trafficking, as public health issues.

Prior to joining MUSC, Rivers held leadership positions with the City of Atlanta government, Georgia State University, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Energy and the Department of Human Services in the District of Columbia.

Rivers was board chairman of the National Urban Fellows and also chairman of the James E. Clyburn Research and Scholarship Foundation. He also served on the boards of multiple community boards in Charleston, South Carolina, and California.

Rivers earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in urban affairs, political science and public administration at Georgia State University. He was a graduate of the National Urban Fellows Program in Public Administration at Yale University and the Riley Institute Diversity Leadership Program at Furman University. He was a charter member of Georgia State University’s first black Greek organization, Alpha Phi Alpha.

Hink said the team knows that this is difficult work. But the ripple effects of homicide are so wide-reaching – from the emotional costs to the families of the victims and perpetrators to the financial costs to the families and to society at large, in terms of hospitalization, investigation and incarceration – that something must be done. She is hopeful that as the program is able to show success, local governments will sign on with additional support.

“If you can change just a few trajectories, it can have a profound impact,” she said.

that worked with him, and he trusted you to operate in that space with his highest expectation. In the moments he pushed you to higher greatness, he would always add a teachable lesson. One of the lessons I cherish learning is his principle of the 4C’s (Communication, Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration). He credited this principle back to his time spent under the late and great Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson. This is a huge loss, and he (Dr. Rivers) will be missed, but so many of us will continue to carry his legacy and lessons with us forever.”

–Monique Hill  
MUSC Libraries

“Dr. Rivers led the National Conference on Health Disparities (NCHD), which was initiated by U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn and former U.S. Rep. Donna Christensen. He was a passionate supporter of training activities for students. Through the funding support provided by Dr. Rivers, the NCHD Student Research Forum focuses on enhancing high-quality biomedical research, research presentation capacity and career development training for undergraduate and graduate professional students. Between 2011 and 2018, 407 students from 29 U.S. states, as well as the U.K. and Germany, participated in the NCHD Student Research Forum, which had a significant impact on the career paths of several participants. Dr. Rivers planted seeds of career growth in students all over the country and internationally, and the seeds will continue to sprout and bear fruit for many years to come.”

–Marvella E. Ford, Ph.D.  
Population Sciences and Cancer Disparities and Office of Community Outreach and Engagement, Hollings Cancer Center

"I do not know of another faculty member at MUSC who contributed in the range of ways that Professor David Rivers did to the education of the public and academic communities, as well as to the education of students at every level and from diverse backgrounds ... before they ever arrived to MUSC, once they got here and after they were graduated. He also used his position on the Academic Affairs Faculty to help people who are not well-represented among us. That is a wonderful testament to paying it forward, sideways and "beyond," as our mission encourages.

–Tom G. Smith, Ph.D.,  
MUSC Academic Affairs Faculty

“In the 18 years I worked alongside Dr. David E. Rivers with MUSC’s Public Information and Community Outreach Initiative, I observed Dr. Rivers’ transformational leadership style, his ability to move the needle in eliminating health disparities in the underserved communities, via the vast number of national conferences on health disparities, community leaders institutes and technical assistance workshops, “Our Health” documentaries, and his business acumen were second to none. He was one of a kind, and we are committed to continuing his legacy.”

–Latecia M. Abraham-Hilaire, DHA  
Public Information and Community Outreach

“David was a tremendous colleague – sincere in his purpose and committed to resolving issues that impacted lives across diverse communities. His vision and support were instrumental to MUSC’s long-standing and productive partnership with South Carolina Educational Television. He brought a lot to this campus. He will be missed.”

–Rich Jablonski  
MUSC PICO

PROGRAM *Continued from Page Three*

gunshot wounds. The new position will connect with those who are identified as at risk by the Emergency Department, pediatricians or other outpatient providers. There’s also potential for this position to serve as a liaison with other local healthcare organizations that also treat victims of violence, Green said.

Cameron said YAP hopes to show young people the whole big world that’s waiting for them.

“YAP has this philosophy: Do for; do with; and cheer on,” he said.



## VALUES *Continued from Page Eight*

Neurology and Emergency Medicine, medical director of MUSC's Comprehensive Stroke Center and medical director of Teleneurosciences in the Department of Neurology, Holmstedt's leadership, compassion and teaching excellence is reflected in her care of patients and working with trainees. Holmstedt also is a principal investigator of the NIH/COBRE Stroke Recovery Program, which features productive collaboration between the Department of Neurology and the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences within the College of Health Professions. This marks the first time inpatient physical therapists can take part in research with colleagues in the stroke recovery research center.

Sinead Farrelly, DPT, a stroke rehabilitation specialist in MUSC Health's Outpatient Rehabilitation Center, is among a team of therapists and clinicians who have collaborated with Holmstedt in providing optimal care for patients.

"Not only has Dr. Holmstedt worked to build effective and collegial collaboration with our department, she actively engaged our input for the development of order sets and met with us countless times to assist in developing collaborative best practices," wrote Farrelly. "Her innovativeness and actions embody the spirit of the collaboration award. She has provided us with the opportunity to supplement our clinical interests and direct patient care with scholarly research."

### RESPECT

Elizabeth Brown, Ph.D., was named the Values in Action Respect award winner. Brown, who is an assistant professor in the Division of Healthcare Studies, Department of Clinical Sciences in the College of Health Professions, was nominated for her strong work ethic, professionalism and genuine interest in making MUSC an inclusive and respectful environment for employees and students.

As part of her research, Brown implemented a modified privilege walk (MPW) as a classroom activity

for undergrads to learn how social determinants of health, especially privilege, race/ethnicity, racism and social class, can affect health equity. She listened to students as they discussed the hardships of being different and its impact on their lives. The MPW project was used to teach students as part of the 2019 and 2020 MUSC Student Research Day. In summer of 2020, as the country faced racial unrest, Brown used her MPW model to conduct collegewide MPW workshops. Brown has since expanded her MPW workshops across MUSC and other institutions and professional organizations and it now includes an MPW Peer Education Program.

"Elizabeth is an energetic junior faculty and researcher focused on health disparities and meaningful teaching, learning and research that can occur in the classroom setting with future health care providers. She is thoughtful, graceful, organized and respectful when working with colleagues and students. I am happy to support her for the Respect Values in Action award," wrote Jillian Harvey, Ph.D., division director, Doctor of Health Administration, College of Health Professions.

### IMPACT

The Values in Action Impact award was presented to Alyssa Rheingold Ph.D. She was nominated for her work and expertise as a licensed clinical psychologist with the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center (NCVC) within the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, in addition to her leadership and experience managing multiple collaborative programs in the Tri-county area as well as within MUSC.

"This really has been a team effort," said Rheingold, upon receiving her certificate from the Coles. "Receiving this award represents a collaboration of so many people. I'm thankful to my team of colleagues and my family, including my husband and children. I couldn't have been successful with my career without my husband and my children. Thank you very much."

Rheingold is recognized for her leadership and ongoing support of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office's



*Photo by Sarah Pack*

**Values in Action Impact award winner Dr. Alyssa Rheingold, second from right, accepts the award from the Coles and nominator Meg Wallace, right, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.**

Victims Services Department. Now a national model for communities nationwide, the program provides outreach and support services, such as counseling, case management services and an outreach program for survivors of homicide.

Rheingold, along with the NCVC team, were instrumental in the summer of 2015, following the Mother Emanuel AMC Church shootings, as they coordinated services with support agencies, law enforcement and community partners and also established family resource centers and the Mother Emanuel Empowerment Center to support families and survivors of the shooting and manage the community's response.

Most recently in the wake of COVID, Rheingold and her team established the Resiliency Program at MUSC to address the needs of front-line health care workers heavily affected by the physical and emotional tolls of the global

pandemic. They created immediate response programs, individualized support services, support groups for units, trainings for hospital staff on mindfulness and self-care practices and programs to process grief and exhaustion. These programs continue to evolve and are standing programs available to all hospital care team members.


"Throughout her time, Rheingold has been a model of leadership, mentorship, collaboration and professionalism. Her impact at MUSC, the Charleston community, South Carolina, our country and even, internationally, has not gone unrecognized in our field. She remains a collaborative part of our team, helping to shape the next generation of compassionate, hard workers in the field of trauma and victimization," wrote Meg Wallace, clinical instructor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

For information or to nominate someone, visit <https://web.musc.edu/about/leadership/president/values>.

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