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LEAD is an annual publication showcasing the achievements of faculty, students and alumni of the University of Central Florida School of Global Health Management and Informatics.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNITY INNOVATION AND EDUCATION
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UCF GLOBAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATICS
2  |
The pandemic has brought so many changes to how we live, interact and work. Despite many challenges, I have awesome news to share! Our proposal of changing unit designation from a department to a school was approved by the university, and went into effect May 10th, 2021. I am very pleased to share with you that we are now a School of Global Health Management and Informatics at the University of Central Florida! This will provide higher visibility and allow us to carry a broader mission for greater reach and impact both locally and globally, and new capacity to develop or house centers and institutes within our new school in the future. The school will strengthen our ability to train globally minded and locally engaged future leaders in healthcare.

Our school has a dedicated faculty and staff who focus on student development and career success. We are proud to offer two exciting major programs leading to a Bachelor of Science in Health Services Administration and a B.S. in Health Informatics and Information Management. Both are certified or accredited by our professional bodies. We also offer three accredited, high-quality graduate programs leading to a Master of Health Administration, an executive MHA and a Master of Science in Health Care Informatics. Our faculty also supports the interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Public Affairs and the state of Florida’s first Risk Management Licensure Program.

We have a diverse mix of dedicated faculty members who conduct innovative research and provide engaging instructional programs focusing on problem-solving and making better healthcare decisions. They have expertise in public health, global health, health policy, healthcare leadership, long-term quality care, community engagement and health informatics.

Our courses are taught in a blended learning environment, with a mix of high-quality online and face-to-face components. All of our programs require internship or capstone projects to help students build relationships, network and gain experience in the field. Moreover, we have a dedicated, hard-working and talented team to help students engage in various professional and career development activities, including opportunities to attend and compete at local, state and national conferences, as well as to network with healthcare partners and professional associations.

Healthcare has the fastest-growing occupations with strong job markets. The school attracts a diverse group of outstanding students from Central Florida, other parts of the United States and countries overseas. Our alumni are leaders in the healthcare industry and are deeply involved in helping our current students make positive impacts.

I encourage you to reach out to our faculty and staff to learn more about the school, our programs, and the healthcare administration and informatics fields.

Charge on!

SU-I HOU, DRPH, CPH, MCHES, RN
Founding School Director and Professor

Meet the Founding Director

My name is Su-I Hou and I am a professor and the founding director of the school. I also serve as the Health Services Management and Research track liaison for the interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Public Affairs. Before joining UCF in 2015, I was a founding faculty member of the College of Public Health at the University of Georgia. I received both my MPH and DrPH from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Over my faculty career, I have taught a variety of research and competency-based courses for both graduate and undergraduate students. My research has focused on Aging-in-Community models and programs, healthy aging, and community and worksite strategies to promote early detection and prevention of selected cancers and human immunodeficiency virus infection or AIDS. Most of my research has involved working with community partners in developing and validating culturally sensitive study instruments, assessing psycho-social factors of health behaviors, developing and implementing theory-based health programs, and evaluating the effectiveness of program interventions. Before entering academia, I gained extensive healthcare and administrative experience serving as the founding director of the Department of Community Health at a major teaching hospital in Taiwan. I have conducted multiple invited mixed methods research training workshops at universities overseas, and I am a current Fulbright Specialist (2019-2024).
Department Expands to a School: 
School of Global Health Management and Informatics

“Think globally; act locally.”

With increase in research, enrollment, and global involvement, the department of Health Management and Informatics has been expanded to a school designation. The School of Global Health Management and Informatics, housed in the College of Community Innovation and Education, made its debut on May 10, 2021.

A school differs from a department in that it carries a broader mission and is not just a result of larger faculty numbers. A school typically has both undergraduate and graduate education programs with larger faculty numbers balanced in academic ranks.

“The school designation is a critical next step to continue the growth of HMI. It reflects the broader mission we carry and allows us to develop academic research centers or house research centers or institutes in the future,” said Su-I Hou, the school’s founding director.

The leadership and faculty within the school have developed curriculum, research and conferences to integrate the global perspective of healthcare management. The school’s involvement with the global conversation on healthcare management ranges from study abroad trips, partnership conferences and faculty research, such as the World Health Organization’s United States reporting team on COVID-19.

Program enhancement has long been a goal of the department. Since moving to UCF Downtown, the desire to officially upgrade to a school gained momentum. Under Hou’s leadership, the department gained approval from the university to become a school. The new designation highlights the School of Global Health Management and Informatics’ global involvement and academic initiatives.

In addition to collaborative work across the globe, the School of Global Health Management and Informatics has increased its global research efforts to gain national attention for its faculty. Hou was added to the U.S. Department of State’s Fulbright Specialist Program in 2019 and received a 2020 Fulbright Specialist Grant to visit the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel to deliver mixed-methods research workshops for graduate students and faculty members. Assistant Professor Yara Asi received a Fulbright Scholar Award, which will follow her research on healthcare delivery and outcomes in the West Bank, a landlocked territory between Israel and Jordan.

The School of Global Health Management and Informatics offers five degree programs, three undergraduate minors and a graduate certificate program in healthcare risk management. The health services administration Bachelor of Science program focuses on the business side of healthcare, while the health informatics and information management Bachelor of Science program focuses on the administrative informatics side. The three graduate programs include a master’s program in health administration, as well as online Executive Master of Health Administration and Master of Science in Healthcare Informatics programs.

“We’re excited because the school designation elevates our visibility and broadens our mission capacity for greater reach and impact, both locally and globally,” Hou said.
LEAD THE EVOLUTION OF HEALTHCARE

With an Executive Master of Health Administration degree from UCF, you’ll be equipped with the power to unleash your leadership potential as you help guide and manage the dynamic health systems of tomorrow.

The rapidly evolving healthcare system in America magnifies the need for talented, driven and highly educated administrators, C-suite executives and leaders to help guide integral healthcare teams. Working to help fulfill the need, UCF’s health administration master’s degree program provides you with hands on administrative, management, financial and leadership skills needed to become an innovator in healthcare.

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• Recognized as a CAHME Mentorship Circle Program

GET STARTED

Ready to take the next step? ucf.edu/online/discover-emha
New Project Explores Telehealth Effectiveness on Veterans During Pandemic

By Robert Wells, Ph.D.

The UCF and Orlando VA Healthcare System research project is examining why some veterans complete their psychotherapy treatment and others do not.

The switch to remote psychotherapy treatment for veterans diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder has worked for some patients during the COVID-19 pandemic but not for others.

UCF and the Orlando VA Healthcare System are exploring why that’s the case in a new study that could aid in finding ways to improve therapy delivery during the modern era of pandemics.

The nine-month project is funded by a more than $25,000 grant from the Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development.

“A large proportion of veterans deal with mental health issues, but often psychotherapy fails to improve their symptoms because for this treatment to be most effective, the patient must adhere to the full schedule, typically involving 10 to 12 sessions,” said Christian King, an assistant professor in UCF’s School of Global Health Management and Informatics and the project’s co-investigator.

“We wanted to understand why some veterans complete their treatments while others do not,” he said. “Then COVID-19 happened and all sessions that were previously in-person were moved to videoconference or telephone. So the need to understand how to keep veterans engaged in therapy became more urgent because the switch to remote modality created new hurdles.”

The project is mining the electronic medical records of VA to understand how the pandemic affected patients’ treatment for PTSD and depression during the 2020 fiscal year.

In addition to King, the research team includes Assistant Professor Andriy Koval and Associate Professor Varadraj Gurupur, both with UCF’s [School of Global] Health Management and Informatics; Dr. Diana Mendez, the project’s principal investigator, with the Orlando VA Healthcare System; Dr. Teresa Carper with Orlando VA Healthcare System; and Dr. Adam Golden with Orlando VA Healthcare System and UCF’s College of Medicine.

“We hope that our study will help improve the treatment of PTSD and depression for veterans,” King said.
The number of Americans age 65 and older continues to increase as the baby boom generation ages and people are living longer. At the same time, many seniors plan to “age in place,” or continue living in their current homes, despite needing more assistance as they get older.

One strategy for aging in place is an emerging idea known as aging in community, in which older adults depend on a community support group or program for assistance. This can consist of situations like older adults or family and friends living in the same house or close by each other in communities where they can easily assist each other.

To find out just how well the aging-in-community strategy is working, a UCF health management and informatics researcher examined three aging-in-community programs in Central Florida. Her study, which is among the first to examine some key variables for these programs, was recently published in the journal Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine.

“Given the fast approaching ‘super-aged society’ in the U.S., there is a critical need to identify and assess the impact of aging-in-community programs aimed at helping older adults remain independent at home while also having a sense of belonging to their community,” said Su-I Hou, professor, founding director of UCF’s School of Global Health Management and Informatics and author of the study.

Hou examined two important factors for successful aging in community — people’s perceived ability to live independently and their perceived neighborhood social cohesiveness — in three types of aging-in-community programs in Central Florida.

These were two village programs, Thriving-in-Place, in Celebration, and Neighbors Network, in Winter Park; the Seniors First Meals on Wheels Program in Orlando, which is a county neighborhood lunch program; and a university-based lifelong learning program, LIFE at UCF.

In a village program, older residents band together to help each other out with drives to the doctor, help with errands and to vet any outside services or assistance.

Countywide neighborhood lunch programs provide meals and nutritional services to older adults in a group setting.

The university-based lifelong learning program provides education for older adults and ways to connect with other people and engage in campus services and programs.

The researcher found that for the nearly 300 total older people she surveyed in the aging-in-community programs, the higher a person’s education level was, the less likely they were to perceive themselves as having the ability to live independently.

She also found that people who were married had greater perceptions of social cohesiveness, or that they lived in a neighborhood where people helped each other out.

When comparing the three programs, study data showed that older adults participating in the neighborhood lunch program perceived a higher level of confidence that they can live independently at their own home, yet a lower level of neighborhood social cohesiveness, compared with older adults participating in the village or lifelong learning programs.

“The findings suggest ‘remain independent at home’ and ‘having a sense of belonging to their community’ may impact older adults with different characteristics or community-support systems differently,” Hou said. “It calls attention to examine how these key factors operate in different programs promoting aging in community, as well as a need to promote confidence in living independently at home among higher-educated older adults, and to facilitate a sense of belonging to their own community for single, older adults.”

Professor Su-I Hou, Dr.P.H., C.P.H., M.C.H.E.S., R.N. received a UCF Teaching Incentive Program award for teaching productivity and excellence and a UCF Research Incentive Award for outstanding research, scholarly or creative activity for 2020.

Assistant Professor Samuel Towne, Ph.D., MPH, CPH is a fellow of the American Academy of Health Behavior and currently serves on the organization’s Awards Council.

Program Manager II Tish Sheppard, known for her ability to get things done, received the Professional Staff Award from the UCF College of Community Innovation and Education for 2020.

Assistant Professor Barbara Andraka-Christou, Ph.D., J.D. and Associate Professor Danielle Atkins, Ph.D., MPA journal article “Whose Opinion Matters about Medications for Opioid Use Disorder? A Cross-sectional Survey of Social Norms among Court Staff” was published in Substance Abuse by Taylor & Francis Online. See the article at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08897077.2020.1846666.

Andraka-Christou received a Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network Learning Experiences to Advance Practice investigator award. The competitive JCOIN LEAP award is offered to a few early career stage investigators nationally as part of the National Institutes of Health Helping to End Addiction Long-term Initiative. The two-year mentoring program provides resources, including travel funding and an NIH-experienced mentor, for developing a federally funded research portfolio.

Andraka-Christou also received national attention for her recent book The Opioid Fix in an interview by National Public Radio. Read the interview transcript at www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/07/21/893387213/to-stop-deadly-overdoses-the-opioid-fix-urges-better-use-of-tools-we-already-hav

Associate Lecturer Amanda Walden, Ph.D., M.S.-HSA, RHIA, CHDA, journal article “To Report or Not Report Health Care Data Breaches,” co-authored by Kendall Cortelyou-Ward, Ph.D, Meghan Hufstader Gabriel, and Alice Noblin, Ph.D., RHIA, CCS, PMP, was the top story in the American Health Information Management Association’s AHIMA SmartBrief publication. View the original article at www.ajmc.com/view/to-report-or-not-report-health-care-data-breaches.

Walden also received the UCF College of Community Innovation and Education’s Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching award and a UCF Teaching Incentive Program award for teaching productivity and excellence for 2020.

Associate Professor Varadraj Gurupur, Ph.D. was awarded the Outstanding Engineering Educator Award from the IEEE Orlando Section for his contribution toward teaching difficult engineering courses in an online environment to students from non-technical academic backgrounds in the Master of Science in Health Care Informatics program. Gurupur is the Co-Inventor with primary inventor Professor Emeritus Tom Wan, PhD on the invention of a unique process for assessing heart failure readmissions. They were issued the school’s first US Patent for their invention.

ADDITIONAL RECENT FACULTY PUBLICATIONS


For the latest UCF Health Management and Informatics faculty publications, visit ccie.ucf.edu/hmi/research/faculty-publications/.

FACULTY RETIREMENT AND PROMOTIONS

Professor Thomas Wan retired from UCF and achieved the title of professor emeritus.

Assistant Professor Danielle Atkins received tenure and was promoted to associate professor.

Instructor Meredith Robertson was promoted to associate instructor.

Instructor Steven Ton was promoted to associate instructor.

NEW GRANTS

A Mixed Methods Case Study Identifying Patient-provider Communication on Food Insecurity Screening

Pi: Su-I Hou with co-PI Christian King, Ann Miller and co-investigators Christina Bernhard* and Karen Broussard

UCF Downtown Interdisciplinary Research Initiative

Program Evaluation for Florida Supreme Court Office of the State Courts Administrator

Pi: Barbara Andraka-Christou with co-investigators Danielle Atkins and Yara Asi, a Public Affairs Doctoral student and Florida Supreme Court Office of State Courts Administrator

Quality of Medication Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Medicaid-enrollees: The Effects of State Policies and Initiative

Co-Pi: Barbara Andraka-Christou with Pi: Bradley Stein (Rand Corporation) National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01 funding)

NEW INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Canada
Faculty lead: Andriy Koval
General Agreement for Collaboration with University of Victoria

Columbia
Faculty lead: Bernardo Ramirez
General Agreement for Collaboration with Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (University of Javeriana)

India
Faculty lead: Varadraj Gurupur
General Agreement for Collaboration with AJ Teaching Hospital and Research Centre

Taiwan
Faculty lead: Su-I Hou
Short-term Study Abroad Agreements with Chang-Gung University of Science and Technology and Chung Shan Medical University

*Faculty initiated and approved by UCF Global
Lucas Lindal

An Illinois native, Lindal used to snowboard and is now taking advantage of being in sunny Florida by learning to surf.

Lucas ‘Luc’ Lindal is a May 2020 graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Health Services Administration program. Currently a health insurance broker, Lindal’s journey to health administration is unique. At the young age of 14, he was nearly paralyzed from the neck down when he broke his neck in two places. His mobility was saved by a millimeter. This event led him to continue his passion for athletics as well as mentor special education students, leading him to his pursuits in college.

“From then on, I realized I wanted to be a part of the healthcare system in a management-type setting,” Lindal said. Like many others, Lindal’s biggest challenge while pursuing his degree was maintaining balance. However, it wasn’t just balance between personal, professional and school life; Lindal started a business. He has used his professors’ personal work experiences and insights to accomplish his mission — “endeavoring to persevere.”

“Starting a business as an undergrad was difficult,” Lindal said. “When I first started, I was told I would need to work 60+ hours a week in order to be a part of the team. My life became a question of how I would balance school, work and my business at 21 years old. However, I took the chance and have been running my business for three months now and it’s flourishing.”

One of Lindal’s most memorable moments of his undergraduate career was being introduced to USHEALTH Advisors, a UnitedHealthcare company, where he is currently working. He plans to continue to develop his skills and climb the ladder at his company while also cultivating his pursuits in nonprofit organizations and real estate.

“The team culture and work environment we hold, empowers not only me, but other individuals to become the greatest version of themselves,” Lindal said.

Shanessa Stewart

In addition to her community accomplishments, Stewart has an interesting personal life! For example, she once rode a camel into the desert and then spent the night outside of her tent under the stars.

Shanessa Stewart was a rising star in the Master of Health Administration program at UCF. She graduated in Spring 2021. Stewart works as a financial counselor II at Orlando Health Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children.

Stewart was introduced to the field through peers and mentors who helped her discover the vast array of opportunities in health administration. The opportunities, coupled with her desire to be involved and make an impact, led her to pursue her graduate degree in health administration.

“I want to make a difference in the community,” she said. “I love helping disadvantaged families, because I come from a low-income, single-parent family. I understand the challenges they face. [My peers and mentors] convinced me that there were countless opportunities in healthcare; no matter what my interests were, I could make a significant impact.”

Stewart took the idea of getting involved very seriously. In addition to her full-time job and school, she was also treasurer of UCF’s Graduate Health Network, a mentor for Valencia College’s Horizon Scholars Program, chair of the Advance- ment League’s Outreach Committee, a student member of the American College of Healthcare Executive’s Central Florida Chapter, and an active member in the MHA Mentor Pods. The toughest part balancing all of this.

“As someone who is ambitious and wants to engage in organizations and community activities while working and attending school full-time, I can easily become caught up in being too involved,” Stewart
said. “I learned that it was more important to choose a few activities that will allow me to contribute, add value and maintain a healthy balance.”

However challenging, Stewart was successful in her balancing efforts. Using her experience and information learned in her program, Stewart organized a monthlong clothing donation campaign at the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children Emergency Room that involved the entire hospital. The donations went to the Central Florida Coalition for the Homeless.

“The results were astonishing, and employees were excited to participate by bagging their unused clothes so I could deliver the clothes,” Stewart said. “This project gave me hope and made me proud of myself for having a vision, bringing that vision to reality, and committing to the process from start to finish. Seeing others so excited to contribute to the mission was remarkable.”

“There were a few elements of the [MHA] program that really helped me develop into a better, more knowledgeable person and just become more comfortable with who I am,” Stewart said. “The program created an environment where students are comfortable when discussing their thoughts about hot topics in healthcare. Personally, I thrive in welcoming environments like our program, because I love talking about [things] that I’m passionate about. Many of the professors have real-world experience in the industry so they’re able to provide first-hand advice to students to help us in our careers. This information was eye-opening to me, but it forced me to ensure that I became involved in organizations, volunteering, etc, to give myself the competitive advantage. Also, the flexibility of the program is amazing and the professors being approachable and wanting to see students do well, not only in the classrooms, but in our careers, was great too.”

Stewart’s future plans include finding a role in healthcare that meets her drive and passion.

“My professional goal is to secure a role in healthcare where I have decision-making ability, I’m challenged, I contribute to the community and most of all, I’m happy,” Stewart said.

Mariah Hilton

Mariah Hilton is a Spring 2020 graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Health Informatics and Information Management program. She also holds Registered Health Information Technician and Certified Coding Specialist credentials, but Hilton’s journey did not begin in the health information management field.

“My first bachelor’s degree was in the [MHA] program that really helped me develop into a better, more knowledgeable person and just become more comfortable with who I am,” Stewart said. “The program created an environment where students are comfortable when discussing their thoughts about hot topics in healthcare. Personally, I thrive in welcoming environments like our program, because I love talking about [things] that I’m passionate about. Many of the professors have real-world experience in the industry so they’re able to provide first-hand advice to students to help us in our careers. This information was eye-opening to me, but it forced me to ensure that I became involved in organizations, volunteering, etc, to give myself the competitive advantage. Also, the flexibility of the program is amazing and the professors being approachable and wanting to see students do well, not only in the classrooms, but in our careers, was great too.”

Stewart’s future plans include finding a role in healthcare that meets her drive and passion.

“My professional goal is to secure a role in healthcare where I have decision-making ability, I’m challenged, I contribute to the community and most of all, I’m happy,” Stewart said.

“I felt challenged; I liked solving puzzles and investigating to see how things happened and how they worked,” Hilton said. “Finally one day I got the courage and went to the manager in the medical records department and asked her, ‘What do I need to do to one day be in your shoes?’ and she was the one who got me started on this education/career path and I have been following it ever since.”

Prior to starting her bachelor’s degree, Mariah went to St. Petersburg College and obtained her Associate of Arts and credentials in health information management. She made the decision to go through UCF’s HIIM program to continue her path. Although she was successful, it was not without challenges.

 “[The toughest part was] the finances; trying to pay to continue my education has been one of the toughest obstacles I have had thus far. There was even a time in my second to last semester that I was nearly on the verge on having to quit school because I struggled with getting a loan and finding monies to pay for my education. However, I persevered and I graduated!”

Though challenged, Hilton was able to find help and guidance in her faculty and staff members.

“The faculty of the HIIM program was truly a tremendous help on this educational journey, especially for me in being a distance learner. From the advisor to the directors and the professors — they were just phenomenal,” Hilton said. “They were there to answer my questions, make sure I understand things, [give] me access to many educational tools and even [offer] extended educational opportunities beyond the classroom. I was able to attend the national [health information management] conference in Chicago, representing UCF, and [to receive] additional educational trainings for credentials or other aspects of the HIM field. The program offers so much, and the faculty really care about you and your success in the program and in the field.”

Hilton did her internship with Sarasota
Memorial Hospital, where she works as a transcription technician. Her internship was with the coding department and included abstracting data and developing audit response plans and tools for its external coding audits. Since working in the field, Hilton has felt a great connection to her work and her team.

“I think my most memorable [moment] so far is being a trainer on Dragon, which is a voice recognition software the hospital utilizes, and training clinicians on how to utilize Dragon in order to document in the medical record,” Hilton said. “Being able to assist clinicians in learning a new way to document that can be more efficient … is fun; just having the opportunity to work one-on-one with them is a memorable experience. We are all a team.”

While working and obtaining her degree, Hilton has thought about the challenges facing the health information management field.

“Privacy and security of health information is always one of the biggest challenges in our field,” she said. “Whether it be in the physical or technology format, HIM professionals are constantly looking at ways to protect health information, especially as technology continues to advance.”

However, challenges like this are what help health information management professionals thrive and improve the quality of healthcare.

“One of the most significant benefits of the HIM field, especially as healthcare moves more toward quality-based initiatives, is the dedication to accurate, efficient and quality documentation of the health record,” Hilton said. “Whether it being coding, auditing, analysis, chart completion, transcription [or] documentation improvement, HIM consistently strives in making the health record a true and accurate reflection of treatment or services rendered and that doesn’t just benefit the providers or insurance companies, but the patients as well.”

Hilton will be continuing her journey through her career and hopes to return for a graduate degree and eventually give back by teaching other health information management professionals in the future.

Christopher Atkins

Christopher Atkins graduated from the Bachelor of Science in Health Services Administration program in Spring 2020. He took full advantage of his time at UCF, utilizing faculty and staff assistance while also maintaining an active role in student engagement as president of the Health Services Administration Student Association. Unlike most HSA majors, Atkins came to UCF with the goal of being a political science major. However, family history and a passion for healthcare and business steered him in a different direction.

“My father practiced dentistry for 48 years, and throughout his time serving any community he practiced in, I knew that I wanted to do something in my life that benefited others,” Atkins said. “I have always been very passionate about healthcare, but I knew that being a care provider like a nurse or physician wasn’t what I wanted to do. However, when I saw the health services administration program, I knew it would be a perfect mixture of both business and healthcare, which I loved.”

Atkins set his mind to being a self-starter and reached out to faculty and staff members to ensure success in his program.

“Throughout my time at UCF, I [never] felt like I did not have support from my professors or any of my academic advisors,” Atkins said. For example, I [was] able to “pick the brain” of incredibly qualified professors like that of [Associate Instructor Philip] Wessel. … [He] helped mentor and assist me in both my academic and professional pursuits. Professors like him and many others are one of the main reasons I chose to continue my education at UCF. Also, the program directors for both the undergraduate and graduate programs (Dr. Bush and Dr. Nieves) [greatly] benefited my educational and professional experiences throughout the program.”

While all HSA students are required to take on an internship, sometimes students go much further in the administration field. Atkins was able to take his internship to the next level by shadowing the president of the hospital where he interned.

“I had a unique opportunity to intern at Winter Haven Hospital, which is a part of the BayCare [Health] System. I began my time at Winter Haven Hospital during the summer of 2018. I was able to shadow the president of the hospital and learn about day-to-day operations. I learned tremendously about how to run different departments in a hospital because I was able to meet with every significant department head at the hospital. Throughout my internship experience, I was embraced by the entire staff of the hospital. Thanks to the president and the whole team at Winter Haven Hospital, my passion for being a leader in the healthcare industry grew exponentially.”

In his studies, Atkins learned that balance is one of the most challenging parts of being a healthcare administrator. Working to address the needs of patients as well as the needs of employees and hospital personnel can be a tightrope to walk. However, he pursues the career because he knows he has
the potential to make a difference.

“I believe the best part [about being a healthcare administrator] is to help create an environment that provides ethical, timely and high-quality care to all patients,” Atkins said. “By being an administrator, you have the unique ability to help change a healthcare system to provide and meet patients’ needs.”

Atkins is already working on his future goals and began UCF’s Master of Health Administration last fall.

“My main professional goal is to help healthcare systems around the world provide efficient, high-quality, ethical care to any individual that is in need. I believe that through my education at the University of Central Florida, I will be able to meet my professional goal through the knowledge I will gain about the healthcare industry,” Atkins said.

Ahsha Konate, a recent graduate of the Master of Health Administration program at UCF, is currently working in the Orlando VA Healthcare System. With an undergraduate degree in health sciences and focus in psychology, Konate turned to the administrative side of healthcare.

During her undergraduate career, Konate volunteered at Shepherd’s Hope, the largest free and charitable clinic in Florida. As a volunteer, she was introduced to the administrative side of the healthcare industry leading her to pursue a career and education in the field.

“I decided to pursue a career in health administration because I enjoyed volunteering in administrative roles [as an undergraduate], especially at Shepherd’s Hope,” she said.

While Konate was earning her graduate degree, she completed three internships: one at Orlando Health, another at AdventHealth and a third at the Orlando VA Medical Center, through the federal Pathways Internship Program, where she has stayed on after graduation. In addition to pursuing her internships and coursework, Konate was also a graduate teaching assistant for the Department of Health Management and Informatics. Like many students, she found her key to success was effective time management.

“The hardest part [was] balancing school, work and personal life,” Konate said. “I [used] my calendar a lot because I [knew] there [was] always something I needed to be doing or preparing for.”

In looking back, Konate feels that the emphasis on networking and getting involved outside of the classroom was important for success.

“I have had the pleasure of meeting so many talented healthcare professionals throughout Orlando and other parts of the United States,” Konate said. “I have enjoyed and recommend attending conferences and events through organizations such as ACHE, NAHSE, and HIMSS. These experiences have been amazing! I look forward to continuing my involvement after graduation.”

Konate’s goals include continuing her growth with the Orlando VA with hopes of moving into a leadership role in the future. She also hopes to give back by being a mentor to future students and potentially become an adjunct instructor.

“Go Knights!” she said.

What advice do you have for future graduates?

“I stand by two key pieces of advice: one from Les Brown - ‘You must be willing to do today what others won’t do in order to have tomorrow what others won’t have.’ As well as one from Eric Thomas - ‘When you want to succeed as bad as you want to breathe, then you will be successful.’”

- Lucas Lindal, B.S. HSA ’20

“Don’t ever stop being a student and don’t be afraid to start at the bottom or not exactly where you want to be. Our field is always evolving and changing, so it is important to be open-minded and that you are willing to learn as much as you can, regardless of the area you choose to work in.”

- Mariah Hilton, B.S.-HIIM

“Get involved. Network. Apply yourself. Take the time to learn and develop your skills. You don’t have to get involved in everything but find a few things you are passionate about and give it everything you’ve got. Make sure you’re adding value to the organization or people [who are] involved. Most importantly, do what makes you happy.”

- Shanessa Stewart, MHA ’21

“Never be afraid to ask questions; keep learning and have faith!”

- Ahsha Konate, MHA ‘19

“... never settle for mediocrity. In healthcare, you must always strive for excellence in everything you do because doing that saves lives. Yes, sometimes life gets tough and it seems like the world is against you, but if you keep pushing forward you will become a success.”

- Christopher Atkins, B.S. HSA ’20
Leading by Example: Fellowship Preparation and Mentor Pods

Our students need more than traditional classroom encounters to achieve their full potential and make them better, well-rounded students poised for success upon graduation.

By Kourtney Nieves, Ph.D.; Mark Bush, DHA, MBA; Shannon Elswick, M.S.-HSA, FACHE

Master of Health Administration program faculty members strongly believe in leading by example and reinforcing success skills throughout the program when helping to guide future healthcare executives.

Students in our Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME)–accredited program have the ability to put their skills to use by competing for administrative fellowships prior to graduation. These nationally competitive fellowships provide students with the opportunity for hands-on learning through one- to two-year rotational or project-based fellowships. During their fellowship, students are not only mentored by top healthcare executives from across the country, they get paid to learn new skills and showcase the competencies they attained in the MHA program. Moreover, many parlay their fellowship into a full-time role within the organization.

Program faculty members also strongly believe that for students to attain these fellowships, preparations must start early and be reinforced throughout the program. Introducing students to the administrative fellowship process during program orientation has led to an increased excitement among MHA students about the possibility of securing a fellowship upon graduation. Students are beginning the process in the first semester by tweaking their resumes, crafting an early version of their personal statement and paring down their list of potential fellowship application sites. Fellowship preparations continue in our voluntary mentor pods for MHA students run by Executive in Residence Shannon Elswick and MHA Program Director Kourtney Nieves, who reinforce the fellowship process and its merits.

Mentor pod leaders reserve one monthly meeting annually to discuss fellowship opportunities for MHA students. In this meeting, they tackle the application process, discuss interviewing skills and field general questions about the best ways to secure a fellowship upon graduation. We have also utilized our growing network of MHA alumni who have completed, or are in the process of completing, their own administrative fellowship to share their personal anecdotes and tips for success. Not only has this maximized the impact of a senior mentor imparting his or her fellowship knowledge, it has produced a peer-to-peer mentoring effect as well.

In August of 2020, two of our MHA program students kept the fellowship momentum going by creating their own fellowship forum. They co-hosted an Administrative Fellowship Forum using Zoom for current health administration students that included four panelists who are UCF alumni and have obtained an administrative fellowship. These current and previous fellows showcased how UCF students have been successful in obtaining an administrative fellowship and provided tips to help current health administration students on their journey from choosing fellowship programs to post-fellowship success. Their goal was to maximize the resources available to students, including our alumni network, during the administrative fellowship recruitment process.

These proactive approaches have led to more successful fellowship applications. In fact, four of our MHA students secured early fellowship offers at places such as Duke and Johns Hopkins. Moreover, the success of these students will expand our alumni network of post-administrative fellows who are encouraging and helping current students develop their own strategy to successfully secure a fellowship. Both the MHA program and success of our alumni in the healthcare sector are enhanced as more of our students earn and complete these nationally competitive administrative fellowships.
Tackling Real-World Healthcare Problems:

Graduate Health Administration Students Compete in Virtual Event

The students participated in The University of Alabama at Birmingham’s case competition in late February.

By Alexandra Shimalla

Every fall, graduate students in the UCF College of Community Innovation and Education’s health administration master’s degree program learn about case competitions. If they try out and are accepted, students get an opportunity to tackle recent real-world problems in healthcare and offer a potential solution in front of a panel of industry experts at case competitions offered throughout the year. The University of Alabama at Birmingham competition always occurs in February and was held virtually this year due to COVID-19.

“Students who audition and get selected for a case team work together with the shared purpose of proposing solutions to a complicated healthcare issue. This enriches their ability to complete meaningful research and exercises their critical thinking skills,” said Shannon Elswick, a senior coach who’s been working with the team for five years. Elswick is also an instructor and executive in residence in the School of Health Management and Informatics.

The case competitions also give students a chance to relate to their course material in a different way. Armed with the skills they are learning from classroom lessons; students can apply their newly gained knowledge to real-world situations they may face once they graduate.

Participants in the UAB competition this year had to propose a post-pandemic plan for a large, multi-specialty pediatric practice in South Florida, explained Judah Soray, a student in the Master of Health Administration program. The pediatric practice was undergoing a transition period, so students had to devise a better organizational structure, explain how to expand the organization and reassign roles, and provide advice on the best telehealth application software to use.

Teams are given the prompt a few weeks in advance of the competition, leaving them enough time to collaborate and research their proposed solutions. On event day, weeks’ worth of research is condensed to a quick 20-minute presentation.

Kourtney Nieves, associate lecturer and graduate academic program coordinator for health administration, has been the faculty leader of the team since 2016. “I wanted to assist the students with the competition, as it opens up so many opportunities for them as case team members to learn and grow, not only as students, but also as industry professionals,” Nieves said.

Soray participated in six networking sessions with industry professionals, and due to the small size of the sessions, he was able to have one-on-one time with the experts. The team also interacted with students from other universities and was invited to Cornell University’s inaugural case competition at the end of March.

“The application of what I learn in a controlled, educational environment is a great complement to the coursework I’m experiencing in the program,” said Sunil Mahajan, a graduate student on the team. “Case competitions let you discuss, make mistakes and build something without the stakes of the real-world workplace. Professionally, it gives me the ability to simulate how I would act in certain situations.”

Originally published March 22, 2021 https://ccie.ucf.edu/2021/03/22/ucf-health-administration-graduate-students-compete-in-virtual-event-to-take-on-real-world-healthcare-problems/
The HSA Internship Program was established in Fall of 1999 by Professor Timothy Rotarius. Since then, it has grown to help thousands of students gain hands-on experience. Each intern works under the guidance of health administration professionals from all types of healthcare organizations, including nonprofits, medical practices, long-term care facilities, accountable care organizations and hospital systems. The facility administrator serves as the intern’s mentor and preceptor to manage and lead the student as though this was his or her full-time job. Each semester there are about 150 undergraduates and graduate students making a positive impact in the Central Florida community.

Interns work on projects directly aligned with skills developed in their academic program and during the internship program. Student projects have grown, and many have been implemented at their host internship site. These include improving the onboarding process for new employees, setting up a system to track budgets and supplies, developing new auditing procedures and creating a market analysis for the best location to open a new practice, all of which have saved each organization both time and money.

The HSA Internship Program has worked to collaborate with over 400 healthcare organizations, a list that grows every semester. Some of the larger systems on the list are Orlando Health, AdventHealth and the Veterans Health Administration hospital system, including the Orlando VA Medical Center. The School of Global Health Management and Informatics is truly grateful to have some of the best preceptors engage with student interns every day. We have had the pleasure of seeing students graduate, work their way up in the field and then come back as preceptors.

Having come full circle, HSA alumni who are now preceptors have a unique perspective and understand the challenges current students are facing. One great alumna-turned-preceptor, Cody Castillo, currently works for Orlando Health as a practice operations manager. When asked why she is passionate about helping students she responded, “I am passionate [about] helping students because as a fellow Knight I want to be able to give back to a program that provided me with so many opportunities. I want to be able to engage and challenge students to find what they love to do, just as I have!”

Two administrators at Lutheran Haven, Justin Yelken and Michael Buxton, recently decided to give back to their alma mater by becoming preceptors and speaking to students about their healthcare journey. This is just one example of the incredible collaborations between UCF and the Central Florida healthcare community.

In the future, the school hopes to expand the internship program to include more organizations, preceptors and students, with a goal of providing the community with the best health administrators and increasing our partnerships locally and beyond.
UCF Launches New Healthcare Quality and Revenue Management Minor

By Alice Noblin, Ph.D., RHIA, CCS, PMP

UCF’s School of Global Health Management and Information has launched a new Healthcare Quality and Revenue Management minor geared to healthcare revenue cycle management. Students will learn about reimbursement methodologies, including risk adjustment and hierarchical condition category assignment. In addition to medical coding for inpatient claims, students will learn about quality pay for performance programs such as the Medicare Merit-Based Incentive Payment System and Patient Satisfaction surveys.

The new minor includes a new course, Value Based Reimbursement, to improve opportunities for students’ employment in clinical documentation.

The Health Informatics and Information Management Program Advisory Committee recommended that UCF include this important content for students, as it is the wave of the future in healthcare reimbursement. Dr. Todd Husty, president of Medical Audit Resources Inc., led the committee.

SKILLS TO PAY THE BILLS: Revenue cycle skills for healthcare business office positions

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Events and Student Involvement

ACHE Student Advisory Board Promo Video

The American College of Healthcare Executives of Central Florida Student Advisory Board at UCF created, directed and produced a promotional video to help other schools and students understand what the ACHE Central Florida Chapter has to offer.

Opportunities for health administration students to connect with healthcare professionals and be involved in the field is crucial to student success. The ACHE Central Florida Chapter provides mentorship, guidance and networking that is unique in its personalized engagement. With this in mind, the Student Advisory Board proposed creating a promotional video to expand the chapter’s reach. The primary goal was to connect students all over Central Florida with the ACHE Central Florida Chapter.

“I am happy to have been able to lead a team with a great work ethic. This project [could] not have been done without the passion and drive [of] the ACHE Student Advisory Board. Furthermore, the project would not have been executed as well as it was without the support of Mr. [Shannon] Elswick and the ACHE Central Florida Chapter.” – Ellice Sanchez, MHA ’21

The School of Global Health Management and Informatics and the Student Health Information Management Association (SHIMA) hosted a workshop for coding certification at UCF Downtown in its inaugural year. Photo by Katie Terry

The Student Health Information Management Association created gift baskets for SGHMI’s community partners in the health informatics field for Health Information Professionals (HIP) week. Photo by Katie Terry

Student Advisory Board members worked with ACHE Central Florida Chapter members to produce a promotional video about the chapter. Photo provided by Ellice Sanchez

Donor wall on the first floor of Dr. Phillips Academic Commons*
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- Health Services Administration Student Association - Hsasa@UCF.edu
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UCF School of Global Health Management & Informatics
Assistant Professor Yara Asi is a two-time graduate of UCF, earning her master’s degree in 2007 and Ph.D. in 2015, recently received the Fulbright Scholar Award. The prestigious program provides 470 awards to researchers and teachers in over 125 countries.

Asi began her two-year project in the spring of 2021. Her work will analyze the effects of movement restrictions on healthcare delivery and outcomes in the West Bank, a landlocked territory bordered by Jordan and Israel. She’ll travel to the area three times over the two years, staying for periods of four to eight weeks.

Most of Asi’s family lives in the territory known as the West Bank. Over the years, Asi has heard her relatives talk about their experiences with trying to get healthcare due to the heavy movement restrictions in the area. Over the decades of fighting between Israel and Palestine over this land, there have been periods of extreme violence, during which, hundreds of checkpoints were erected throughout the West Bank. Citizens must show documentation and sometimes undergo searches in order to pass through these points.

The movement restrictions in the West Bank include checkpoints, a border wall and a permit system. “Different aspects of movement restrictions impact your healthcare, depending on what you need,” Asi said. For example, a pregnant woman would need frequent access to her doctor for routine checkup. Ambulances would need immediate access through checkpoints in order to get to hospitals or patients rapidly. Unfortunately, these checkpoints are often closed unexpectedly, and citizens don’t realize this closure until they’re standing at the gate; the lengths of closures vary wildly as well from a day to weeks at a time without any explanation, she explained.

Asi will be conducting focus groups, interviews and developing a survey to assess the health impact of movement restrictions on the general civilian population of the West Bank. “My project is looking at how movement restrictions impact people’s health and what ways people get around it,” she said. Perhaps the citizens use telehealth, traditional healers or avoid seeking care altogether.

She didn’t know about the impact of COVID-19 when her proposal was submitted in September 2019, but the pandemic has offered areas for her to expand and explore when conducting her research.

“This is very exploratory work,” Asi said. A few studies have looked at specific populations, such as medical students and pregnant woman, but Asi wants her work to focus on how prevalent the phenomenon is for the general population.

“We already know that movement restrictions impact healthcare. What I want to know is how frequently does it happen. How is it expressed to most people? Is it just a minor annoyance or have most people needed emergency care that they weren’t able to get? The hope is that once I see what the main problems
Professor, school director and public affairs’ program liaison Su-I Hou was recently added to the Fulbright Specialist Roster within the United States’ Department of State’s Fulbright Specialist Program for 2019 to 2024.

The Fulbright Specialist Program sends U.S. faculty and professionals to serve as expert consultants on curriculum, faculty development and research, institutional planning, and related subjects at academic institutions abroad. Specialists are competitively selected based on their knowledge, skill sets and ability to make a significant contribution to projects overseas. They are eligible to be matched with approved projects from more than 150 countries.

Hou received a 2020 Fulbright Specialist Grant to visit the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel and deliver mixed methods research workshops for graduate students and faculty members. The trip was postponed due to COVID-19 but is expected to take place after the travel ban is lifted.

Hou also has been invited to collaborate on BGU’s priority institutional initiatives, including World Health Organization projects and the university’s global health program, and she will discuss potential exchange activities between BGU and UCF.

Learn more at ccie.ucf.edu/2019/03/21/public-affairs-and-health-management-professor-added-to-fulbright-specialist-roster/

Originally published June 19, 2020, at ccie.ucf.edu/2020/06/19/ucf-health-management-and-informatics-faculty-member-awarded-fulbright/
WHO COVID-19 REPORTING TEAM

With the continued spread of COVID-19, researchers are working together to examine and report data that may aid in the efforts of stopping the spread and finding treatments. In addition to clinical research, policy research is underway to analyze and improve emergency responses. The World Health Organization is collecting data from experts in different countries to track policy measures and responses. The organization is analyzing how those responses correlate to the spread, recovery and death rates around the world.

"It is a depressing and frustrating assignment," Unruh said. "It is very difficult to spend at least a half a day every day reading the depressing news and culling through it to form the ongoing report. As a nurse, health economist and health policy expert, I have a pretty good idea about what could have been done to contain the pandemic and what needs to be done to mitigate its spread ... COVID-19 is spreading, so mitigation is now in order."
To create cohesive data that is comparable across the globe, the WHO outlined specific report markers, listed below. Unruh, Koval and Alexander are collecting data regarding the U.S. policy response and/or measures in relation to:

- Preventing transmission (health communication, physical distancing, isolation and quarantine, monitoring and surveillance, testing)
- Ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity
- Providing health services effectively (planning services, managing cases, maintaining essential services)
- Paying for services (health financing, entitlement and coverage)
- Measures in other sectors (border controls, mobility, economy, state aid and civil protection)
- Governance

As the team collects data, reports are posted online to the COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM) and updated as information becomes available. The data collection process is still in the early stages and there is not yet enough data to determine best practices. These measurement reports are part of a country-by-country reporting project with 52 countries, including European countries, Canada, and the U.S.

“It appears that both timeliness and type of response are important,” Unruh said. “For example, early testing and physical distancing appear to be effective in lowering spread.”

Alexander said, “It’s still early and cross-country analyses are limited to date. There was a lot of variability in responses (both timeliness and stringency of responses) between countries and even among U.S. states. The U.S., despite its failures, was not alone in falling behind in its response. It’s also easy to judge countries on the basis of their case and death counts, but this resource provides an additional common set of metrics and allows for a better understanding of why countries acted the way they did.”

Though it is still early in the data collection process, the information will hold many insights and possibilities regarding the current U.S healthcare system.

While its future impact is yet to be determined, the information will help policy makers see what succeeded and what failed, according to Alexander. “This information will allow policymakers and researchers to assess what went well and what went poorly. The long-lasting implications of the crisis and actions taken remain to be seen, including positives (expanded telehealth and bans on surprise medical billing practices) and exposed weaknesses (employer-based health insurance, workforce concerns and general pandemic preparedness and coordination),” he said.

Unruh said the data shows clear weaknesses in the current U.S. system. “The crisis brings out the frayed fabric of the U.S. healthcare system. Our public health system is underfunded and understaffed, hospitals function too leanly to handle such a crisis, health insurance is largely dependent upon employment, and many people have little or no insurance to cover a serious illness such as this. On top of this, there are few price controls on medicines, medical supplies and equipment, so costs of care can be exorbitant. It remains to be seen whether this crisis will spark change in these and other areas so that our healthcare system functions better in general and in response to crises,” she said.

The data collection alone is overwhelming, but among researchers the consensus is that the data needs to be collected to plan better for the future and work toward collective solutions. Koval echoes the sentiments of many researchers around the world who also want a cohesive approach to solutions. “The crisis and [the U.S.’] response to it will make a dent in the idea of ‘personal responsibility,’ on which the financing of American healthcare heavily depends,” Koval said. When a fast food worker comes in to work sick, because they cannot afford insurance or to miss a day at work, this results in a collective impact and calls for collective responsibility.”

The future of this research will include reports from more countries and the hope to have a truly global look at the data. To follow the information and reporting, visit the HSRM website at www.covid19healthsystem.org/mainpage.aspx.
Taiwan Study Abroad: Asian Culture, Healthcare and Aging Society

By Su-I Hou, DrPH, CPH, MCHES, RN

The School of Global Health Management and Informatics’ Taiwan Study Abroad program is a short-term, summer academic program to bring students from the United States to Taiwan. Student participants enroll in a three-credit course at UCF on Asian Culture, Healthcare and Aging Society.

I originally created the program at the University of Georgia in 2011. When I joined UCF, I established and adapted the program for the campus. I recruited the inaugural UCF student group and we traveled to Taiwan in 2017. The program has been very well received and successful in recruitment for four years in a row. I have taken three UCF student groups to Taiwan to date; unfortunately, the fourth program was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a native of Taiwan, I am very passionate about the region and hold special insights into its people and culture. Each year, I handpick each program site, carefully plan the course schedule and travel itinerary, and infuse one-of-a-kind cultural experiences and fun activities to create lifetime memories for students.

Unique program features include the following:

- Partnerships with universities, healthcare (hospitals and long-term care facilities), government, industry and local nongovernmental organizations in multiple cities
- Language partners with Taiwanese students and joint-class activities
- Hands-on interactive and authentic cultural experiences
- Experiential learning and local site visits with guided reflections
- Integrated program social media platform for real-time and continued engagement
- Interdisciplinary and diverse program participants from both undergraduate and graduate levels

Program Discussion Topics

- Issues and challenges of Taiwan’s rapidly aging society on its universal healthcare system and emerging long-term care policies
- Community-based vs. facility-based aging services and reflection on different cultural context and systems between U.S. and Taiwan
- Current health promotion and cultural adaption strategies

In addition to visiting multiple health and aging sites, students experience Taiwan’s world famous hot spring spa (my favorite), night markets (another must-do in Taiwan) and cultural sites.

Student Reflections

“I learned to love people again and [that] money is not everything. I learned to help more and be involved in everything possible to better myself and my country. One day I hope to build a school for children that focuses on loving one another and caring for the earth and God. Taiwan is a little replica of what I [imagine].” – Elanda Andre

“I am honestly in disbelief by the high level of care that is provided by this facility. I can now see why Dr. Hou wants to retire here, this place is gorgeous and so well created!” – Adrian Cea

“It [is] a beautiful, convenient, fun, affordable and safe environment for older adults to enjoy their retirement in, and I’d like to bring this concept home with me to the U.S.” – Bryn Taylor

Read more about our Taiwan Study Abroad program, including daily program highlights and other student reflections, at www.facebook.com/TaiwanStudyAbroad.

Students visited the Chang-Gung International Medical Center. “I’m proud of the high quality yet amazingly affordable healthcare in Taiwan,” Hou said.

As a native of Taiwan, I am very passionate about the region and hold special insights into its people and culture. Each year, I handpick each program site, carefully plan the course schedule and travel itinerary, and infuse one-of-a-kind cultural experiences and fun activities to create lifetime memories for students.

Top left: At Puli Christian Hospital’s adult day care center, students interacted with seniors during music therapy activities.

Top right: Students enjoyed self-brewed high-mountain oolong tea while learning about the “healing environment” for older adults.
UCF’s School of Global Health Management and Informatics continues expanding and strengthening its network of health administration partners around the United States and the world. During the current and last academic years, we have forged these partnerships in different ways, responding to the changing COVID-19 times using appropriate strategies and learning methodologies.

A prime example of these globalization initiatives is the school’s collaborative work with Javeriana University in Colombia. The school and faculty have a long-standing relationship with the counterparts at both campuses in Bogota and Cali.

In fall 2019, the school organized a workshop for Javeriana in response to the success of a similar event completed the previous year. A group of 20 graduate students from Javeriana traveled to the newly inaugurated UCF Downtown campus in Orlando and participated in an intense week of lively academic interactions and dynamic visits to several of the school’s healthcare partners in the Central Florida community. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the characteristics and best management practices of these healthcare organizations and compare them with the healthcare innovations that are taking place in the Colombian health and social security system. The success of this second activity prompted the scheduling of a third one for this past fall; however, the conference was postponed given the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this past academic year, faculty and students from both universities maintained interactions in virtual academic sessions. The school also extended the collaboration to include the Institute of Public Health at Javeriana University and incorporated the institute in the delivering of COIL (Collaboration Online International Learning) modules.

Research collaboration between the universities was supplemented with the visit of a Javeriana post-doctoral fellowship scholar to UCF during the 2019-20 academic year. The continuation of the research project incorporates interdisciplinary faculty members from other areas of UCF who focus on the well-being and health of migrant and vulnerable populations.

Other national and international initiatives include:

- **Collaboration with Gulf Medical University in the United Arab Emirates on the university’s inaugural executive Master of Health Administration and Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Management programs.**

- **Development of certificate and master’s degree courses in health administration with the International School of Medicine at Anahuac University in Cancun, Mexico.**

- **Collaboration with the Chang-Gung University of Science and Technology and Chung-Shang Medical University on the The Taiwan Study Abroad program.**

- **Establishment of COIL (Collaboration Online International Learning) modules with the School of Health Sciences and other schools at Anahuac University in Puebla, Mexico, in support of the university’s internationalization strategy.**

- **Participation in teaching and research development with the executive health administration program at The Catholic University of America Rome Center.**
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