University leaders celebrate opening of Currie Hall

By Douglas Morino

USC leaders celebrated in August the opening of a new, resort-style residence hall on the Health Sciences Campus.

The Malcolm and Barbara Currie Residence Hall can house up to 456 students in a modern, spacious complex with 178 apartments, a fitness center, swimming pool, barbecues and an “academic success center” with computers, printers and two study rooms. Medical students living on the Health Sciences Campus were previously limited to the 90-bed Seaver Residence Hall.

USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, commended Malcolm and Barbara Currie for their steadfast support to the university, as well as their visionary philanthropy. The residence hall is named in recognition of their investment in the university’s biomedical research and education. The Curries gave $10 million in 2015 toward the endowment of the Keck School of Medicine of USC and construction of the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Biosciences.

“The Curries, in fact, have long believed in the soaring possibilities that come when science and engineering join forces,” he said. “Lives can be improved; lives can be saved; lives can be transformed. That is why USC made a dedicated choice to build at this campus, where we are investing not only in the future, but only in our students — but in this community.”

Keck School of Medicine Interim Dean and Director of the USC Gayle and Edward Rotkis Eye Institute, Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, described the residence hall.

See CURRIE HALL, page 3

Chief health information officer begins

By L. Alexis Young

Smokey James (TJ) Malseed has been appointed as chief health information officer for Keck Medicine of USC and associate dean for information sciences at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, administrators announced recently.

Malseed will lead growth and oversee operations for information systems and support the planning, operating and optimizing information management across the care continuum for the hospital sites, ambulatory locations and office-based practices of Keck Medicine, according to a memo sent by Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine, and Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, interim dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Rotkis Eye Institute.

Additionally, Malseed will support the integration of care for Keck’s patient population at its owned sites and at other locations that may collaborate with Keck on population health management programs. He also will lead the integration of clinical care and biomedical research to develop new paradigms of care.

Malseed most recently worked at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA), where he held positions as vice president and chief information officer, and chief applications officer. With 20 years of experience in IT, he oversaw the strategy and direction for CHLA’s technology efforts and led numerous clinical, revenue cycle, financial, human resources, and regulatory programs.

Flu vaccine available Sept. 12

Flu vaccines will be available to all faculty, nurses and Keck Medicine of USC staff starting Sept. 12 at Employee Health Services, Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Evaluation & Treatment Clinic, Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., weekends and holidays.

Preservative-free and egg-free vaccines are available on request. Flu season begins Nov. 1 and stretches to March 31.

Taking skills on deployment

Nurse anesthesia graduate part of Operation Inherent Resolve

By Mary Dacuma

Although medical students comprise the majority of the graduating class from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the school offers robust programs in a number of other disciplines, including nurse anesthesia. The rigorous program, which accepts only 16 students each year, provides comprehensive academic and clinical training in every aspect of anesthesiology.

Joe Romero, a 2013 graduate of the nurse anesthesia program and a captain in the U.S. Army Reserve, certainly found the program helpful in his unique role abroad.

In 2016, Romero was deployed to Iraq to serve as a nurse anesthetist with the 948th Forward Surgical Team (FST) in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). OIR’s mission is to assist the Iraqis in the fight against Islamic State militants and end the sectarian violence in the Middle East.

“The FST’s role is simple, but significant,” Romero said. “We provide life-saving surgery and are a morale force multiplier for the Iraqi soldiers on the ground. With us here, they have the courage and confidence to do the dangerous work of clearing neighborhoods, removing explosives and fighting ISIS knowing that somebody will care for them if they are injured.”

On average, Romero administered anesthesia to one patient each day. On the busiest days, he provided airway management, advanced trauma life support and critical care management to as many as four patients simultaneously. Most patients were men from the Iraqi Army, although the FST has also saved women and small children. Typical injury patterns are the result of direct mortar fire, explosives and gun shot wounds.

See DEPLOYMENT, page 3

Strategic planning panel eyes school’s goals

By Amanda Busick

To define the vision and strategic direction and develop a better understanding of what core values, goals and strategies matter most at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, leadership has launched a six-month strategic planning initiative. A steering committee is creating this plan with help from AMC Strategies, a Los Angeles-based consultancy group that specializes in working with academic medical centers.

The committee is co-chaired by Keck School Interim Dean Rohit Varma, MD, MPH; Helena Chui, MD, chair and professor of neurology; and Andrew McMahon, PhD, chair and W.M. Keck Provost Professor of Stem Cell Research and Regenerative Medicine, and director of the Edythe and Eli Broad Center for Stem Cell Research and Regenerative Medicine. The committee also includes members from the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Biosciences.

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See GOALS, page 3
Undergraduates present summer research projects

By L. Alexis Young

K eck School of Medicine of USC hosted the sixth annual Bridging the Gaps Summer Research Poster Day on Aug. 4 in the Broad CIMR Center.

The program began in the summer of 2011 and serves as a recruitment effort for the medical and graduate school programs. It runs for eight weeks in the laboratories of Keck School faculty members who also serve as mentors for the students. This year, 15 students participated in the program, which culminated with a presentation of their research posters.

“I am always impressed with the magnitude of their accomplishments in such a short period of time,” said Joyce Rischei, PhD, chief diversity officer and assistant dean for student affairs. “Undergraduates, students are not expected to or even able to complete a research project in the time allotted. However, they all develop a full understanding of their respective research allotted. However, they all develop a full understanding of their respective research.

To date, 86 minority undergraduate students have participated in the program and 39 have matriculated into programs of their interests. Alumni of the summer program are now members of the Trojan RISE cohort enrolled in MD, PhD and MD-PhD Medicine programs.

Cadet, a senior at Princeton University, said she found the program provided experiences she hasn’t yet had.

“I really appreciate this experience and specifically the opportunities to shadow physicians,” explained Cadet, who presented her poster about the risks associated with driving and cell phone usage. “I was able to shadow a pulmonologist and a pediatric surgeon, and I gained insight into areas that I haven’t previously been exposed to.”

Program participant Anthony Momore said the program gave him the opportunity to see a different side of medicine.

“I loved that we got to do a little bit of everything: we got to interact with physicians, hear lectures from different doctors and do our own research about something that we’re interested in,” explained Homere, who recently graduated from the University of Chicago. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

FRIDAY, SEPT. 9

8 a.m. USC Cancer Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

9 a.m.-3 p.m. USC Verdugo Hills Hospital Seminar. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

9 a.m.-4 p.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

Saturday, Sept. 10

8 a.m.-noon. Department of Ophthalmology. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

9 a.m.-9 p.m. USC Stem Cell Special Seminar: “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

Tuesday, Sept. 13

11 a.m.-5 p.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “It’s definitely a place I would want to come for medical school.”

Fellowship ties CareMore physicians to Gehr Center for training, research

By Mary Dacuma

A new fellowship will allow physicians to study innovative methods to care for high-cost, high-need patients, as the Gehr Center for Implementation Science at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and CareMore Health System announced a collaboration to train the next generation of leaders in health care delivery and implementation science.

The collaboration allows for CareMore physicians, through the CareMore-Gehr Fellowship, to receive policy and research training at Keck Medical Center of USC under the mentorship of Gehr Center faculty. The fellows will work on health care delivery innovation projects related to CareMore’s patient base. Bimala Bhola, MD, most recently chief resident in internal medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, has been chosen as the inaugural fellow for the program.

“CareMore-Gehr Fellowship represents a novel partnership between a leading academic medical center and an innovative managed care delivery system,” said Michael Hochman, MD, MPH, director of the Gehr Center and professor of clinical medicine. “Examining CareMore’s model, which has successfully managed the highest risk patients in complex health care delivery environments, will further illuminate how these models work to improve care delivery.

With the ever-changing health care marketplace, it remains crucial to continuously develop and recreate effective health care delivery methods. The CareMore-Gehr Fellowship seeks to help with that.

“Dr. Bhola’s work with the Gehr Center will help us better understand our existing model of care and identify opportunities of care delivery that we can more effectively serve patients,” noted Sachin Jain, MD, MBA, CEO of CareMore. “The Gehr Center and the Keck School of Medicine is one of the premier institutions in the emerging fields of health care delivery science and implementation.”

The CareMore and Gehr Center collaboration also provides a model for effective academic partnerships with novel health systems and delivery models.

Some of the most exciting ideas in health care are generated in clinical practice outside of the academic medical setting,” said Edward Crandall, PhD, MD, chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Keck School. “Academic study of health systems like CareMore can help us understand how these models work to improve care delivery.”

CareMore physicians will also provide important training for future clinical leaders. Many of the skills that will be emphasized in the CareMore-Gehr Fellowship program are imperative for innovating the quality and efficiency of care delivery, as well as the health of populations. The Fellowship will be co-led by Hochman and Anil Hanuman, D.O., regional chief medical officer at CareMore.
A s a third-generation Hawaiian, USC Stem Cell researcher Justin Ichida, PhD, is equally comfortable with hula and lead guitars as with laboratories. As an assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at USC, he dedicates his days to finding new ways to study and treat ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s disease.

As an undergraduate at UCLA, he served as president of the Hawai’i Club, or the Hui O’Imiloa, and danced hula in shows in Los Angeles. For the Hawai’i Club’s signature lu’au, Ichida and his fellow officers cooked a pig in the traditional fashion and flew the feast to the UCLA campus.

“There’s just a special way that we wanted to cook it,” he said. “You use hula and lead guitars as with laboratories. There’s no one better among those in the occupational science and occupational therapy community to lead our program into its next phase of excellence,” said Florence Clark, PhD, the division’s outgoing chair and associate dean who has served as its administrative leader since 1989. “I am excited to see what Dr. Baranek will create as we enter into the 100th anniversary of the occupational therapy profession and the 75th anniversary of occupational therapy at the University of Southern California.”

Until recently, however, the program was barely noticing what was happening in the world outside of Southern California.

“When we moved into the new building on September 20, I realized we could do it at UCLA in my apartment. So we actually cooked a huge meal in Hawai’i, flew it up and catered it.”

Baranek assumes the chair and associate dean position on February 1, 2017.

Clark will take a year-long sabbatical before returning to focus on teaching, research and continuing to expand USC Chan’s global presence throughout Asia and the Pacific Rim.

Baranek received a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. The USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, like the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, is a division within USC’s dental school.

Meet the Faculty: Justin Ichida, researcher with rhythm

Get to know the faculty members on the Health Sciences Campus and beyond!

Do you have a special skill or interest that nobody expects? Is there a professor whose hidden talent should be celebrated?

Let us know by emailing hsconnect@usc.edu with nominations for our Meet the Faculty feature and you might see them in a future HSC News issue.

and gave me the confidence to take on the anesthesia machine. Instead, he infuses equipment are limited compared to those in critical care medicine in order to help these soldiers.”

Baranek also is director of the USC Gayle and Edward Rotsky Eye Institute. “It’s very important that we have a solid advanced practice anesthesiology. Although some nurse anesthetists work alongside anesthesiologists, many are the sole anesthesiologist providers for most rural community hospitals nationwide and community hospitals nationwide and community hospitals nationwide and community hospitals nationwide and community hospitals nationwide.”

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“West coast top FST is one of the most professionally gratifying things I have ever done. I am honored to serve and help these soldiers.”

Environmental assessments also were conducted to gather data in 59 different areas in the categories of research, education, clinical services and resources. This will be presented at a dialing retreat Sept. 21 at the Huntington Library and Gardens. During the retreat, faculty members will review interview and survey results, as well as key findings from the environmental assessment, in order to discuss and define the vision and goals for the Keck School. Retreat discussions also will include brainstorming sessions to refine the priorities that should be the main focus of the strategic plan. Following the retreat, thematic teams will be formed to develop strategies and tactics to address these goals, which will be presented to the steering committee. The committee then will develop an implementation plan that will be presented to the Keck School as a whole in March of 2017.

For more information on the strategic planning committee, go to keck.usc.edu/strategicplan.
A renowned neurologist and expert in neuroprotection visited the Ranolla Todd Hodges Stroke and Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) Program of USC recently, delivering a grand rounds lecture and discussing his work. David C. Hess, MD, chairman, professor and distinguished presidential chair in the department of neurology at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, delivered the lecture on neuroprotection, with a focus on preconditioning, remote limb conditioning and exercise on Aug. 9, Hess, who helped develop the REACT telestroke network in rural Georgia and is co-founder of the telestroke company REACT Health Inc., is working with colleagues at Augusta University to develop remote ischemic conditioning as a treatment for acute ischemic stroke and vascular cognitive impairment. Nerves Sanossian, MD, director of the TIA Stroke Program and associate professor of neurology (clinical scholar) at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, awarded Hess with the 2016 Ranolla Todd Hodges Visiting Lectureship on Stroke Education and Prevention. —Melody Sharif

Study shows being overweight can shorten a person’s life span

Being overweight increases the chances of premature death, according to a USC researcher. Although people accept that obesity can shorten a person’s life span, scientists have debated whether the weight category between normal and obese is, in fact, a health risk. Being overweight definitely does not help people live longer, said Jonathan Samet, MD, MS, director of the USC Institute for Global Health. His statement is backed by a four-continent effort involving 239 studies and data from 10.6 million people. The collaborative and comprehensive study — one of the largest to date — was published in the Lancet. “Increasing the risk of dying is a powerful indicator of health. The new results on overweight should be strong motivation for people to return to a healthy weight,” said Samet, one of the study’s authors and holder of the Flora L. Thornton Chair in Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. — Zen Vuong

Biologists seek squirrel never before seen alive by scientists

Researchers are on a real-life search for what one calls “the ultimate Pokémon,” Zenkerella, an elusive scaly-tailed squirrel that has never been spotted alive by scientists. Zenkerella insignis, a mysterious rodent from central Africa, is among the least studied of all living mammals, said Erik Seiffert, PhD, study senior author and a professor of clinical cell and neurobiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Using three whole-body specimens, scientists sampled Zenkerella’s DNA for the first time. The study, published in the journal PLoS on Aug. 16, details how researchers analyzed Zenkerella’s genes using cells from cheek swabs. Based on DNA results, the researchers determined that, contrary to expectation, Zenkerella is a very distant cousin of two scaly-tailed squirrels with webbing between their legs and elbows that allow them to glide from tree to tree. Thus, Zenkerella, who cannot glide, should be placed in the newly named Zenkerellidae family, researchers said. —Zen Vuong

Participants sought for 2016 Los Angeles Heart Walk

By L. Alexis Young

Keck Medicine of USC has a sponsor of the 2016 Los Angeles Heart Walk on Oct. 8 at the Pasadena Rose Bowl. With a fundraising goal of $125,000, Keck Medicine is hoping to engage 1,000 employees to participate in its efforts to help the American Heart Association fight heart disease and stroke.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the United States, and affects the lives of many of Keck Medicine employees, patients and their families.

The USC CardioVascular Thoracic Institute (CVTI) has recruited 55 members for their Trojan Hearts team and raised more than $4,000 within one month. Team captains Ashley Valentino, support coordinator, and Liz Vela, clinic manager, have found creative ways to engage their staff, such as a practice heart walk culminating with a celebration, an ice cream social and raffles.

“They lost my father to a heart attack and another teammate lost her mom, so we’re doing this for our families and our patients who are impacted every day,” she explained.

The team is selling American Heart Association paper hearts in efforts to help Keck Medicine meet the fundraising goal and raise awareness. Registered walkers are able to create personalized fundraising pages with the capability to send fundraising emails, connect to social media and track fundraising progress. The suggested fundraising goal for each walker is $20, and free T-shirts will be provided for those who meet this goal. There is still time to form a team or join an existing team to help the American Heart Association fund research and education for cardiovascular disease.

The Heart Walk begins at 8 a.m. Oct. 8 at the Rose Bowl. For more information, to donate or to register for the 2016 Los Angeles Heart Walk, visit http://heartwalk.heart.org or email Anne.McGilvray@med.usc.edu.

Participants pose for a photograph during the 2015 Los Angeles Heart Walk at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

LOS ANGELES — The new entrance monuments for the Health Sciences Campus are unveiled at Zonal A, Aug. 31 at the Health Sciences Campus.

HSC News

HSC News is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the University of Southern California’s Health Sciences Campus community. It is produced by Keck Medicine Marketing and Communications staff. Permission to reprint articles is available upon request. No artwork may be reproduced without the creator’s consent.

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