

## THE HISTORY OF THE ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAMS AT TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

Tuskegee University (then Institute) developed allied health programs from a 1966 Title III Training Grant for Allied Health Professions. At the time, there was a need for quality education for personnel supporting clinicians in health care. Under the leadership of Dr. Luther Foster, President of Tuskegee University, the Academic Provost Dr. William Lester was selected as the project director for the Title III grant. With this grant funding, Dr. Lester hired a physical therapist named Theodore Childs from New York as a consultant to develop what was called at the time *allied health professions*. Dr. Theodore Childs, who had also been recommended by the American Physical Therapy Association, had a doctoral degree in education. He became the first administrator for the allied health programs.

Between 1970 and 1980, Dr. Childs established the four allied health programs at Tuskegee University with the support and assistance of Dr. Cornelius Hopper. Dr. Hopper a physician, who served as the Medical Director of John Andrews Hospital and as the Vice President for Health Affairs at Tuskegee University created clinical opportunities for student training. Mr. Walter Oldham, serving as the Executive Director of Tuskegee Area Health Education Consortium (TAHEC) was also instrumental in securing clinical training sites at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuskegee. With their combined efforts, they recruited faculty and staff for the new allied health programs. The four programs were physical therapy, medical technology (now called clinical laboratory sciences), occupational therapy, and radiologic technology.

When Dr. Childs arrived, Mrs. Virginita Cannon, a local physical therapist was the program director for physical therapy. As the consultant, he helped Mrs. Cannon develop the physical therapy curriculum. Later Dr. Childs recruited Catherine Tolson as the founding program director for the medical technology program and recruited Ms. Marie Moore (Lyles) to help with the occupational therapy program. She arrived at Tuskegee University on July 1, 1977 to develop the occupational therapy curriculum. Later Steve Forman and his wife Janet Forman were hired to establish the radiologic technology program. Originally housed under The College of Arts and Sciences the programs moved to the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences in 1983.

When Dr. Childs left the University in 1983, and a new University President, Dr. Benjamin Payton was starting his tenure, it was decided to add the allied health

programs to the School of Nursing to form a stronger academic unit. Dr. Rosetta Sands arrived in 1984 as the new Dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health (SNAH) with some experience with allied health programs as well as nursing. One of her first challenges as Dean of the School was to finalize the closing of the physical therapy program. To assist her she recruited Dr. Richard Bamberg (1984-1988), a medical technologist by trade, as the Associate Dean for Allied Health to manage the allied health programs. Between 1983 and 1986, the physical therapy and radiology programs closed due to staffing, funding, and accreditation concerns.

In 1988, Dr. Margie Johnson became the Dean of the School. Ms. Moore served as the Interim Head of the Allied Health Department until Dr. Johnson hired Dr. Stephen Sodeke in 1990. As a medical technologist, and having taught clinical chemistry in the medical technology program in the early years, Dr. Sodeke returned to Tuskegee as the Associate Dean for Allied Health. Dr. Sodeke managed the two remaining allied health programs: clinical laboratory sciences (now under the direction of Ms. Edith Powell as program director and Mrs. Cheryl Davis as faculty) and occupational therapy under the direction of Mrs. Marie Moore Lyles. Mrs. Brenda Johnson served as interim program director of occupational therapy between 1988 and 1990.

When Mrs. Lyles retired as the program director for occupational therapy in 1999, Ms. Gwendolyn Gray (1999-2012) was appointed and approved by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) as the new program director. The President, Dr. Benjamin Payton appointed Dr. Sodeke as the new Assistant Director of the Tuskegee University Bioethics Center in 2001. Dr. Sodeke had served as the Associate Dean for Allied Health since 1990.

In 2001, the only two remaining allied health programs were clinical laboratory sciences under the direction of Dr. Cheryl Davis and the occupational therapy program under the direction of Dr. Gwendolyn Gray. In August of 2002, under the direction of Dr. Gwendolyn Gray, the occupational therapy program officially became a Master of Science degree program because professional, entry level training in occupational therapy moved from a baccalaureate degree to a master's degree. This was necessary to maintain accreditation and prepare entry level, professional occupational therapists. The freshmen class that entered in the fall of 2002 began the 5-year Master of Science program in occupational therapy. The first M.S. class graduated in May 2007.

The Associate Dean for Allied Health position closed in 2001 because in 1996 when President Dr. Payton created five (5) University Colleges and added the

SNAH to the College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Doris Holeman (1999-2017), the new administrator for SNAH became Associate Dean for the School. The Dean position shifted to the Dean of veterinary medicine, Dr. Alfonso Atkinson. He became the new Dean for the College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health. As a part of this new organization, the allied health programs benefited significantly from increased funding for projects, educational resources, biomedical teaching staff, new technology for the classrooms and a community of scholars who enabled new opportunities for faculty growth and development.

After President Payton obtained funding for the Bioethics Center for Health Care and Research, the old John Andrews Hospital building where allied health programs was housed since 1983, was renovated as the main classroom building for arts and sciences, bioethics and allied health programs. The complete renovation of the old John Andrews Hospital building in 2006 became a 'state of the art' classroom building with expanded classrooms, offices, conference rooms and laboratories for student training in the allied health programs. Utilizing a universal design, the facilities in the allied health wing were accessible for all disabilities. Clinical laboratory sciences program for the first time had their own clinical student lab and occupational therapy gained a renovated morgue for human anatomy and physiology classes.

In 2005, under the direction of Dean T. Habtemarian, and Associate Dean, Doris Holeman, Dr. Jannett Lewis-Clark was hired and appointed Head of Allied Health programs in 2010. In the summer of 2016, the University President Dr. Brian Johnson and the Board of Trustees approved the separation of SNAH from Veterinary Medicine and once again, the School of Nursing and Allied Health became independent under the direction of Dr. Doris Holeman, now Interim Dean of SNAH. In 2013, Dr. Holeman appointed Dr. Jannett Lewis-Clark as interim program director for occupational therapy.

After Dr. Holeman retired in 2017, Dr. Constance Hendricks (2018-2020), became the new Dean for SNAH. By now the clinical laboratory sciences program was in trouble of closing with low student enrollment, funding concerns and staffing problems. Between 1980 and 2018, the CLS program had six (6) program directors (Catherine Tolson, Edith Powell, Cheryl Davis, Floyd Raven, Lynette Gayle, and Wyvetta O'Neal) and struggled with long-term stability while balancing the low student enrollment and funding. Under the leadership of Dean Hendricks, the University administration and Board of Trustees decided to close the program. The CLS program officially closed in 2020, and a new undergraduate major in health sciences was established as a part of the Allied Health Department.

Occupational therapy remained as a Master of Science degree program as established in 2002. In 2019, Mrs. Mary Arrington was appointed as the new program director for the undergraduate health science curriculum.