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Advisory Board Ready to Take Genetic Counseling to Higher Heights

“This Program is so important to the state, the region and the nation. We need to ensure its strength and stability long into the future,” said Dr. Sashi Pai, professor and clinical geneticist, Medical University of South Carolina. “How can we let people know about this hidden treasure?” spoke Cathy Novinger, business executive and Columbia civic leader. These comments and more shaped the discussion of the inaugural meeting of the Genetic Counseling Program Advisory Board in September 2012. The Advisory Board is comprised of leaders in genetics, business and the community, and serves to bring new perspectives to the table as they advise the Program Directors and School of Medicine administration in the evolution of the curriculum and Program resources.

That first meeting crystallized the Board’s first major goal: we will create the Genetic Counseling Program Endowment, an interest bearing fund within the University of South Carolina Educational Foundation that generates financial support for the academic mission of the Program. Our alumni have responded to the initial request most generously! Thank you all!

See Advisory Board p. 2
Every donation helps and is put to use to benefit our students.

Uncovering the hidden treasure...shaped our second major goal: we will build awareness of the Program in the community. Karen Brooks has already been out and about in Columbia presenting “lunch and learn” sessions to select community leaders. These activities give us the opportunity to teach others about the value of genetic counseling services...priceless education outreach. Fall 2013 will bring other outreach opportunities and a special event with alumni in mind...stay tuned!

We’ll be adding a webpage to the Program website to keep alumni and others aware and connected as we continue to build our future together.

Meet the Genetic Counseling Program Advisory Board! Our mission is to assist the Program Directors and the School of Medicine in fulfilling the goals and objectives of the Program as we advance the education of genetic counselors.

We pledge to:

• Support the mission of the Genetic Counseling Program;
• Support the Program in continuous improvement of the curriculum;
• Be knowledgeable about the needs of the Genetic Counseling Program;
• Make recommendations to the Program Directors and School of Medicine administration, where appropriate;
• Support the goal of increasing Program resources, financial and otherwise;
• Promote the Program as a state, regional and national resource.
Half way through my first year in the University of Melbourne’s Master of Genetic Counselling program, our director spoke with us about the possibility of completing one of our second year rotations abroad. Instantly my interest was piqued, as being exposed to overseas genetic counselling programs seemed like an excellent way to broaden my understanding and appreciation for the genetic counselling profession. It was not long before I had scheduled a meeting with the director to discuss the possibility of completing a placement in the US, as I had planned to travel there in the winter. When I asked what schools in the US she would recommend, without hesitation she spoke of USC. She explained that previous students had completed a placement with Janice Edwards at USC and had glowing reports about the program and their experiences. Upon returning home that day, I immediately jumped on the USC Genetic Counselling Program website and it didn’t take long before my mind was made up; I was heading to Columbia, SC.

From day one, I have felt incredibly welcome amongst both the students and the genetic counsellors at USC. I have been given the opportunity to observe in a number of different genetic counselling settings including prenatal, paediatric and cancer genetics, which has been great, as my interests within the different genetic counselling fields are still quite broad. Through both my experiences observing consultations in clinic and participating in student classes, I have learned so much and have been able to practice and build on my genetic counselling skill set. I have also developed a great appreciation for the differences in the genetic counselling style and process between the US and Australia; these differences occur due to variability in access to testing and population demographics. Thanks to Janice, the USC Genetic Counselling students and the network of genetic counsellors at Two Med and GGC Columbia I have had the privilege of working with, I will return to Australia with a broader understanding of the genetic counselling profession, a more confident approach to interacting with clients and an appreciation for the worldwide network of genetic counsellors and how we can work together to support and assist the growth and development of this remarkable profession.

Christi Radford, Class of 2005: Evidenced by her thesis title, *Examining the Training Needs of Genetic Counselors Employed by Industry*, 2005 graduate Cristi Radford has always been interested in genetic counseling roles outside of the clinical realm. Upon graduation, Cristi headed north to Delaware for her first job as a cancer genetic counselor where she remained for a year and a half. “It was a great job, but I wanted to move back to the south and have always had an interest in research, outreach, education, and different models for genetic service delivery,” she says. Cristi moved to the sunshine state of Florida in 2007 where she helped develop a community hospital cancer risk assessment program at Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH), the only community hospital in FL offering genetic testing for cancer at that time. “I loved seeing how genetics is conducted in a community setting because that’s where most patients are diagnosed with cancer.” While working at SMH, Cristi also worked for Moffitt Cancer Center as an education and outreach coordinator “helping to build Inherited Cancer Registry (ICARE) by connecting non-genetic and genetic professionals with the resources at Moffitt and encouraging them to register their patients.” Cristi worked for SMH and Moffitt for five years enjoying her involvement in both community and academic aspects of genetic counseling.

Most recently, Cristi joined Ambry Genetics in September of 2012. “This position gives me the opportunity to educate out in the field and work with a cutting edge lab.” Cristi’s job with Ambry involves traveling throughout the Southeast to meet and educate clients conducting genetic testing. “I love the variety and flexibility the job affords. And, it is so neat to learn the different ways people do genetics.” While not currently practicing in the clinical realm, patient care is still important to Cristi. As the current President of Lynch Syndrome International, Cristi supports the non-profit advocacy group’s mission of support, education, and public awareness related to Lynch syndrome. “I don’t want to lose touch with the patient side of genetic counseling. The patients are most important.” We couldn’t be prouder of Cristi and her contributions to our field!
Endowment Secures the Future

While financial gifts from our alumni have always been important to our Genetic Counseling Program, alumni giving is now more vital than ever as we work to create a Program Endowment. Encouraged by our Advisory Board, the endowment will ensure the future of our Genetic Counseling Program by providing a sustainable and reliable level of support to the Program’s operating budget. Regular donors Vicki Vincent (‘87), Courtney Rowell Tate (‘00), and Rhonda Scanlon (‘02), all express the similar sentiment of “simply wanting to give back.” Vicki says, “This Program gave me the education to do what I want to do—to be a genetic counselor—and I just want to give back as a way of saying thank you.” Alumna Courtney Tate remembers what is was like to be a struggling graduate student. “It was considered a good Friday if we had enough spending money to buy lunch from the 99 cent menu at Wendy’s!! So, as cliché as it may sound, I give to the USC Genetic Counseling Fund as a way to help the current students. It is a way to say ‘thank you’ for all that the Program has given, and continues to give, to me.” We genuinely thank our alumni that have helped to establish the foundational endowment this academic year. Perhaps most important is the fact that no amount is too small. We greatly appreciate every dollar given—as regular donor Rhonda Scanlon says, “No amount is too small. Twenty dollars a year is something, and it is helpful. Just give what you can.”

THE ALUMNI NETWORK IS STRONG AND READY TO HELP YOU! NOTABLE QUOTES

“The USC alumni network has been a great support to me throughout my career. Fellow alumnae have helped provide career guidance and support and have also introduced me to new career opportunities. I continue to cross paths with other USC graduates in my current role at Signature and always enjoy hearing what wonderful things my friends and classmates are up to.” – Anne Baughman, c/o 2004

“The network helps keep me updated on past classmates and supervisors. I enjoy staying updated with what other counselors are doing especially since I am in a state with few genetic counselors.”

--Emily Rosebrough Jordan c/o 2011

“The USC Alumni network has been extremely helpful in finding volunteers for NSGC collaborations. I’ve used it to find speakers for the AEC and help on various projects for the Prenatal SIG.” – Kate Wilson, c/o 2007

“The alumni network helped me to get my first job and to connect with some of the finest counselors in the country. I was hired by a fellow alumnus who I met at our alumni dinner at an AEC meeting. It’s has also been very helpful for me to connect with other alumni when I have seen family members of their patients and to seek their wisdom for advice and suggestions.”

– Madison Foster Thomason c/o 2011

GENETIC COUNSELING ADVISORY BOARD

G. Shashidhar Pai MD, FACMG
Clinical Geneticist
Medical University of SC

“Work done for no personal gain is far superior to any other kind of work.”

J. Edward Spence, MD
Director, Clinical Genetics Program
Levine Children’s Hospital at Carolinas Medical Center, Charlotte

“The Genetic Counseling Program at USC has a tradition of graduating excellent genetic counselors with the highest level of knowledge and skills.”

Courtney Tate, MS, MBA
Marketing Consultant
Genomic Strategy Consulting

“As a graduate of the USC Genetic Counseling Program, I am honored to serve on the Genetic Counseling Advisory Board as it provides a means by which I can give back to the program that has given so much to me - both as a student, and now as a professional working in the fast-growing genetics industry.”

Steven A. Skinner, MD
Director, Greenwood Genetic Center

“The USC Genetic Counseling Program is a valuable resource for our state that continues to produce high quality genetic counselors who are meeting a priority need in South Carolina.”

Shannon Pooser
Former Patient & Community Philanthropist

“I am passionate about educating others about genetic counseling, genetics impacts families everywhere.”

Debora Zvejnieks, MS, CGC
Certified Genetic Counselor

“As a graduate of the USC Genetic Counseling Program, I support the program that has enabled me to successfully pursue my career through various transitions and geographical relocations. This program is a tremendous asset for South Carolina and the southeast, both to the medical community and to the population served.”

Andrea Sellers, MS, CGC
Assistant Director, Genetic Counseling Program

“I work to ensure the USC Genetic Counseling Program is as strong as possible for future generations of genetic counselors.”

Counselors.”

The Genetic Counseling Program at USC has a tradition of graduating excellent genetic counselors with the highest level of knowledge and skills.”

Madison Foster Thomason c/o 2011

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The alumni from the USC Genetic Counseling Program continue to contribute to the genetic counseling profession in visible, remarkable ways. Katie Sheets, MS, CGC ('09) recently received the 2013 Jane Engelberg Memorial Fellowship to conduct the Down Syndrome Prenatal Diagnosis Study with Co-PI Blythe Crissman, MS, CGC at Duke University Medical Center. This 2-year exploratory study aims to better understand the needs of patients with a prenatal diagnosis of Down Syndrome.


FREE patient support materials are available to Prenatal Genetic Counselors for distribution to their eligible patients.

Contact Katie to request your patient materials today: Katie.Sheets@duke.edu.

Cam Brasington, Class of 1988:
For those that know Cam personally, the only question we have about her winning this year’s Distinguished Master’s in Genetic Counseling Alumnae Award is, “What took so long!?!” Well, actually this is the second time we’ve honored Cam for her contributions. In 2001, she was selected as the Distinguished Master’s Alumnus for the entire School of Medicine! Cam Brasington, a 1988 graduate of our Program, has served her patients and our profession extremely well for more than twenty years. Currently a pediatric genetic counselor for Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) in Charlotte, NC, Cam is an advocate for her patients, known to always go the extra mile to ensure they have all resources available to them, whether specific to genetics or not.

Many know Cam has a passion for individuals with Down Syndrome and their families. She developed and coordinated the Down Syndrome clinic at CMC for fifteen years, currently serves on the Professional Advisory Board for the National Down Syndrome Congress, is on the Board of Directors for the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte, and is part of the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group. In addition, Cam has been part of countless special projects and publications pertinent to individuals with Down syndrome, most recently chairing the development of NSGC Practice Guidelines for giving a prenatal and postnatal diagnosis of Down Syndrome.

Coworkers and patients alike sing Cam’s praises. Fellow CMC colleague Megan Mann says, “Cam makes sure that we as counselors have what we need to get through the week… She is always willing to cover a clinic or anything you have on your to-do list, regardless of how much she has on her plate. She’s just great to be around.”

In addition to her clinical work, Cam continues to remain involved with the USC Training Program on many levels. She is the clinical supervisor for our rotation site at CMC, lectures to our students regularly, and serves on thesis committees often. As such, she has been an invaluable mentor to countless USC graduates. Katie Berrier Sheets ('09) says, “Cam has offered guidance, and an unmatched level of encouragement as a mentor, supervisor, and now, as a colleague, co-author, and dear friend.

Thank you, Cam, for being a true leader and example in our field. We are so proud to call you our own!
Class composite pictures, Dr. Best’s final exam, and lunch at the Carolina Deli are a few things that have been “tradition” around the USC Genetic Counseling Program for years. Class of 2006 alumna Christina Barger Hurst initiated what has become another tradition in May of 2005. When it was time for her class to attend the Greenwood Genetic Center laboratory experience as a part of Maymester, it only made sense the Greenwood native would host her classmates for a mini-vacation at her family’s lake house on Lake Greenwood! “My parents hated the idea of us traveling between Columbia and Greenwood when we could just stay at our lake house. We ended up having so much fun that they wanted to ensure other classes could experience the same thing.” A year later, her family graciously offered to host the next class while at GGC. And the next class. And the next class. “We are so glad to give students a place to get their work done but also enjoy being together.” The Craig Corley Cottage, named after its joint owners, Christina’s maternal grandfather and mother respectively, “has lots of windows and is very relaxing.” While Christina’s family enjoys the lake house for long weekends and holiday gatherings throughout the year, they have consistently offered it to USC students for a few days in May. “My parents and I have always wanted the students to spread the word that it is available! I feel like I have a connection to all of the students now - I often meet them at NSGC where I will hear “We stayed at your cabin!!” So, from the classes of 2006, 2007, 2008 ………”Thank you, Christina and family, for such a fun tradition!”
Sherri Babb (’90): I transitioned to full-time genetic counseling in May 2012 after 19 wonderful years of part-time; same job since 1995, same office, growing practice. Brent and I are also preparing to transition to the empty-nest in the fall of 2013. We hope to fill the time gap currently occupied by high school sports and family fun with some cycling, hiking and a little travel. Our 20-year old son is a sophomore in college at University of Missouri and our 17-year old is wrapping up his senior year in high school in the midst of making his college decision. I must say that I am continually thankful for my education through the USC genetic counseling program and my career in genetic counseling allowing for a wonderful balance of family and part-time, meaningful work during my most important parenting years.

Christina Masciangelo Lavin (’98): after over thirteen years with the same employer, I made the leap to a new position in a growing genetics department within a hospital system in the suburbs of Chicago (Advocate Medical Group.) I’m excited about the new challenges this position will present, as I revisit (and somewhat relearn) pediatric and cancer genetic counseling, as this new position allows me to perform all types of genetic counseling. All my old files and syndrome summaries are going to be coming in handy! I am still able to work part time at this new position and the rest of my time is spent with my two daughters, who are now 5 and 7. We are all enjoying being in the suburbs of Chicago, where we’ve been for the past two years.

Courtney Rowell Tate (’00): Mark and I welcomed daughter Madison Elyse Tate on February 4, 2013. Mom, Dad & big brother Mason Emery (15-months old) are excited to welcome her to our family! We are living in Bluffton, SC, where I am working as an independent marketing consultant.

Libby Hull Malphrus (’01): In October 2012 I was accepted as the first non-physician clinical instructor at the Mercer University School of Medicine Savannah Campus. I teach a monthly 1 hour "Genetics in Medicine" lecture to OB/GYN residents, medical students, practicing OB’s or other healthcare providers who would like to sit in. Topics include general genetics, prenatal screening/testing, ultrasound abnormalities, common genetic syndromes, pregnant patients with genetic syndromes, fetal infections, etc. Personally, my Mom and I are both GYN cancer survivors and our non-profit organization "Help the Hoo-Hahs" has raised over $21,000 for local women battling GYN cancers. For more information, visit www.helpthehoohahs.org

Lindsay Allen Metcalf (’03): We are busy in Greenville with me job-sharing at the GHS Cancer Genetics Program, keeping up with 4 year-old Charlotte and 1 year-old Sterling, and preparing myself to live through a major renovation of an old house (this should sound familiar, I should have known this would be a theme in my life when I married an architect…)

Christina Laning Alamillo (’04): I’m happy to share that all my hard work has come to fruition… I have had 2 publications in the past year- one in Current Opinion and the most recent one in Prenatal Diagnosis. Very proud moment for sure!

Anne Baughman Bandholz (’04): My husband, Eric, and I are living in Spokane, WA along with our Australian Shepherd, Aiken. I have now been with Signature Genomics for 3 ½ years and have loved working with fellow alumnae, Justine Coppinger (’95) and Vruti Mehta (’12). The Northwest has been fun to explore though we have yet to try skiing! We’ll try to cross that off our bucket list this winter as there is plenty of snow up here!
Leah Robison ('05): Dave and I and our two children will be moving from Louisville, KY to Raleigh, NC this summer.

Holly Hardin Zimmerman ('07): Pat and I live in Jackson, Mississippi. We have a now 18 month old daughter, Fallon, who is such a little lady. Our other children include two cats and one dog. I am loving my job as a genetic counselor in Mississippi, and a big part of my excitement is because I now have colleagues! Yay! I have been nothing but impressed by one of my new colleagues, Emily Rosebrough Jordon (class of 2011)! We have a weekly genetic counseling clinic and monthly journal clubs!

Kate Wilson ('07): In 2012 I transitioned from prenatal to cancer genetic counseling when I started a cancer genetics service at UT Houston. I see patients at several community hospitals in the greater Houston area, and I love it! Recently, I started working as co-chair on the NSGC Coding subcommittee and help write the Coding Corner article in Perspectives. So if any fellow USC alums have interest in coding and billing, please let me know. On the personal side, my son Jackson is now 21 months old. He is full of personality and keeps us laughing all the time.

Anna Edens Hurst ('07): I am currently about 18 months out from finishing pediatrics residency and starting a fellowship in clinical medical genetics. I am enjoying Wake Forest, working with great geneticists (Tamison Jewett and Chad Haldeman-Englert who was a fellow at CHOP when my classmate Melissa Ciano Byler was a counselor there) and with the counselors, too. (USC alumni Tara Stamper ('95) and Megan Ferguson Mortenson ('06) are nice enough to let me tag along in clinics some days.) I’ve definitely gotten a reputation as the genetics enthusiast in my class. My co-residents are also nice enough to pass along interesting patients to my weekly outpatient continuity clinic, so there are kids with Down syndrome, PKD, and even mitochondrial disorders that I get to be their primary pediatrician for their well-child care and sick visits. (They joke with me that, "You’re the only person who would order an acylcarnitine profile during a check-up!" But I swear, I only did it once, and it was just a repeat sample with good reason and good appropriate follow-up!) So, I am keeping my genetic roots strong as I prepare for fellowship! USC trained me well, and I think about you all there (and in the Deli) so often!

Sarah Hash ('08): My family is doing well and keeping busy! On top of us both working full time Ryan is a volunteer EMT and I am on the Session at our church and the lead vocalist in our Praise Team. Our daughter continues to be a source of so much joy in our lives! In January we moved to a bigger house because we are expecting another baby in July! The gender is a surprise, which is always a challenge working in a MFM office.

Peggy Walker ('08): I will soon be the grandmother to TWINS! My son and daughter-in-law, living in Portland, Oregon, are expecting their first (two!) babies this summer!!

Kristen Rohrer Wood ('08): In May 2012 my husband and I moved from Black Mountain, North Carolina to my hometown of Friendship, Maryland. Around the same time, we were excited to learn that I was pregnant! My husband has been putting his recently earned a mechatronics (engineering) degree to use with a new job, while I have been resting up for the arrival of our little girl Emma. She is due any day now (actually, past due as of today!) and we are very excited to meet her.

Allison Bellomo ('09): Caleb Carpenter Bellomo was born 1/8/13 at 3:52 AM, 9 lb 9 oz, 21 in!

Leigh Davidson deHoll ('10): Things are well! I'm still working at MUSC as a prenatal counselor. Andrew and I bought our very first home last June so a lot of our time has been occupied with various house projects. We still have a commuter marriage since Andrew is currently working for a judge in Columbia and we really only get to see each other on weekends. I'm happy to say that he will start a new job with a firm in Charleston this August so we will finally get to live together full time again! No kids for us yet...just our 3 year old mutt, Tilly.
Sara Rhode (‘10): I became engaged to my sweetheart of 8 years, Brendan. The proposal was atop the Eiffel tower - in Las Vegas. Our wedding will take place in our hometown in Florida in February 2013. We are looking forward to a cozy honeymoon filled with skiing and snowboarding in New Hampshire - and to think that I never skied before my moving up to Connecticut just over 2 years ago. This year we were fortunate that Brendan was finally able to move from sunny Orlando to join me in Connecticut; he now works at Travelers insurance company.

Courtney Downtain (‘11): The last few months have been full of life changes! At the end of November I left my position at Duke and moved up to Vienna, VA to be with my fiancé, Eric. I accepted a position as a Genetic Counselor at GeneDx in Gaithersburg, MD. While I miss seeing patients, I am loving my new position on the Neurology team at GeneDx, and I am so happy to finally be in the same city as Eric! We are busy wedding planning for our big day on May 4, 2013!

Emily Rosebrough Jordon (‘11): Emily Rosebrough became Emily Jordon this past November! Emily and Max met at USC and Max moved to Jackson after finishing his physical therapy program. They are involved in serving their church, running, cooking and occasional spontaneous dance party.

Megan Mann (‘11): I passed the board exam!!

Madison Foster Thomason (‘11): I’ve been working in pediatrics and cancer in Chattanooga, TN for the past year and a half and am still loving it. On January 12, 2013, I was blessed to marry a most amazing man, Ryan Thomason. We have a cat named Amos who I am convinced has feline Waardenburg syndrome—one green eye, one blue eye, and a white patch of hair on his back. We are currently in the market for some kayaks. We are thoroughly enjoying this new season of life together as we rely on God for the grace to love each other and those around us.

With Appreciation to our Friends of the Program, Alumni and Donors for the 2012-13 Academic Year

Myron and Vicki Vincent (‘87) with matching donation from SCANA Corporation
Kenneth Loud (‘88)
Cam Brasington (‘88)
Kerry Crandall (‘88)
Amelia Wilson Craver (‘88)
Sherri Babb (‘90)
Joan Conrad Ehrhardt (‘91)
Debera Zvejnieks (‘92)
Allison D. Aitchison (‘95)
Melissa Bennett (‘97)
Angie Ward Lichty (‘99)
Courtney Rowell Tate (‘00)
Kathleen Hays Devar (‘00)
Rhonda Scanlon (‘02)
Sharon Hoyle Molinari (‘03)
Anne Baughman Bandholz (‘04)
Bridgette Aufmuth (‘05)
Michele Jacobs Gabree (‘07)
Peggy M. Walker (‘08)
Kelly King (‘09)
Stacy Hall Lenarcic (‘10)
Jaime Natoli (‘11)
Emily Rosebrough Jordon (‘11)
Vruti Mehta (‘12)
Karen Brooks

First year Genetic Counseling students won the First Place in the 1st Annual Department of OB/GYN Pumpkin Carving Contest! These students are not only budding health professionals, they are creative, too! Congratulations.