

# CORNERSTONE

## MESSAGE FROM INTERIM DEAN ALLISON S. DANELL

Greetings from Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at ECU! It is my pleasure to present this brand-new format for *Cornerstone*, a more nimble and brief digest of THCAS happenings, than we have published in the past.

While our look may have evolved, our mission remains the same: to highlight the achievements of our students and faculty across all disciplines in THCAS, which includes the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. And what an accomplished group of Pirates they are!

I am confident this newest issue of *Cornerstone* will help you maintain your connection to the people and programs of THCAS, where people build relationships, exchange ideas, and find

success. I am excited for you to learn more about several members of the THCAS family in this issue of *Cornerstone*, including the longest serving professor at ECU, English Professor James Kirkland. Such sustained and meritorious service to the university is laudable, indeed, and we are proud that Dr. Kirkland has made ECU THCAS his professional home for all these years. You will also read more about colleagues in the Departments of Economics and Psychology whose commitment to student success and research innovation is evident and inspiring.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Cornerstone* and continue to be proud of your long-running relationship with THCAS, the heart and home of the liberal arts and sciences at ECU. ▶



Dr. Allison S. Danell

### Nyah Harris

*Recipient of the Jim and Pam Mullen Study Abroad Scholarship*



- ✘ Pursuing a B.A. in Psychology, with minors in Hispanic Studies and Natural Composite Science (Spring '20)
- ✘ Studied abroad in Granada, Spain, summer 2019
- ✘ What Nyah loved about studying abroad:
  - ~ Best experience I have ever had in my life
  - ~ Loved the culture and atmosphere
  - ~ Taught me so much about myself
  - ~ Reminded me how much I want to see the world

### Dr. Jarvis Hargrove

*Associate Professor of History, Co-Director of the African and African American Studies Program*



- ✘ Began working at ECU in Fall 2019; Specializes in African History
- ✘ Ph.D. in History from Howard University
- ✘ Published works on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism, and Independence in Africa
- ✘ Jarvis said his goals include:
  - ~ Continuing to support History's reputation as one of the premier programs within the UNC System
  - ~ Growing the AAAS Program into one of the most recognized and respected interdisciplinary programs on campus
  - ~ Growing AAAS class listings and concentrations for students

# HANDS-ON RESEARCH

## Faculty, students learn from one another

by Lacey L. Gray, University Communications

East Carolina University® and the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences value faculty and student success, especially through research and hands on learning. One duo, Dr. Jacob Hochard, professor of economics, and Michael “Mick” Ayala, undergraduate economics major, are performing research to help improve the lives of eastern North Carolinians. They are conducting research for two nationally funded projects that focus on studying the resilience of communities and how they bounce back from disasters.

Hochard first met Ayala through his principles of microeconomics course, and he immediately hired Ayala as one of his research assistants in January 2019.

**“Mick was my star student,” Hochard said.**

A non-traditional student, Ayala is a marine corps veteran who served as a military intelligence specialist before beginning his academic path at ECU. He is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi and Omicron Delta Kappa honors societies for leadership and service. Ayala wants to improve the quality of life for eastern North Carolinians by communicating advanced economic concepts in ways they can be applied by the public.

**“You have to take risks. That’s the first thing I’ve learned from Dr. Hochard,” Ayala said.**

Through their research, Hochard and Ayala are examining communities that are rural, underserved from public services - access to education and healthcare - and areas that are known to be potential hotspots for environmental exposures, including water and airborne pollutants that can cause sickness. The initial project looks at families in the southeastern part of the state who live downstream of concentrated animal feeding operations, which include hog and chicken farms.

The residents depend on private well systems, and in areas that are often hit by hurricanes and flooding, Hochard said, “it’s a perfect storm of potential environmental exposures.”

What Hochard and Ayala want to learn is how people respond to those risks. What interventions can be led by counties,

states or universities to help improve those livelihoods? How can they manage risks without crippling the industry that has been there for so long?

For most undergraduate students, Hochard said research introduces a blueprint to broaden and finetune their intellectual curiosity. However, Ayala already had many research questions in mind when he began working with Hochard.

**“Mick has essentially taken over all the logistics of a major federal grant, which is a tremendous accomplishment for an undergraduate student. I will be hard-pressed to replace Mick once he graduates.”**

Hochard suspects Ayala’s military training and experience has made him extremely detail oriented and thorough, allowing him to assess risks in ways Hochard has not previously considered.



Hochard says he is learning as much from Ayala as he believes Ayala is learning from him.

“I have learned from Mick probably as much as he has learned from me,” Hochard said. “We have an incredible resource with our veterans at ECU. The veteran population are talented, driven and dependable. They are ambitious and reliable. They have been a tremendous resource to help ECU better serve eastern North Carolina and the entire state.”

Ayala also feels ECU and Harriot College values its veterans. One program in particular that supports veterans is the summer Veteran to Scholars program,



Michael “Mick” Ayala is pursuing an undergraduate degree in economics and has the unique opportunity of performing research under the direction of Dr. Jacob Hochard.

founded and designed in 2017 by English faculty member Dr. Anna Froula, with funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**“[ECU] has a remarkable support system for military veterans,” said Ayala. “Because of the Pirate™ Veterans Organization, Student Veteran Services and the Veteran to Scholar summer bridge program, they give us a fighting chance. It’s one of the reasons I’m at ECU.”**

Another one of Ayala’s strengths is his ambition. According to Hochard, Ayala is the type of person who could work for anyone or in any environment.

“Mick has challenged me. He can envision 100 pathways that he wants to pursue,” said Hochard. “The challenge has been empathizing with his needs - with his career ambitions - offering the best perspective and experience that I have and recognizing when I simply don’t have the knowledge to guide him.”

Ayala values the opportunity to work with Hochard and knows he still has a lot to learn.

“The more that I get to take risks with my knowledge, the more I understand that there’s a lot I need to learn. I think that’s a great advantage of being able to work with a professor,” he said.

Ayala said he will continue his research with Hochard until his graduation in December 2020, and beyond, if an opportunity presents itself. He said Hochard is “admired by so many people” and that “he has a lot to offer.”

“His work ethic and his character exemplify what a researcher does,” said Ayala. “I’m starting to understand the real value behind the education I’m receiving at ECU.” ➤

# HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE

## ECU English faculty member continues educating students more than 50 years later

by Lacey L. Gray, University Communications

Dr. James Kirkland is a professor of English at ECU. For one of the largest departments, with more than 80 faculty, this is not particularly noteworthy. What makes Kirkland unique is that he is the longest serving faculty member, having taught since 1969, and he has no intention of stopping anytime soon.

After completing his doctorate in American Literature at the University of Tennessee, Kirkland moved to Greenville with his wife Paula and their newborn daughter Becky. Their son Craig was born three years later.

"The idea of somebody staying in one place for 50 years is kind of unusual these days. Once I settled in, I liked it here a lot," he said.

Over the years, Kirkland has adapted to changing circumstances. He started his career under ECU President Leo Jenkins and has worked under six university chancellors and two interim chancellors.

Campus itself also looked much different. The student population in 1969 was 9,259 and there were 42 English faculty members. English was housed in the Austin Building, which replaced the original "Old Austin" located on 5th Street, where the department had resided during its first 55 years of existence.

Kirkland has mainly taught composition but also graduate level courses, and he developed a special interest for folklore and urban legends.

"Teaching has always been the great joy of being here," said Kirkland.

He said the best measure of the department's value has been the accomplishments of its graduates, which have included a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist for the Washington Post, a Brody School of Medicine class president, law school graduates, teachers, poets, novelists, and other community and business leaders.

Outside of academia, Kirkland's interests involve exercise and travel. In 1972, he started the ECU Recreation Center's men's basketball league, which he still plays in today. His list of travel destinations is extensive, and he loves trying local foods and attending festivals.

When asked how long he plans to continue working, Kirkland said, "I don't really know. There's a lot here that interests me still. I think I would miss the classroom. That's the part that keeps me coming back." ➤



As the longest serving professor at ECU, Dr. James Kirkland had the honor of carrying the university mace during the 2019 Spring Convocation.



Dr. Marissa Carraway (center), principal investigator and clinical assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, is one of four researchers collaborating on a grant to train future psychologists in interdisciplinary behavioral health.

# COLLABORATIONS IN CARE

## Grant calls on interprofessional collaboration to address opioid use

by Spaine Stephens, University Communications

A unique grant celebrates ECU's commitment to using interprofessional collaboration to address emerging and challenging trends in health care.

Harriot College's Department of Psychology and the Brody School of Medicine's Department of Family Medicine were awarded an \$890,000 Graduate Psychology Education Program Grant from the Health Resource and Services Administration. Researchers include Drs. Marissa Carraway, Robert Carels and Christy Walcott, from the Department of Psychology; and Jane Trapp, clinical associate professor of physician assistant studies.

Complementing ECU's mission to serve eastern North Carolina and focus on access to care, the project will emphasize cutting-edge training to doctoral-level students in primary integrated behavioral health care as well as prevention and treatment services for opioid and other substance use disorders.

"We are training the next generation of psychologists to function within a team-oriented approach, addressing all patient needs, including mental health and substance abuse," Carels said. "The grant could not have come at a better time for our students, the university and the people of eastern North Carolina."

Dr. Alan Christensen, chair of the department of psychology, said the grant highlights the standard of care in an already nationally unique academic program.

"Reducing health disparities and addressing the needs of rural and underserved populations is the central issue not only in the present but for future generations," Christensen said. "ECU is ideally situated to address these issues." ➤



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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Sarah Sipe, ECU Class of 2015, B.S. Chemistry, B.A. German



**Sarah Sipe** explored science and all that the world has to offer as an undergraduate student at ECU, majoring in Chemistry and German. "Sarah's passion for German is driven by her love of the language and culture, but also by her desire to work internationally. Germany is at the cutting edge of many chemical and pharmaceutical advances, so German became a natural fit for Sarah," said Dr. Susanne Jones, ECU associate professor of German.

In addition to excelling in these two challenging majors, Sarah took advantage of extracurricular opportunities including studying abroad and engaging in undergraduate research

with Dr. Anne Spuches, ECU associate professor of Chemistry. "Sarah was a valuable researcher and incredible mentor to students in my lab," said Spuches.

Today, Sarah is pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of Texas, one of the top-ranked programs in the nation. She is gaining expertise in structural biology applications using high tech chemical instrumentation, and her German degree helped her secure an internship as a graduate student at Thermo Fisher Scientific in Bremen, Germany, in 2018. "The ability to speak the language and share the culture with the people I met in Europe allowed me to forge deeper connections, both personally and professionally," she said.



Good job, or should we say *gut gemacht*, Sarah! ▶

Consider supporting Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences students by making a donation online at [www.ecu.edu/give](http://www.ecu.edu/give) or by contacting Jessica Nottingham at 252-737-1753 or [nottinghamj@ecu.edu](mailto:nottinghamj@ecu.edu).