

JAX STATE CHPW NEWSLETTER

Fall 2025

Message from the Dean: Tracey D. Matthews

Dear Alumni and Friends,

I'm excited to share the incredible momentum within the College of Health Professions & Wellness! Your support and partnership continue to make a real difference as we grow and innovate.

This semester, we've expanded opportunities for future health leaders with new entry points for programs like Athletic Training and the Doctor of Nursing Practice, and we're promoting advanced credentials such as the Graduate Health Care Administration Certificate for MSN students. In addition, we have rebranded the Graduate Sport Management program to Sport Industry providing our students with broader opportunities in sport! These initiatives strengthen our workforce and serve the region's work force needs.

Discover how our students and faculty are making significant contributions in the health professions, physical education, and sport fields. Please share this newsletter with colleagues, prospective students, and anyone interested in healthcare education's future.

Be Well and Go Gamecocks!

Tracey



Welcome New Faculty & Staff

Amanda Cunningham

We're thrilled to welcome Amanda Cunningham to the Kinesiology faculty team! Amanda Cunningham, a Michigan native, is excited to join the Exercise Science team as a new instructor. She specializes in clinical exercise physiology and is currently in the process of completing her dissertation on exercise motivation among cardiac rehabilitation patients. Amanda looks forward to sharing her passion for helping others use movement to improve heart health and quality of life.



Alicia Parton

Mrs. Alicia Parton is our new Administrative Assistant for Respiratory Therapy. With her background in technology and organization, Alicia is already an asset to our team, assisting with operations and accreditation tracking. She has quickly become a friendly and dependable point of contact for students, faculty, and alumni, and we're excited for the creativity and dedication she brings to the program.



Delaney Whiddon

Delaney Whiddon is the newest addition to the MAT Program and CHPW Team! She is a junior here at Jacksonville State University, majoring in Management and Marketing. Her hometown is Roanoke, AL. She will be a valuable asset to our college!



Updates

College of Health Professions and Wellness (CHPW) Update:

A Family of Service and a Community of Learners: Jax State Public Health at the Cocky Cares Health Fair

At Jacksonville State University's Cocky Cares for Calhoun County Health Fair, held October 7–8 at the Jacksonville Community Center, the spirit of service and collaboration was on full display.

Students from Jax State's Master of Public Health, Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, and Kinesiology programs worked side by side to provide health education, screenings, and patient navigation while engaging with attendees and community partners. This interprofessional effort offered students hands-on experience in addressing real-world health needs and highlighted the university's commitment to preparing compassionate, knowledgeable professionals. The event truly embodied Jax State's mission to educate, serve, and make a meaningful impact across the community.



School of Nursing Update:

Fall 2025 Semester

Empowering Exemplary Nurses to Care for Anyone, Anytime,
Anywhere!

The Jax State School of Nursing is off to an energetic start this fall with our largest incoming group of upper division nursing students since the pandemic! From dynamic simulations in pediatrics,

mental health, and obstetrics to hands-on Rapid Response Team (RRT) and Interprofessional Education (IPE) events, students have been putting their skills into real-world practice. Fourth-semester nursing and MAT students also took part in *Stop the Bleed* training—an American College of Surgeons initiative that has empowered nearly 4 million people worldwide with life-saving bleeding control techniques.



Collaboration has been key this semester, with initiatives like **Mental Health First Aid training** led by the SAM Foundation and the **Cocky Cares Health Fair and Flu Vaccination Clinics**, serving students, faculty, and staff alike. The **South Complex** has also been buzzing with activity, welcoming high school groups and individual visitors eager to explore the exciting opportunities within the **College of Health Professions and Wellness (CHPW)** and the **School of Nursing**.

With continuous simulations, labs, and community partnerships in motion—there's truly never a dull moment at the South Complex!

Check out all of our program options at [School of Nursing - School of Nursing](#)

Kinesiology Department Update:

Jacksonville State Updates Master's Program to Reflect Expanding Landscape of the Sports Industry

From the Red & White 06/13/2025



Jacksonville State University has updated the name and scope of its graduate program in sport management to better reflect the modern realities of the field. Previously known as the Master of Science in Sport Management, the program is now the Master of Science in Sports Industry—a name that captures the broader, evolving nature of careers in sports today.

Housed in the College of Health Professions and Wellness, the 30-hour graduate program remains committed to preparing students for leadership roles in athletics, but now with a more comprehensive view of the sports world. In addition to traditional management training, the program emphasizes skills in communication, marketing, analytics, and economic development—responding to the growth of areas such as digital media, sports tourism, and revenue generation.

“While management remains a key component of our program, we’re taking a more contemporary approach that goes beyond the administrative and operational side of sports,” said Dr. Allen Gilbert, Associate Professor of Sport Management and Coordinator of the Master of Science: Sports Industry Program. “The new name better reflects our mission to prepare students for all facets of the sports industry—whether that’s working with professional teams, media outlets, athletic departments, or event organizations.”

Students in the program can tailor their degree to match their career goals by choosing from three tracks: a general Master of Science in Sports Industry or a concentration in either Sport Management or Sport Communication. Each path is designed to equip graduates with the specialized skills needed to thrive in today’s dynamic sports industry. Select courses are offered in a hybrid format, giving students the flexibility to attend in person or online.

The program has earned a strong reputation for graduate success, with alumni securing careers in collegiate and professional athletics, media and communications, facility management, and corporate partnerships. Its blend of academic rigor and real-world preparation has made it a sought-after choice for students looking to launch or advance their careers in the field.

- The program’s core includes courses in law and ethics, finance, human resource management, and marketing—plus the option of completing an internship or directed study. The curriculum allows students to complete their degree in as little as one year.

Check out our Department of Kinesiology's programs at [Kinesiology - Kinesiology](#).

Respiratory Therapy Department Update:

National Respiratory Care Week

October 19th - 25th is National Respiratory Care Week. The national designation of the 3rd week of October was established by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. The goal is to share more

information about the field of Respiratory Therapy, educate others on respiratory related diseases, and recognize the contributions of the Respiratory Therapists to the healthcare team. As a community service project for JSU RT, the JSU RT Senior class organized a campaign to gather donations for Samaritan House in Talladega. Personal care items such as toiletries and canned food were being collected in the JSU RT Department at JSU South. Our students delivered the donations to Samaritan House during Respiratory Care Week.



Check out the Jax State Respiratory Department:
[Respiratory Therapy - Respiratory Therapy](#)

BCBS Foundation Grant

Thanks to a Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation grant, the program purchased two ventilator manikins to enhance simulation-based learning. Faculty are currently training to integrate these new tools into classroom and lab instruction, giving students valuable hands-on experience with advanced ventilator management. In addition, a new Respiratory Therapy Scholarship Fund allows donors to directly support our RT students and help provide continued opportunities for growth and success within the program.



Alumni Spotlight

Hunter L. Watts Nursing Excellence Annual Scholarship

The Jax State School of Nursing is proud to share the launch of the Hunter L. Watts Nursing Excellence Annual Scholarship — a small way Hunter can give back to the university that gave so much to him.

Hunter says, "Jacksonville State University shaped my journey in more ways than I can count. From student organizations to late nights studying, JSU built the foundation for the nurse, leader, and person I am today. This scholarship is a reflection of that gratitude and my continued commitment to supporting the next generation of Gamecock nurses. As someone who remains deeply dedicated to delivering high-quality healthcare to our community, I know it starts with investing in the future of nursing — and in students who are passionate about making a difference right here at home."



The JaxAPP opens September 1 and closes February 1.

Scholarship Criteria:

Must be a Nursing major
Junior or Senior standing

Full-time enrollment
Minimum 3.25 GPA
Passion for serving our local communities after graduation

This is a one-time award for one academic year and is non-renewable.

If you'd like to support this mission, you can donate directly to the scholarship by visiting <https://give.jsu.edu/g/make-a-gift> and searching for "Hunter L. Watts Nursing Excellence Annual Scholarship." Every dollar goes toward helping future nurses thrive.

Mallory Shears, Respiratory Therapist

When I started college, I dreamed of becoming a pharmacist. But after transferring to Jacksonville State University, I discovered my true calling through prayer and a new opportunity — JSU's inaugural Respiratory Therapy program.

As one of 24 students in the first cohort, I quickly learned that respiratory therapy was more than a career — it was a mission. After graduation, I joined UAB Hospital, where I worked through the COVID-19 pandemic in the ICU. Those years tested me deeply but also strengthened my faith and passion for helping others.



My dream was to join UAB's Critical Care Transport team, and after hard work and perseverance, I did just that — transporting critically ill patients and organ donors while building lifelong bonds with my teammates. During that time, I also earned my MBA in Healthcare Administration from JSU, becoming the first student to complete that concentration.

Today, I serve as a Respiratory Supervisor at UAB and am honored to be part of the AARC Emerging Leaders Program. Each step of my journey reminds me why I chose this path — to serve, lead, and make a difference one breath at a time.

Student Spotlight

Madison Lankford, Respiratory Therapy Student

What has been your favorite experience in the program so far?

My favorite experience has been all the volunteer opportunities I've been able to participate in through the program. I've loved being part of events like Read Across America, Camp Wheeze Away, and various community education activities. It's also been rewarding to help showcase the program to new students on campus. These experiences have allowed me to give back, connect with people in the community, and share what makes our program so special.

What is a fun fact about yourself?

A fun fact about me is that I love to travel and experience new places and cultures.



Why did you choose Respiratory Therapy?

I chose Respiratory Therapy because I've always been interested in healthcare since I was little and wanted a career where I could make a direct impact on people's lives. I also like that respiratory therapists work in so many different areas such as critical care, emergency, and neonatal units. This provides lot of variety and opportunities to keep learning.

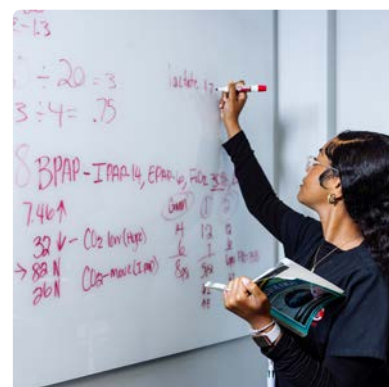
What are your goals after graduation?

As I complete the respiratory therapy program and transition into practice, I aim to make a meaningful impact by setting a high standard of patient care and professionalism. I hope to work in an ICU, NICU, or with pediatric patients once I graduate. I've also considered continuing my education with a master's or business degree and hope to advance to a leadership role in my future workplace. I want to contribute to a culture where every therapist understands the importance of their role in saving and improving lives. I plan to stay updated on advancements in respiratory care, advocate for innovative treatment options, and always approach my work with compassion and dedication.

Student Scholarship and Recognition Corner

Jax State RT Advisory Board Meeting

On October 9th, JSU RT held their annual Jax State RT Advisory Board meeting. The board consists of RT Directors and Leaders from around the region that support our program. We have RT Faculty/Staff, our Medical Director, JSU RT Alumni, and current JSU RT Students involved too. We hosted 40 members of the RT community either on campus or virtually through Teams. This allows us to share programmatic updates regarding application numbers, acceptance numbers, graduation rates, board exam pass rates, and any proposed curriculum or programmatic changes. We solicit input from the board members for opportunities for improvement and updates on equipment and/or supplies that they use at their facilities. This allows us to keep current with the current market expectations for our graduates, as well as ensuring that we are continuing to offer the latest and greatest equipment and supplies to our students while they are here.



Camp WheezeAway

October 18th and 19th, several JSU RT students volunteered their time to help raise money for Camp WheezeAway, which is an Asthma Camp for children. They attended the NASCAR Race weekend at Talladega and worked in one of the food service tents. Camp WheezeAway will share in the profits from the sales to help support the camp. Children are never asked to pay to attend the camp, so it requires them to raise \$60,000+ per year to support the cause. The camp is normally held around Memorial Day, and this past May, we had several of the JSU RT Students attend the camp to work as camp counselors as well. They provided Asthma education and helped make sure that the campers had a great experience while learning that they can still enjoy "normal" activities, even when dealing with their Asthma.

Halloween with RT Students

October 30th - JSU RT Senior Students celebrated "Happy Hallowheeze" with a potluck lunch and dressing up in costumes.



Stop the Bleed

On September 24, 2025, fourth semester nursing students facilitated Stop-the-Bleed training to MAT students and to senior undergraduate Physical Education students.



Congratulations Coby Bonner

Jax State's School of Nursing is thrilled to announce that Coby Bonner, a senior nursing major from Oxford, Alabama has been elected as this year's Homecoming King!



Sport Management Graduate Accepts Position with Tennessee Titans

Congratulations to Sport Management graduate Ty Woodruff for accepting a position with the Tennessee Titans in the NFL. He will be working in their video technology department.



MAT Program Awarded Scholarships

JSU MAT students and alumni were awarded over \$18,500 in scholarships and awards at the 2025 ALATA CSMM in Trussville, Alabama. Pictures are from the Awards, Scholarships, and Hall of Fame Dinner at the Trussville Civic Center on June 5th, 2025.



MAT ACES Workshop

Our Master's in Athletic Training students are gearing up for success! They participated in the ACES Workshop on October 30–31, 2025, a nationally recognized prep experience designed to help them excel on the BOC Exam. We were excited to join forces with students from Huntingdon

College and the University of West Alabama for this collaborative learning experience. Together, these future healthcare professionals will gain essential tools, strategies, and practice to step confidently into their careers. Take a sneak peak of our Halloween costumes from last year's conference.



Public Health Students Lead Impactful Summer Projects with Local and National Partners

This summer, students from the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) program at Jacksonville State University participated in impactful special projects through the HPE 412 Special Projects in Public Health Education course. This experiential learning opportunity allowed students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world public health challenges in collaboration with community partners both locally and nationally.



These experiences reflect JSU's strategic commitment to Reach, Engage, and Discover, the pillars guiding the university's mission to empower learners and strengthen communities.

Locally, students worked with the Jacksonville Christian Outreach Center (JCOC), a nonprofit organization serving individuals and families in crisis. Students supported JCOC's mission by assisting with food distribution, conducting community needs assessments, and developing health education materials tailored to local needs. Learn more about JCOC at <https://myjcoc.org>.

Nationally, students partnered with the Black Women's Mental Health Institute (BWMHI), an organization dedicated to promoting mental health equity for Black women and girls. Through this collaboration, students contributed to research, advocacy, and program development initiatives focused on culturally responsive mental health care. Visit <https://www.bwmhi.org> for more information.

"These projects are a cornerstone of the Jax State Public Health Program," said Kelley Swatzell, Program Director. "They give students the opportunity to engage directly with communities, solve real problems, and grow as future public health professionals."

Jax State Public Health provides hands-on learning and community engagement, preparing students to lead and innovate in the field of public health.

Pictured: Nijha Murray (left) and Jakya Willie (right), students in Jacksonville State University's Bachelor of Science in Public Health program, attend the Black Women's Mental Health Institute in July 2025 as part of their HPE 412 Special Projects in Public Health Education course.

Faculty and Staff Recognition

Honoring Mrs. Carla Willingham: Celebrating 25 Years of Dedicated Service to JSU

After 25 years of outstanding service to Jacksonville State University, the School of Nursing will bid a fond farewell to Mrs. Carla Willingham, long-time Administrative Assistant to the Associate Dean, as she retires effective February 1, 2026.

Carla's career at JSU has been defined by dedication and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Since joining the School of Nursing in 2005, she has become a steady constant behind the scenes—keeping operations running smoothly, supporting countless faculty, staff, and students, and ensuring that the mission of the School was carried out with professionalism and heart.

Known for her warm smile, kind spirit, and attention to detail, Carla has been much more than an administrative assistant—she has been a mentor, encourager, and friend to many. Her ability to manage challenges and her genuine care for others have left an indelible mark on everyone fortunate enough to work alongside her.



Over the years, Carla has witnessed the School of Nursing's tremendous growth and transformation—from program expansions and accreditation milestones to new facilities and leadership transitions. Through it all, she remained a steadfast and trusted presence, representing the very best of JSU's values of integrity, service, and community.

Alabama Athletic Trainers' Association

Dr. Chris Clark, Program Director for the Jax State Master's in Athletic Training Program, was nominated to run for the At-Large 2 position with the Alabama Athletic Trainers' Association! Chris has been a strong advocate for the athletic training profession, and this role is a great opportunity for him to continue making a difference for athletic trainers across Alabama.



Faculty Research and Recognition

12th Annual Dr. Louis S Pappas Educational Seminar

September 20th, JSU RT Department Head, Ed Goodwin, was invited to speak at the 12th Annual Dr. Louis S Pappas Educational Seminar hosted by Grandview Medical Center. He presented an update on the current state of the profession and discussed several new developments in the field such as the APRT role, the RT Compact Licensure, and other emerging roles for respiratory therapists. The annual seminar provides CEUs/CRCEs to help RTs and Nurses maintain their licensure.



UAB Interprofessional Healthcare Symposium

Faculty from Public Health and Nursing present their work on the Cocky Cares for Calhoun County health fair at the UAB Interprofessional Healthcare Symposium.



Dr. Missy Duckett



Dr. Meghan Burroughs



Dr. Tammy Killen



Dr. Kelley Swatzell



Dr. Rhonda Knight

In Loving Memory

Dr. Windon Edge

February 18, 1961 – June 10, 2025

It is with great sadness that we share Dr. Windon Edge passed away on June 10, 2025. Windon served as a faculty member, undergraduate nursing coordinator and the Director of Collaborative Affairs for many years. Known for his love of travel, quick wit and passion for nursing, we will miss him dearly. [Windon Edge Obituary - Gadsden, AL](#)

Jax State College of Health Professions and Wellness

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