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**July-August
2021**

NEWSLETTER

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New Physics Faculty – Dr. Tikaram Neupane



Dr. Tikaram Neupane joins the department August 9, 2021. He is the new faculty, Assistant Professor of Physics. Dr. Neupane earned his Ph.D. from Hampton University, Virginia, in Condensed Matter and Optical Physics. He will be teaching both lectures and labs of College Physics I.

Welcome, Dr. Neupane, to the Chemistry and Physics Department.

New Staff Member – Mr. Brandon Lowery



Our new staff member, Brandon Lowery – Research Specialist, will join the department on September 7, 2021. Brandon has worked as a Brave Assistant in the department several years ago. He will work in the labs along with Mrs. Carolyn Oxendine. Brandon will assist faculty with the many logistical chores associated with experimental laboratory coursework and the administrative work critical to maintaining safe and regulatory-compliant laboratory spaces.

Welcome, Brandon, to the Chemistry and Physics Department.



Alumna Leyia Bullard Oxendine Accepted to Physician Assistant Program at Methodist University

Leyia Bullard Oxendine, a 2017 graduate of UNC Pembroke, has been accepted to the Physician Assistant program at Methodist University.



Oxendine of Pembroke earned a bachelor of science in Nursing. She plans to return to Robeson County and serve as a healthcare provider.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the small class sizes and how they allowed for one-on-one experiences with my professors," Oxendine said. "Drs. Astrid Oviedo, Siva Mandjiny and Rachael Smith are just a few names that come to mind when I think of my time at UNCP. As professors, they pushed and encouraged me to perform. I also am thankful to God for such a wonderful opportunity."

While at UNCP, Oxendine was an active member of the NC-Health Career Access Program (HCAP). The physician assistant program begins August 16.

Alumna Kennedi Henry to begin Dental Residency at ECU



UNC Pembroke alumna Kennedi Henry recently passed the North Carolina State Dental Board examination and will soon begin her residency at East Carolina University.

Henry earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 2016 before earning a Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from the ECU School of Dental Medicine in May. She is set to begin a one-year Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency at ECU this month.

"When I reflect on my time at UNCP, I have concluded that deciding to attend the university for my undergraduate training was the best decision that I have ever made," said Dr. Henry, a Richmond County native.

"During my time in the chemistry department, I was offered multiple opportunities to conduct research and be taught in small class settings with excellent faculty. The faculty, staff and advisors at UNCP helped me become who I am today, and I know that I would not have succeeded without their guidance and willingness to teach.

"I truly believe that I am a testament to UNCP's motto of 'get there from here.' This university paved the way for a small-town girl from Hamlet, N.C., to become a doctor of dental medicine, and, for that, I am forever grateful. UNCP will always be my home."

Following her residency, Henry plans to pursue an associateship at a practice in a rural community.

NC State and UNC Pembroke 3+2 Engineering Program has its First Graduate



Dana Lamberton spent long hours inside the labs in the Department of Chemistry and Physics at UNC Pembroke.

In the five years it takes for the average college student to earn a bachelor's degree, Dana Lamberton completed two—one in applied physics at UNC Pembroke and another in mechanical engineering at N.C. State University.

She was afforded this unique opportunity through UNC Pembroke's 3-plus-2 dual-degree engineering program with N.C. State. Established in 2016, the program allows students to spend three years at UNCP and two years at N.C. State and graduate with bachelor's degrees from both institutions. Lamberton is the first graduate.

"It was definitely a challenge earning two degrees in five years. Both degree curriculums were rigorous," said Lamberton of Red Springs. "It was challenging at times to maintain my grades and there were points when it was stressful. But, in the end, I gained a lot through the experience."

She completed her UNCP degree requirements in the spring of 2019, before transitioning to N.C. State. In May, she graduated from both universities simultaneously.

Under the program, UNCP students must complete the required courses for an applied physics degree, and then transfer to N.C. State to spend the next two years working toward a degree in mechanical engineering or electrical engineering.

"My experience at UNC Pembroke was overwhelmingly positive," she said. "It provided me with a personal education experience which allowed me to thrive as a student. The professors and other mentors I had at UNCP truly cared about making a quality education possible. I spoke to each of these people daily, and the personal interaction encouraged me to do my best."

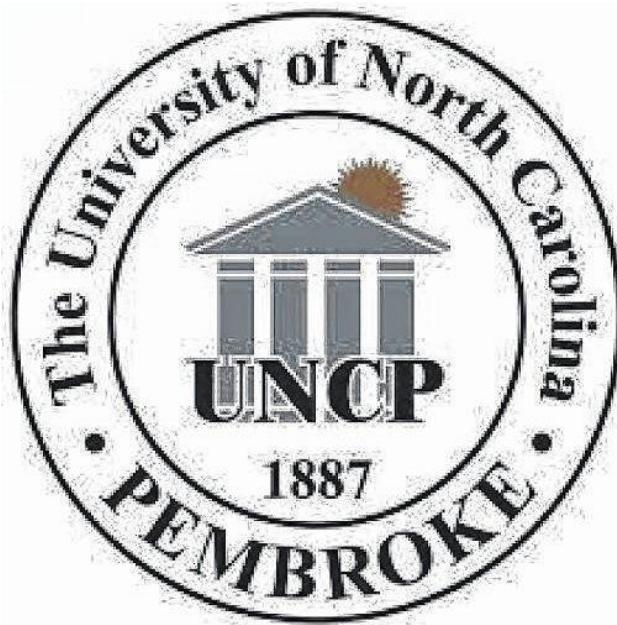
At UNCP, Lamberton was a member of the Maynor Honors College. However, transitioning from UNCP, where all the professors knew her name, to a larger university with auditorium classrooms with 100 students was an adjustment.

"When your teacher knows your name and approaches you, saying he feels that you could have the potential to do better on an essay or a project, and then helps you do, so it is very encouraging. N.C. State was much different. The teachers were approachable and helpful, but you must be a driven and independent-minded student to succeed."

The hands-on and lab experience she received at UNCP laid the foundation for her success at N.C. State. Her work as a lab assistant provided valuable experience with the concepts she was learning in the classroom. Lamberton recently accepted a summer job in Colorado and is considering a career as an engineer or continuing her education in graduate school.

"My career goal is to work in a fulfilling environment doing work that is interesting and continues to challenge my mind."

The College of Engineering offers several 2+2 and 3+2 programs in partnership with colleges and universities around the state. Learn more [here](#).



UNCP Alumnae Complete Doctor of Pharmacy Program at Wingate University



Sharon Ayioka



Ashley Arcara



Alex Miles Locklear



Brooke Chavis



Megan Stevens Kwasnik

PEMBROKE — Five alumnae of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke recently graduated from Wingate University's Doctor of Pharmacy program.

Alex Miles Locklear, Megan Stevens Kwasnik, Sharon Ayioka, Brooke Chavis and Ashley Arcara were among the Spring 2021 graduating class.

Arcara and Chavis graduated from UNCP in 2016. Kwasnik, Ayioka and Locklear received their UNCP degrees the following year.

Ayioka, a native of Kenya pursuing a career as an ambulatory care pharmacist, credits her UNCP professors Rachel Smith and Maria Santisteban for her academic success.

"I would not have made it this far without them," she said. "Also, the COMPASS program awarded me a scholarship which helped take the financial burden off my shoulders, allowed me to do research at MIT. The COMPASS program opened so many doors for me."

Arcara has accepted a yearlong acute care residency at Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center in Charlotte.

"My time at UNCP has impacted my life in so many ways," said Arcara, a Fayetteville native. "It has allowed me to pursue my career goal of becoming a pharmacist. Without the wonderful faculty and staff, I would not be where I am today."

Locklear, of Pembroke, said her UNCP experience helped prepare her for the challenges and rigorous course load in pharmacy school.

"The faculty and staff always pushed me to do my best. They never doubted my abilities and always encouraged me when I fell short. They always had expectations of me, and for that, I am grateful because it helped shaped me into the pharmacist that I am today."

Locklear is considering job offers with hopes of becoming a full-time community pharmacist.

Brooke Chavis, of Maxton, has landed a graduate intern position with Walgreens. Her time at UNCP allowed her to gain the necessary knowledge in biology and chemistry, which helped her succeed in pharmacy school.

"The faculty were encouraging and challenged me to reach my full potential. Furthermore, the Health Career Access Program allowed me to complete an internship that gave me insight into the medical field, which piqued my interest in exploring numerous careers, leading me to pharmacy school. Skills and knowledge gained at UNCP were vital in helping me obtain my PharmD," Chavis said.

Chavis plans to seek a pharmacist position with Walgreens upon obtaining her licensure.

Kwasnik, a resident of Bladenboro, credits Siva Mandjiny and Rachel Smith for shaping her UNCP experience.

"Dr. Mandjiny puts so much of himself into his teaching and wants to see his students succeed," she said. "Dr. Smith's door was always open for anything her students needed, whether it was to discuss organic chemistry or have a good cry."

Kwasnik plans to gain experience working at a community pharmacy before applying for a two-year residency program focusing on infectious disease.

UNCP Graduate Christian Ryckeley Begins Medical Residency at Aventura Hospital



Christian Ryckeley

Fresh out of medical school, Christian Ryckeley will soon begin a three-year emergency medicine residency at Aventura Hospital and Medical Center in Florida.

Ryckeley earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina in May. Before medical school, he was an honor student at UNC Pembroke, earning a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in chemistry and zoology in 2016. He excelled academically as a member of the Maynor Honors College, graduating summa cum laude. A former McGrew-Fruecht scholar and a chancellor's ambassador, he credits the nurturing student-professor experience he gained at UNCP for his academic success.

"From Dr. Siva Mandjiny in the chemistry department being an endless source of encouragement to the Health Careers Club and Natalya Freeman-Locklear forming the foundation of my medical training and experience, UNCP has been instrumental in my journey toward medicine.

"But most of all is my mentor, in science, education and life, Meg Zets. Without her, I cannot imagine being where I am today. She was the pivotal moment in my undergrad career, constantly challenging me and my understanding of the world, and that has spurred me on to pursue not only medicine and academia but also conservation and humanitarianism," Ryckeley said.

The residency program begins June 25. Upon completion, the Tar Heel native says he is considering a fellowship in pediatrics or emergency medical services and eventually seeking a career practicing medicine at a community, nonprofit hospital in both a clinical and academic capacity.

To All of You



Student News

Ashton Schmoll: (Applied Physics-Spring 2021), one of the stronger students got accepted to join the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer.

Yara Abumohsen: got admission to UNC-Chapel Hill Medical School.

We are so proud and honored to have them in our Program.

If you happen to see them, please congratulate them.

