



# Health Happens Here

*A newsletter for the Department of Allied Health Sciences*



Fall 2011



in the department of Allied Health Sciences with Joint appointments as professor of Biomedical Engineering, School of Engineering, and Professor of Community Medicine and Health Care, School of Medicine, University of Connecticut. Dr. Faghri believes to be an effective teacher one must be an active participant in research and well educated within his or her field. Being up to date in the field you teach in is essential to providing a well-rounded education to your students.

Professor Faghri received her Doctoral degree in Medicine from Esfahan University, School of Medicine. She received a prestigious Rawdy Fellowship and accomplished her postdoctoral training at the National Center for Rehabilitation Engineering (NCRE), Wright State University, School of Medicine. She also received a Masters Degree in Physiology and Biophysics from Wright State University, Department of Physiology and Biophysics. She is a Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine.

As a medical doctor and an exercise physiologist, Professor Faghri has expertise in health promotion, disease, and disability prevention program planning and evaluation for healthy individuals as well as neurologically impaired and those with chronic conditions and elderly. Professor Faghri's significant fundamental contributions are in the field of functional electrical stimulation and in workplace health promotions. "Workplace interventions are imperative both from the employees and employers cost saving perspectives" says Dr. Faghri. Besides being essential to recruitment and retention in a competitive labor market, robust health benefits are becoming increasingly costly to employers, and employees bear a significant share of the burden. Ironically, more than 75% of health care costs are related to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer and high blood pressure. These chronic

## Faculty Highlight Professor Pouran D. Faghri, MD, MS, FACS

Professor Pouran Faghri joined the University of Connecticut in 1995. She is an established researcher and educator

diseases all share the same risk factors (smoking, obesity, lack of exercise and unhealthy diets), all of which are preventable through healthy lifestyle choices. In 2005, Professor Faghri developed the first State of CT workplace health promotion program called ConnectiFIT. The mission of the program was to provide necessary support, resources, and coordination in the development of health promotion programs for the CT State Employees and was funded by Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

More recently, Dr. Faghri received a CDC funded research to implement a weight loss program for employees who are overweight or obese and at high risk for type 2 diabetes, employing contingency management theory for intervention. The results of this research have been presented at national conferences and are under review for publications.

In 2006, Professor Faghri and her colleagues at UMass Lowell and University of Connecticut Health Center were awarded one of two National Centers of Excellence in the country as part of the WorkLife initiatives by CDC and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW) is a cross-disciplinary collaboration, which implements and evaluates multiple models for integrating health promotion with occupational health interventions, with a strong emphasis on musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and mental health outcomes; the underlying role of work organization; and the importance of worker involvement in program goal-setting, design and implementation are integral parts of the program. <http://www.oehc.uhc.edu/healthywork/index.asp>

NIOSH has funded the CPH-NEW to explore and research the concepts of Total Worker Health™; an effort to recognize synergy in combining efforts to reduce personal health risk factors with traditional safety stress hazard reduction approaches in the workplace. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twb/centers.html>

The CPH-NEW center successfully concluded its first five-year review in 2011 and was renewed for another five years (2011-2016). Professor Faghri is the Co-Principal investigator of the center and oversees center activities at Storrs campus.



## Liana Garcia-Fresher

### Allied Health Sciences Advisory Board President

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” - Anne Frank.

Ms. Garcia-Fresher lives by these words in both her work and her volunteerism. Liana has been an active participant and is now the most recent president of the Allied Health Sciences (AHS) Department Advisory Board. Ms. Garcia-Fresher graduated from the University of Connecticut’s School of Allied Health with a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Dietetics in 1985. Ms. Garcia-Fresher has held Executive Director and CEO positions with Non-Profit Corporations and is currently the Executive Director of a national disabled children’s charity called the Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) Foundation based in Avon, CT. “My vision, as the AHS Advisory Board President, is for the department to continue providing strong academic programs; innovative curriculum; recruit, retain and place the best and brightest students as well as advocating for the highly qualified faculty.”

### Internships: The Key to Success

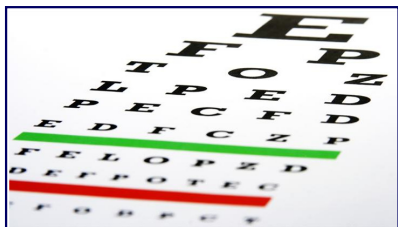
The Department of Allied Health Sciences faculty adopted an internship guidebook at its December 2011 meeting. This document outlines the specific details of the internship experience and is intended to give the student and internship site an understanding of the obligations and expectations of the experience. AH 3091: Supervised Internship is a course open to Junior- and Senior-status students enrolled in the Department of Allied Health Sciences (AHS). Internships are suggested but optional for completion of the AHS major. Internships are a 3-way cooperative venture among an employer, a faculty member, and a student. This experience-based course places students in an organization under the guidance and supervision of both a qualified professional in an organization (agency, business, NGO, University Center or laboratory) and an appointed faculty member from the AHS department to gain hands-on experience. This course helps students:

- Connect and apply academic learning to real-world environments
- Confirm a career choice
- Identify the type of organization and/or work environment they may wish to work in
- Develop professionalism, communication and team-building skills

*If you or your organization is interested in hosting an intern, please contact  
Dr. Susan Gregoire, Director AHS Academic Advisory Center (860) 486-0015*

### Undergraduate Student Highlight: Arjun Sheno

Arjun Sheno is currently a Junior in the Allied Health Sciences Program who wants to pursue a career in optometry. In January 2012, Arjun will travel to Orissa, India with Unite for Sight. Unite for Sight is a non-profit global health delivery organization that empowers communities worldwide to improve eye health and eliminate preventable blindness. The volunteers for the Unite for Sight Program come from places across the globe to help eye clinics in serving populations in underprivileged areas. Arjun and other volunteers will assist in providing free community based screenings, organize sight restoring surgeries for both adults and children and bring forth educational programs to increase awareness. Arjun is happy to participate in this program as he believes it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for him to gain valuable experience in the eye care field while helping those in need in his native land. The specific program offered by Unite for Sight combines Arjun’s passion of optometry with the bigger picture of health care in the world. By taking part in this program, Arjun hopes to gain a new perspective of the completely different view-point of health care in a third world culturally rich country.



## Professional Science Masters Degree in Health Care Genetics

Recent milestones in genetics testing have introduced new paradigms for addressing personalized medicine, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, and genetic design. The UConn Dept of Allied Health Sciences has proposed to offer a Professional Science Master's (PSM) Degree in Health Care Genetics that will train scientists and professionals with interdisciplinary competency in human genetics, disease identification, laboratory diagnostics, health care ethics, and regulatory issues in the clinical laboratory. The UConn Board of Trustees approved this proposal at its September meeting. The proposal is scheduled for review by the Board of Regents for Higher Education in March 2012. The objectives of this Program are to provide the didactic and experiential components such that graduates can 1) apply knowledge of genetic principles and genomic technologies to improve quality of health-care through the diagnosis, screening, intervention or prevention of disease and the maintenance of health, 2) understand that health-related genetic information can have important social and psychological implications for individuals and families, and 3) identify resources available to assist those seeking genetic information or services. This degree will be a University wide initiative that crosses multiple departments on the Storrs and Health Center campuses.



The target clientele are students with degrees in the life or clinical sciences who wish to pursue career advancement or new career opportunities in companies, laboratories, or health-centers whose mission is to identify, treat and/or prevent human disease. The proposed degree is a two-year, 33-credit, Plan B Master's program, with options for part-time completion. The program has its foundations in the existing strengths of its faculty members with expertise in genetic testing, research, and the application of genetics in health-care.

Competencies required of the laboratorian in the move toward personalized genetic medicine will include more direct links to patient care, customer relations, teaching, consulting, data analysis and process improvement. Yet, there is a workforce shortage of laboratory professionals in the health care industry, in CT and nationwide. Applied professional programs related to employability are rising in popularity ([www.sciencemasters.com](http://www.sciencemasters.com)). The development of a PSM in Health Care Genetics at UConn is thus timely, appropriate to address the workforce shortage, relevant to the interests of college applicants, and will meet the trends of genetic testing and the expanding role of the clinical laboratorian. The Program faculty will begin recruiting during the spring 2012 semester with the provisional "Pending Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education approval" for its first class to start fall 2012. *For further information, please contact the Program Director, Dr. Judy Brown at [judy.brown@uconn.edu](mailto:judy.brown@uconn.edu).*

## The Mediterranean Diet and Tuscan Cuisine in Florence, Italy



Jane Kerstetter, PhD, RD, Professor in Nutrition and Dietetics and Peter Fischer, PhD, Professor of History are directing this summer's Study Abroad Program at the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai in Florence, Italy. The program is designed for students interested in health and nutrition.

The foods produced and consumed in the Mediterranean Countries are quite possibly the healthiest diet in the world. Students will spend 6 weeks totally immersed in the food and nutrition environment of Florence Italy while studying the effect of the Mediterranean diet on our health and the history of the Italian food culture. The Program will combine in-class lectures of the health benefits of the Mediterranean style of eating, and important historical aspects of the Italian food culture with hands on approach to the growing, preparation, and serving of local Tuscan foods.



The 2012 courses include ITAL 101: The Florence Experience I: Beginning Italian I and AH 4095: The Mediterranean Diet and our Health  
To learn more visit: <http://studyabroad.uconn.edu/Summer> Spaderna or Email Jane Kerstetter at [jane.kerstetter@uconn.edu](mailto:jane.kerstetter@uconn.edu). *Applications due March 1!!*

**Dr. Kerstetter , students and colleagues during the 2011 study abroad program.**

## Career Option: Genetic Counseling

Genetic counselors use specialized education in both medical genetics and counseling to help patients understand complex genetic information and make informed decisions. Diagnostic Genetic Sciences (DGS) students have been fortunate to shadow, intern and perform research with certified genetic counselors at The Hereditary Cancer Program, Division of Human Genetics at the UConn Health Center. Robin C. Schwartz, M.S., C.G.C., an Assistant professor in the Division of Genetics and Developmental Biology, Dept. of Pediatrics and Jennifer B. Stroop, M.S., C.G.C., coordinator for the Hereditary Cancer Program, have a strong commitment to education and volunteer to accept student interns interested in the field of genetic counseling. Justin Leighton, Christina Bond, and Jessica Ebrahimzadeh are DGS alumni who are now certified genetic counselors or are enrolled in a genetic counseling program. It is without a doubt that these alumni and current students who have worked with Robin and Jennifer (Caitlyn Walsh, Natasha Aekus, and Alicja Wojtkiewicz) gained invaluable learning experience and advice under their mentorship.



## Allied Health Sciences volunteers at Cornucopia Fest

The student members of the Allied Health Sciences Club volunteered at the seventeenth annual Cornucopia Fest on Sunday, September 25, 2011 with other members of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Some of the exhibits and presentations included a Zumba® class sponsored by the Hawley Armory Fitness and Wellness Center. The UConn Allied Health Sciences Club had a table of information and presentation on The Benefits and Risks of Caffeine. Visitors could also take a 4 ½-minute cancer education survey, receive cancer risk reduction/prevention counseling specific to each individual's cancer risks and take away cancer fact sheets and brochures. Pictured at this event are (L) Kelsey Darragh, AHS and (R) Allison Bailey, DGS.



## An Educator's Profile

Martha Keagle MEd, CG(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, Diagnostic Genetic Sciences Program Director, was featured with an "Educators Profile" in the most recent issue of the Journal of the Association of Genetic Technologists 37(4): 219-221.



## Alumni News

Three Registered Dietitans, graduates of the Dietetics Program, are working in a new and exciting area of dietetics -- Supermarket Registered Dietitians. Angela Corcoran and Jessica Altland are both employed as RDs at ShopRite grocery stores and Julie Menounos is the first ever instore registered dietitian for Stop & Shop.



**Do you have questions, comments or suggestions for this or future AHS Newsletters?  
Please contact the 2011 Editor: Kaitlyn Mirabile at [kaitlyn.mirabile@uconn.edu](mailto:kaitlyn.mirabile@uconn.edu)**