



# McCOLLOUGH INSTITUTE

for PRE-MEDICAL SCHOLARS

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®



## MCCOLLOUGH INSTITUTE FOR PRE-MEDICAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Greetings from the McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars at the University of Alabama! These are exciting times. The McCollough Pre-Medical Scholars Program was created through the generous gift of Dr. Gaylon McCollough and Susan N. McCollough. Through the dedication and effort of superb team of collaborators in the College of Arts & Sciences, the McCollough's vision for a premier pre-medical program became a reality.



Dr. Ted Poston,  
Director of the  
McCollough Institute for  
Pre-Medical Scholars

I came on board in July 2018 to continue the development of the Institute. Throughout last academic year our team of teachers, researchers, and staff built the backbone for the McCollough Scholars experiences. The program centers on a minor in interdisciplinary studies in medicine within a first-year living-learning community. McCollough Scholars will live together in the Blount dormitory their first year while they take a sequence of interdisciplinary classes on the art of medicine. This education will provide McCollough Scholars with much needed knowledge and skills to excel in medical school and the medical profession. We are thrilled to transition from the building phase to welcome the inaugural class of McCollough Scholars! We are blessed with an abundance of gifted students starting this Fall. You will meet a few of them in these pages and learn about their accomplishments and visions. Each student is the receipt of the prestigious University of Alabama's Presidential Scholarship.

While their accolades are numerous, their character and vision for service in the medical profession is exemplary. We look forward to the great contributions from this amazing group of students!

For more information about the program, please visit [Mccolloughscholars.ua.edu](http://Mccolloughscholars.ua.edu)



2019 Inaugural class of  
Pre-Medical McCollough Scholars



College of  
Arts & Sciences



## Joy Becher

If one were to design a cover page for my story, it would picture a German flag for my origin, a world map and passport for my adventurous travels, a point shoe for my passion for dancing, a bunch of colorful brushes for my artistic side, and probably my high school transcript for my academic achievements. But those are just things that are visible on the outside. I dare you to dive into my story and uncover that dancing, moving to a different continent at the age of twelve, and traveling to countries like Nicaragua has shaped me into the type of person who is searching for a place to belong, eager to make a difference, and willing to dive into the unknown. When I learned about the McCollough Pre-Medical Scholars program, I realized that it could provide me with likeminded people who are curious about themselves and the world and determined to work for their goals. But not only am I hoping to find a family there since I'll be in the US without my family in a year, I'm hoping to gain knowledge that will guide me along my studies and medical research. McCollough will give purpose to the talents that God gave me.



## Thomas Haigood

Hello, my name is Tommy Haigood and I'm from the small town of Ranburne, Alabama. I am a National Merit Finalist and scholarship recipient from the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science. During high school I served as a class officer, peer tutor for my classmates in math and Spanish, and sound technician for the school's garage band. I'm majoring in microbiology because I've always been fascinated with disease and microbes. I plan to pursue an MD-PhD after completing my degree at University of Alabama and become either a medical researcher or an infectious disease doctor. I'm also working on a second major in Spanish. I've been studying Spanish for four years and in my junior year of high school I had the privilege of studying abroad in Seville, Spain. I recognize many people here in the United States do not have the same opportunity to access healthcare due to language barriers. I hope by continuing my education in Spanish, I will be better prepared to serve my community by bridging the language barrier to aide people in accessing the healthcare they need. I feel honored to be part of the McCollough Scholars program and am excited about the opportunities this program provides.



## Phoebe Guidry

As aspiring physicians, the McCollough Scholars share a common desire. We want to serve others. While many undergraduate programs could provide us with the proper coursework to be prepared for the MCAT or the rigor of Medical School, the McCollough program offers something unique in higher education. We will be taught to think critically and philosophically regarding medicine in order to give our patients the treatment they deserve. By gaining a proper historical perspective of medicine, we will be better prepared to address the questions of tomorrow. We will be well-rounded applicants for medical school and well-rounded doctors.

I am Perry High's Class of 2019 Valedictorian, a Superintendent's Georgia Scholar, and All-State French Horn player. I served as Production Director for our Drama Department and Vice President for Kappa Alpha Zeta Sorority and National Honor Society.

At the University of Alabama, I have been accepted into the Million Dollar Band and New College. Through New College, I will combine the study of music and developmental biology by investigating the effects of sound on physical and cognitive growth. My depth focus will be in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The McCollough Institute will help make this idea a reality.



## Sara Sanders

I graduated valedictorian from Fred J. Page High School in Franklin, Tennessee, where, as varsity soccer captain, I was dedicated to growing the team both on and off the field. As a board member of Blue Crew, our freshmen mentoring program, I was committed to aiding the freshmen's transitions and growing school spirit. However, my greatest accomplishment occurred 5,000 miles away, but it is the reason I decided to attend The University of Alabama as a part of The McCollough Pre-Medical Scholars Program. Over the course of two months in São Paulo, Brazil, I spent time with numerous kids who have difficult backgrounds, but, each day, I was able to help free them from their daily struggles. My experiences in Brazil opened my eyes to the idea of working in under-resourced communities for my future career. It grew my interest in international collaboration surrounding global health, and because of this, The McCollough Pre-Medical Scholars Program's unique, interdisciplinary approach to medicine immediately attracted me. Understanding the history, philosophy, and culture surrounding medicine will better equip me to become an understanding and empathetic physician in the global health field.



Dr. Jason A. DeCaro will be teaching a Foundations 1 course section for The McCollough Scholars Program in spring 2020.

Jason A. DeCaro, PhD, is professor of anthropology and the incoming Marilyn Williams Elmore and John Durr Elmore Endowed Professor in the Social Sciences. His work in Tanzania, Nicaragua, and the Southeast US connects subjective, human aspects of experience to quantifiable

differences in physical and mental health. This perspective draws together two observations: first, our bodies are affected by our physical and social environments. Second, these environments are shaped by culture and socioeconomic forces, as is the practice of medicine itself. Dr. DeCaro's special research focus is the effect of everyday stress on children's immune systems, growth and development. Recently, he also has begun investigating how communication among adult intimate couples influences their biological stress responses, and physical and mental health. He has been a College of Arts & Sciences Distinguished Teaching Fellow and involved

over 200 undergraduate students in his research. Throughout 13 years at UA, his teaching has focused on a gap in pre-medical education that the interdisciplinary McCollough Scholars program is uniquely positioned to address: what aspiring physicians need to know about ways that culture and social experiences "get under the skin," with implications for domestic and global health-care practice and the success of public health initiatives.

## FACULTY NEWS



Dr. Katrina Ramonell, Associate Professor in Biological Sciences at The University of Alabama

Dr. Katrina Ramonell is an Associate Professor in Biological Sciences and has been at UA for 15 years. Dr. Ramonell is from Birmingham, AL and an avid

SEC football fan. She received her B.S. in Microbiology from Auburn University, her Master's degree in Microbiology from Columbia University and her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. She did her postdoctoral work at Stanford University in California. She tells her students that she is 'touring the SEC' to see more football games in person! For her Ph.D. project, she worked with NASA in Space Biology. Ask her about her experiments on the space shuttle!

Dr. Ramonell's research focuses on Innate Immunity in plants. Innate immunity is an ancient immune response that

is shared between plants and animals. The Ramonell lab studies cell signaling that governs pathogen recognition by the host. The lab utilizes modern genomic, bioinformatic, genetic and cell biological techniques to study our research questions. The Ramonell lab is composed of graduate and undergraduate researchers and we are always looking for interested students to join our lab. Dr. Ramonell is also a dedicated teacher and she teaches biochemistry, biology of cancer and plant physiology. She is excited to be involved in the McCollough Institute and looks forward to welcoming the inaugural class!