BUS TOUR PARTICIPANTS



Elijah Asagbra | asagbrao16@ecu.edu Health Services and Information Management, CAHS

Health information technology (HIT) has been touted to be an important tool in promoting patient engagement. However, without proper adoption and use, the advantage provided by HIT for patient engagement may not be achieved. It is therefore important to understand which functionalities are germane for patient engagement, and what role patients and community health departments have in its implementation and actual utilization.

As such, Dr. Elijah Asagbra proposes to investigate the following: first, to examine consumers' expectations, preferences and aversions, as well as factors that influence behavior change to stimulate active and consistent utilization. Second, to explore county and community level support for the use of HIT for patient engagement. The role of public health departments and other community resources in promoting patient engagement will be examined.



Leigh Atherton | athertonw@ecu.edu Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies, CAHS

Dr. Leigh Atherton's overarching research agenda involves the examination of animal-assisted interventions as an adjunctive approach to traditional mental health, addictions, and rehabilitation counseling treatment modalities. His short-term research objective is to explore the theoretical framework of animal-assisted interventions in counseling, specifically aiming to detect and measure the role of theoretical constructs elucidated through animal-assisted interventions within a counseling context. Dr. Atherton's long-term research objective is to develop projects that inform the development of best practices for the use of animal-assisted interventions as an adjunctive approach in counseling. To achieve these research objectives, he will seek to develop strong, sustainable community partnerships to conduct efficacy and effectiveness studies.



Oyinlola T. Babatunde | babatundeo@ecu.edu Nutrition Science, CAHS

Dr. Oyinlola T. Babatunde's research is focused on promoting health among community-dwelling underserved population groups, particularly low-income and older adults, to contribute positively to the wellness of the rural communities and reduce health disparities. Her goal is to help individuals in these population groups achieve optimal health by providing culturally relevant nutrition education and tailored intervention for prevention or management of chronic disease conditions to assure successful and healthy aging.

Most of Dr. Babatunde's work is quantitative in nature, however, considering the need to better understand and serve her priority population groups, and be more inclusive, particularly of those having limited literacy, she received training to use mixed-methods research approach to enhance engagement with the population and data collection.



Craig M. Becker | beckerc@ecu.edu Health Education and Promotion, HHP

Dr. Craig Becker's research focus is on positive health and the precursors necessary to nurture, enable and create better health beyond the absence of disease. He does salutogenic or health origins research and focuses on the measurement of health status using his developed and validated multidimensional Salutogenic Wellness Promotions Scale (SWPS). The SWPS assesses health promoting actions in the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, vocational, and environmental areas. Interventions from this research focus on ways to enhance health and well-being. Related outcomes document a positive influence on performance at schools, in work, and in relationships with others and the environment. Recent research published the Paneugenesis — or creating all good — Model to guide this research and application of the findings.



Heidi Bonner | bonnerhe@ecu.edu Criminal Justice, THCAS

Dr. Heidi Bonner's research focuses on the administration of the criminal justice process, with an emphasis on police decision making and the effects of policies and programs on police operations. Specific research interests include judgement and decision making, police accountability systems, criminal justice worker stress and wellness, and criminal justice response to domestic violence and sexual assault.



Patch Clark | clarkp@ecu.edu School of Theatre and Dance, CFAC

Professor Patricia "Patch" Clark's interests are in the impact of the arts in the areas of public education and collaborating with researchers and educators in the area of STEM to explore, create, and develop integrated arts projects in STEAM. She is also interested in the impact the arts have upon communities, businesses, and health care and developing projects which document the contributions the arts can make to the various agencies. Some examples include: the Beaufort and Hyde County Child agencies and the making of "voiceover" programs and children's theatre for pre-K children and families as a phone APP; the impact of arts in hospitals and healthcare facilities; the development of children's programming and summer theatre as model for arts education, artistic growth, tourism, and revenue; and, the discovery and identification of untapped arts resources in eastern North Carolina for the development of collaborative discovery, projects, and programming.



Melissa Cox | coxmel17@ecu.edu Health Education and Promotion, HHP

Dr. Melissa Cox's research examines contextual influences on the development of adolescent alcohol use. At the core of this research is exploring how the social and physical environment exerts risk and protective influences on youth drinking. She examines contextual influences on adolescent alcohol use from both a developmental perspective, addressing relationships between context and alcohol use over long periods of time using longitudinal data, as well as from a momentary perspective, to identify environmental factors that pose the highest risk for drinking. Dr. Cox's work represents an intersection of public health approaches, principles of developmental science, quantitative methodologies, and prevention science. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to inform public health policy and prevention programming to reduce to the burdens and consequences of youth drinking.



Jamie DeWitt | dewittj@ecu.edu Pharmacology and Toxicology, BSoM

The DeWitt Lab's main research focus is on how exposure to emerging contaminants in the aquatic environment, such as per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) and pharmaceutical and personal care products, affect the adult and developing immune systems. The lab is especially interested in how emerging contaminants can lead to diseases, such as autism and Alzheimer's disease, after these early-life exposures disrupt the developing immune system and lead to changes in the developing nervous system.



Randall Etheridge | etheridgej15@ecu.edu Engineering, CET

Dr. Randall Etheridge's research is focused on enhancing the management and design of human-altered systems to improve the water quality reaching downstream ecosystems. This includes increasing the sustainability of agricultural production and improving coastal ecosystem restoration. In each case, his team is trying to optimize specific biogeochemical processes to achieve a desired outcome, whether it is producing food, removing nutrients, or replacing lost habitat.

Dr. Etheridge's team uses the latest technology in the field to better understand and quantify what is occurring in the monitored systems. The use of sensors that can collect parameters including nutrient concentrations and water flow at a high temporal resolution have provided great insight into the systems that have been monitored.



Deeonna Farr | farrd17@ecu.edu Health Education and Promotion, HHP

Prior to obtaining her doctorate, Dr. Deeonna Farr was a public health practitioner whose work spanned public health education, advocacy, and research initiatives to address the chronic disease burden in communities of color. Dr. Farr's current research portfolio includes mixed-method projects investigating influences on Black American's participation in cancer prevention research, the impact of false-mammography results on Black women's breast cancer behavioral intentions, barriers and facilitators of colorectal cancer screening in Black populations, and life course influences on mechanisms influencing cardiovascular disease risk in Black populations. At ECU, Dr. Farr seeks to use community-based participatory research methods to engage with communities and address the disproportional burden of chronic disease among communities of color in the eastern North Carolina region.



Rachel Gittman | gittmanr17@ecu.edu Biology, THCAS

Rachel Gittman's research is currently focused primarily on the following: 1) evaluating biotic and abiotic drivers of coastal ecosystem productivity and community structure and function; 2) developing and testing approaches for applying ecological principles to coastal habitat restoration; and 3) understanding feedback loops between human decisions and ecosystem functions and services in coastal communities.



Jeanne Hoover | hooverj@ecu.edu Academic Library Services, Joyner Library

Ms. Jeanne Hoover's research interests relate to scholarly communication, specifically open access in the research lifecycle. Her focus includes increasing accessibility, reproducibility, and impact of data and scholarly work through open access tools and publishing. Ms. Hoover's current collaborative project is on using Open Science Framework to disseminate research results within a lab setting. Additionally, she is interested in developing practical training for both librarians and educators to incorporate and use open educational resources in the classroom setting, specifically on creating useful, affordable, customized, and accessible instructional materials that encourage high engagement while retaining appropriate rights for the author.



Robert Hughes | hughesr16@ecu.edu Chemistry, THCAS

Dr. Robert Hugh's laboratory is a lab with research interests at the interface of chemistry and biology. His team's projects vary from rational design approaches to biocatalysis to the engineering of optogenetic proteins for studying cell death pathways to the development of molecular biology methods for creating improved protein fusions. The creation of useful tools for biochemists and molecular biologists is also primary focus of their lab. The team is interested in collaborating with those who may wish to integrate the lab's technologies into their research programs.



Akshat Kapoor | kapoora16@ecu.edu Health Services and Information Management, CAHS

Dr. Akshat Kapoor's primary research interest focuses on improving patient engagement via use of innovative technologies, such as apps, social media, and interactive educational resources, to aid patients in the self-management of their medical conditions. His research emphasizes how health care organizations can innovate and effectively engage patients and communities in playing an active role in their own health. Dr. Kapoor's startup-funded research project aims to improve the quality of lives of breast cancer survivors. Breast cancer survivors deal with various health issues that require constant self-care and management, often without an understanding of their current condition, or treatment related side effects. The objective is to evaluate a web based app called ACESO (After Cancer Education and Support Operations) on improving self-efficacy, quality of life, and patient-provider communication.



Veeranna Maddipati | maddipativ15@ecu.edu Internal Medicine, BSoM

Dr. Veeranna Maddipati is interested in collaborating with other departments to see if they can better study pulmonary diseases and help eastern North Carolina deal with their effects.



Arjun Mohan | mohana14@ecu.edu Internal Medicine, BSoM

Dr. Arjun Mohan's research interests are Severe Asthma (clinical, epidemiological and translational research), Sarcoidosis (murine model based research, basic sciences and translational research), and Chronic obstructive Pulmonary Disease (Clinical and Epidemiological research).



Mark Moss | mossm17@ecu.edu Foundational Sciences, SoDM

Dr. Mark Moss' research focuses on improving oral health through systems level changes. This involves research around: community engagement to reduce health disparities; addressing the impact of social determinants on oral health; public policy to improve access to care for underserved populations; and translating biologic mechanisms of health and disease to populations.



Ramiro Murata | muratar16@ecu.edu Foundational Sciences, SoDM

Dr. Ramiro Murata's research interest include microbiology and mechanisms of biology, as well as the effects of natural products against infectious diseases.



April Reed | reeda@ecu.edu Management Information Systems, COB

Dr. April Reed's research is based on a community project called the Management Information Systems (MIS) STEM Camp for Girls. The project is a public service completed through collaboration with community partners at local Pitt County public schools. Participants are middle and high school girls. The research question is "How do the career attitudes of females in grades 7-10 change after a MIS STEM camp?" The methods to be used will be a pre and post survey of the camp participants, their teachers and their parents based on the validated Student Attitudes toward STEM survey for Middle and High School Students surveys by the Friday Institute. The camp took place on Nov. 3, Nov. 17, and Nov.18 and the surveys have been completed.



Abby Schwartz | schwartza15@ecu.edu School of Social Work, HHP

Dr. Abby Schwartz's research focuses on the barriers vulnerable racial and ethnic subgroups of older cancer patients face in adhering to cancer treatment protocols. To date, two qualitative studies have been completed with a rural and a urban population. In eastern North Carolina, older African-American cancer patients and their caregivers have been interviewed about their experiences. In Philadelphia, Penn., focus groups have been conducted with older Hispanic patients, social workers, health professionals, and other stakeholders. Of key importance has been the identification of social and physical environmental barriers older cancer patients, caregivers, and other stakeholders have identified and described, as well as ways such barriers have been circumvented. These projects are one component in a research agenda centered on the development of culturally appropriate community-based interventions that will support vulnerable older cancer patients and caregivers in adhering to cancer treatments.



Susan Sherman | shermans15@ecu.edu Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies, CAHS

Recent legislation changes through WIOA (Workforces Innovations and Opportunity Act) lowered the federal educational requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. State VR agencies can now choose to lower their standard of hire to individuals with a bachelor's degree in rehab or other related fields. This research seeks to determine which factors (e.g. environmental, consumer, counselor, agency policy, use of evidence based practices) determine successful employment outcomes pre-and post-WIOA legislation changes. This research projects a qualitative and quantitative exploration of personnel qualifications and other factors related to successful outcomes in state VR agencies. These findings could impact the field of rehabilitation counseling in North Carolina and nationally, as well as impact the field of rehabilitation counseling studies in higher education.



Raymond Smith | smithraym17@ecu.edu Engineering, CET

Dr. Raymond Smith is interested in the application of industrial and systems engineering, operations research, methodologies to solve problems related to health care, service systems, and energy and system chain problems.



Anne Marie Spuches | spuchesa@ecu.edu Chemistry, THCAS

Dr. Anne Marie Spuches' interests lie in the field of Bioinorganic Chemistry. Her lab is interested in the thermodynamic, kinetic, and structural forces that drive metal binding to proteins and peptides. Currently, they are investigating toxic metal (cadmium and lead) binding to EF-hand proteins including cardiac Troponin C, a protein involved in heart muscle contraction.





Srinivas Sriramula | sriramulas17@ecu.edu Pharmacology and Toxicology, BSoM

The current research in Dr. Srinivas Sriramula's laboratory is focused on understanding the central neural mechanisms involved in the regulation of blood pressure. In particular, it is investigating the role of kinin B1 receptor activation and its interaction with Renin Angiotensin System components in the development of neurogenic hypertension. Dr. Sriramula's laboratory uses an integrated physiological, pharmacological, and gene-targeting approach, employing in vivo animal models of human diseases, complemented by in vitro cell cultures. Some of the techniques used include blood pressure recordings in mice using telemetry system, autonomic function assessment, brain nuclei-targeted microinjections, electron and fluorescence microscopy, and routine cell and molecular biology techniques. The major goal of the laboratory's research is to elucidate mechanisms underlying the pathophysiology and identify novel potential therapeutic targets for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

Mary Jane Thomassen | thomassenm@ecu.edu Internal Medicine, BSoM

Dr. Mary Jane Thomassen's research has been focused on the question of how inflammatory lung disease affects alveolar macrophage activities that are critical for maintenance of pulmonary homeostasis. In 2003, her laboratory was the first to observe that PPARgamma is constitutively expressed in human alveolar macrophages from healthy control subjects. Since that time her team has studied the role of PPARgamma in a number of inflammatory lung diseases including sarcoidosis and pulmonary alveolar proteinosis as well as several animal models. Dr. Thomassen has spent her entire career in clinical departments and has successfully set up translational programs at three different institutions including Case Western Reserve University, The Cleveland Clinic, and East Carolina University.



Rukiyah Van Dross | vandrossr@ecu.edu Pharmacology and Toxicology, BSoM

The goal of Dr. Rukiyah Van Dross' research is to develop novel therapeutics for clinical treatment of colon, melanoma, and non-melanoma skin cancer. Her team's patented agent, 15dPMJ2, was a potent inducer of death in tumor, but not in non-tumor, cells suggesting that 15dPMJ2 may produce fewer adverse effects. Tumor studies revealed that 15dPMJ2 also inhibited melanoma growth in mice by more than 70 percent. Current data indicates that damage-associated molecular pattern (DAMP)-immunogenic cell death activation contributes to the therapeutic efficacy of 15dPMJ2. DAMP expression activates dendritic cells, cytotoxic T cells, and memory T cells which can protect the host against tumor recurrence. Dr. Rukiyah and her team seek to determine the role of DAMPs in 15dPMJ2 activity to develop commercially available drugs that will provide potent, selective, and sustained activity against cancer.



Jitka Virag | viragj@ecu.edu Physiology, BSoM

Heart failure is a significant public health problem. The heart lacks sufficient regenerative potential to recover from an ischemic event. Dr. Jitka Virag and her team employ the murine model of myocardial infarction to study acute ischemia and reperfusion injury and chronic remodeling in non-reperfused myocardial infarction. In particular, they are interested in the Eph receptors and their cognate ligands the ephrins, the largest family of membrane-bound, receptor tyrosine kinases that utilize a bidirectional signaling strategy, in inflammation, autophagy, cell kinetics, angiogenesis, and scar formation in post-MI myocardium to evaluate the potential capacity of ephrinA1 to modulating EphA receptor activity to improve myocardial infarct healing. The team examines the heart from the level of cardiac function using echocardiography down to the cellular and molecular levels to resolve mechanistic questions.



Nasreen Vohra | vohran@ecu.edu Surgery, BSoM

The laboratory of Dr. Narseen Vohra in the division of Surgical Oncology is focused on "translational science." Dr. Vohra and her team are engaged in studying immune responses in cancer patients with the ultimate goal of developing and optimizing immunotherapies and systemic therapies that may be directly applied to patients. They are actively interrogating both tumor and lymph node specimens from patients with breast cancer to understand how an immune response to the tumor is orchestrated and how it evolves to either become pro-tumor or anti-tumor. Understanding how this occurs may allow the team to find ways to help the immune system be more effective at destroying cancer. Additional collaborations involve studying breast cancer metastasis, impact of obesity on breast density, and breast cancer and clinical outcomes in various cancer.



Yajiong (Lucky) Xue | xuey@ecu.edu Management Information Systems, COB

Dr. Yajiong (Lucky) Xue's research interests include IT strategy, IT governance, IT compliance, healthcare informatics, knowledge management, IT security, leadership management, decision making, and data analytics.



Li Yang | yangl@ecu.edu Internal Medicine, BSoM

The research in Dr. Li Yang's laboratory is focused on cancer biology, inflammation, and vascular biology. Dr. Yang and his team study a family of pH-sensing G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) that are activated by acidosis, a biochemical hallmark of the tissue microenvironment found in tumor, inflammation, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, renal disease, metabolic disease, and many other disorders. The lab's goal is to better understand the disease mechanisms and to identify therapeutic targets and biomarkers for disease prevention and treatment. In this regard, GPCRs are important pharmaceutical targets accounting for more than 30 percent of FDA approved drugs. In collaboration with other research groups, they are also evaluating the potential therapeutic effects of the pH-sensing GPCR small molecule modulators using preclinical animal models.



Jason Yao | yaoj@ecu.edu Engineering, CET

Dr. Jason Yao is interested in research in medical devices and sensors for non-hospital settings, along with novel sensors and control systems.



Ruby Yeh | Yehch14@ecu.edu Human Development and Family Science, HHP

Dr. Ruby Yeh's research areas include, but are not limited to, early learning exposure of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) in early childhood, pre-serve/in-service teachers' learning and training, creative teaching and learning, and parental involvement. As a new EOSA scholar, her research project focuses on inquiry-based learning and to promote science-processing skills in early childhood classrooms. Dr. Yeh's project goal is promoting early STEAM awareness through holistic and an innovative approach through engaging family and further transforming community and families together. Currently she is working with in-service and preservice teachers, young learners, and families in the local community.



Tonya Zeczycki | zeczyckit@ecu.edu Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, BSoM

The regulation of enzyme activity is fundamental to preventing metabolic and homeostatic chaos. Dysregulation of enzyme activity, either increased or decreased, often contributes to the development of disease. A colossal number of complex, multifunctional enzymes important to metabolic and cellular processes exhibit some form of regulation, be it through small-molecule effector binding, protein-protein interactions or the multi-enzyme complex formation. Dr. Tonya Zeczycki and her team are particularly interested in defining new models describing macromolecular allostery. Their lab uses biophysical methods to answer the question "How do protein structure, thermodynamics, and conformational changes dictate the regulation of enzyme activity?" in order to determine how enzyme regulation leads to the progression of metabolic (i.e. type 2 diabetes, metabolic disorder) and neurodegenerative diseases.

PARTICIPATING CLUSTER DIRECTORS



Len Annetta | annettal16@ecu.edu

Mathematics, Science and Instructional Technology Education, COE | Big Data & Analytics Cluster

Dr. Len Annetta is the Taft Distinguished Professor of Science Education at ECU and serves as the Co-Director of the university's newly established Big Data and Analytics Cluster. Annetta has won several external awards from the National Science Foundation to study Serious Education Games with underserved K-12 students. His most recent work revolves around augmented reality technologies and scientific visualization of big data from a distance



Dan Dickerson | dickersond15@ecu.edu MSITE/STEM CoRE, COE | STEAM Education Cluster

Dr. Daniel Dickerson, is an Associate Professor of Science Education in the Department of Mathematics, Science, and Instructional Technology Education. He is also the Coordinator of the STEM CoRE (Collaborative for Research in Education) at East Carolina University. His research focuses on the teaching and learning of earth and environmental science content, environmental education, and STEM teaching and learning. He is a former high school earth science teacher who has served as PI, Co-PI, or Evaluator on NOAA, NSF, NIH, U.S. Department of Education, IMLS, state, and foundation funded projects.



David Griffith | griffithd@ecu.edu Anthropology, THCAS | Marine & Coastal Systems Cluster

Dr. David Griffith is a Thomas Harriot College of Arts & Sciences Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and current Interim Director of the Institute for Coastal Science and Policy. His research interests include coastal communities, labor relations, economic anthropology, international migration and immigration, and refugee issues. He is currently working on projects investigating the emergence of sharing economies and cooperative relations in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and María in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and the impacts of Middle Eastern and African refugees on rural Germany. He has conducted multiple projects on guestworkers from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean working in the United States and Canada, as well as research on Traditional Ecological Knowledge among the Inupiaq of Kotzebue, Alaska, leadership and fisheries policy in commercial fishing families and communities across the U.S. Southeast and Gulf of Mexico, and the impacts of anthropogenic and weatherrelated disasters on coastal peoples. He is the author of eight books and over 100 peer reviewed articles, book chapters, book reviews, and other publications.

PARTICIPATING CLUSTER DIRECTORS



Keith Keene | keenek@ecu.edu Biology, THCAS | Precision Health Cluster

Dr. Keith Keene is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology and Center for Health Disparities. He has over 14 years of experience in molecular genetics and has collaborated on several genome-wide association studies (GWAS) of complex human diseases, including stroke, recurrent stroke, diabetes, and dyslipidemia. The Keene Laboratory utilizes cutting edge -Omics approaches (genetics, epigenetics, metabolomics, etc.) to interrogate heritable factors that contribute to disease and health disparities. The Keene Laboratory seeks to combine big -Omics data and Bioinformatics to accomplish the goals of precision medicine. These approaches will allow improved personalization of risk assessment and targeted prevention, address why particular disparities exist, and provide insight regarding one's ability to control manageable risk factors and likewise one's response to current treatment regimens.



Kim Larson | larsonk@ecu.edu Nursing Science, CON | Health Behavior Cluster

Dr. Kim Larson is an Associate Professor in the College of Nursing at East Carolina University. Her clinical expertise in international population health includes work in Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. As a nurse fluent in Spanish, she works closely with the Latino population in North Carolina through health departments, migrant health centers, and school-based health centers. Her research foci are community-based participatory research with Latino communities across the lifespan and sexual risk reduction interventions with Latino adolescents.



Shawn Moore | mooresha@ecu.edu Center for STEM Education, COE | STEAM Education Cluster

Dr. Shawn Moore is the Interim Director for the Center for Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education and is the co-director for the STEAM education research cluster (SERC). The SERC will function as an interdisciplinary collaborative resource and partner to support and serve institutional projects that focus on STEAM education directly or projects that have an educational component. The SERC will support faculty researchers who have an interest in interdisciplinary projects that prepare a pipeline of talented STEAM professionals, develop STEAM related tools and technologies to impact rural prosperity, and to negotiate research projects that may link to other clusters as well as to projects throughout the university. Research projects will be co-developed with input from leadership, core members, and the advisory council, and other key stakeholders.

ECU LEADERSHIP & REDE STAFF



Ron Mitchelson | mitchelsonr@ecu.edu

Ronald L. Mitchelson is currently the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at East Carolina University. He has been at ECU since 1999. He received his undergraduate degree in Geography at State University of New York in Buffalo. Ron received his MA and PhD degrees in Geography from The Ohio State University. Prior to his current position, Ron served as interim Vice Chancellor for Research, department chair (17 years), center director, and graduate coordinator. He served 13 years at the University of Georgia and seven years at Morehead State University in Kentucky. Mitchelson's various fields of instructional and research interests include transportation and geographic intelligence and location analysis. He has worked with agencies (CIA, DoD, USDOT, USEDA) and firms (Fedex, Lowes, Harris Teeter) to solve problems.



Sharon Paynter | paynters@ecu.edu

Dr. Sharon Paynter is the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement and Research, Director of Engagement and Outreach Scholars Academy, and Associate Professor of Political Science at ECU. She joined the ECU faculty in 2009. She received her PhD in Public Administration from North Carolina State University, her MS from the University of Denver, and her MPA and Bachelor's degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill. Paynter's research interests include hunger, poverty, and public policy.



Mary Farwell | farwellm@ecu.edu

Dr. Mary Farwell serves as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Director of Undergraduate Research, and Professor of Biology at ECU. Farwell received her doctorate in Biochemistry from the University of California, Berkeley. Farwell's research interests include gene regulation in cancer cells and STEM education.



Kathryn Verbanac | verbanack@ecu.edu

Dr. Kathryn Verbanac serves as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences, Director of Postdoctoral Affairs, and Professor of Surgery at ECU. Verbanac received her doctorate in Biochemistry from the University of Iowa. Verbanac's current breast cancer research focuses on the tissue microenvironment and immune signatures at metastatic sites.

ECU LEADERSHIP & REDE STAFF



Brandon Morrison | morrisonb17@ecu.edu

Dr. Brandon Morrison joined REDE in October 2017 as Director of Strategic Initiatives, where he will take the lead on the development of multi-institutional partnerships and business relations that support economic development and research activities. He's also tasked with supporting the advancement and administration of ECU's pan-university research clusters. He received his BS in Environmental Science from Franklin & Marshall College and his Master's and PhD degrees in Environmental Management and Earth and Ocean Sciences, respectively, from the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. Prior to joining ECU he managed global sustainability for the world's largest developer and operator of Integrated Resorts.



Matt Smith | smithmatt17@ecu.edu

Matt Smith, REDE Communications Specialist, spent seven years in the newspaper industry before joining the division. Smith earned his MA in Technology and Communication from UNC-Chapel Hill. Smith oversees REDE's communication efforts with internal and external media outlets, while operating the division's social media platforms.



Paige Middleton | middletonp17@ecu.edu

Paige Middleton is the Visual Arts Specialist for the Division of Research, Economic Development and Engagement. Before joining ECU in September of 2017, she worked as an image processor for Gander Mountain and Overton's as well as a graphic designer for a local printer, Acculink. Paige has a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from ECU.



Cassie Keel | keelc15@ecu.edu

Cassie Keel is the Administrative Support Associate for the Office of Community Engagement and Research. She received her Bachelor's of Science in Psychology from East Carolina University. Cassie assists with the daily functions and administrative needs of OCER.