JAX STATE CHPW NEWSLETTER

Fall 2026

The Jax State CHPW has been busy this fall! Read all about the news below!

Welcome New Faculty & Staff



Dr. Aleah Brock
Associate Professor/Speech Language Pathology Program Director



Dr. Nick Buzzelli
Assistant Professor Sports Management & Sports Industry



Mrs. Jessica Snider
Instructor, Athletic Training



Ms. Hannah Simmons
Administrative Assistant to the Associate Dean



Ms. Leigh Anne Shirley
Instructor, Nursing



Dr. Amanda Southwell
Assistant Professor, Nursing



Mrs. Hannah Tucker
Director of Clinical Services



Ms. Stacey Wood
Administrative Associate to the Dean



Dr. Hunter Watts
Assistant Professor, Nursing

Not Pictured: Ms. Jalyn Bopp, Instructor, Nursing

Updates

College of Health Professions and Wellness (CHPW) Update:

NEW Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology at Jax State



The Jacksonville State University Board of Trustees has approved a new Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology, expanding the university's health professions offerings and creating new opportunities for students interested in careers helping individuals with communication and swallowing disorders.

To continue reading this exciting story click the picture above!

School of Nursing Update:

Jacksonville State University School of Nursing Reaches Full Capacity in BSN Pre-Licensure Program



The Jacksonville State University School of Nursing is proud to announce that its pre-licensure undergraduate nursing program reached full capacity with 120 newly admitted nursing students in Fall 2026. This marks the first full-capacity cohort since the COVID-19 pandemic, representing an important milestone in the continued growth and strength of the program. The return to full enrollment reflects renewed interest in nursing education at JSU and the School of Nursing's commitment to preparing highly qualified graduates to meet the healthcare needs of Alabama and beyond. The BSN program combines rigorous classroom instruction with clinical experiences, simulation, and skills-based learning to prepare students for professional nursing practice.

In addition to the growth of the traditional BSN program, the School of Nursing continues to expand accelerated and flexible pathways for nurses seeking additional education. A new faster master's option provides students with an opportunity to progress more efficiently into graduate nursing education, building on JSU's fully online MSN offerings in Population Health Nursing and

its concentrations in Nursing Education and Emergency Management. The school has also introduced a two-semester STEP option, providing an accelerated pathway for eligible registered nurses to complete the RN-to-BSN requirements. STEP is designed to recognize the knowledge and experience of practicing RNs while providing a flexible online pathway to the BSN. In addition, the BSN-DNP has added a second entry point offering more admission opportunities for students. Together, these initiatives demonstrate JSU Nursing's continued commitment to expanding educational opportunities and creating pathways that allow students and practicing nurses to advance their education and careers more efficiently.

Check out all of our program options at School of Nursing - School of Nursing

Stay Tuned!!! More to come on the Jax State School of Nursing 60th Anniversary celebration in Fall 2027

Kinesiology Department Update:

Jax State Public Health Partners with Operation Wipe Out



The Jacksonville State University Public Health Program is proud to support OPERATION WIPE OUT, a statewide initiative dedicated to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health threat in Alabama through education, HPV vaccination, screening, and follow-up care. OPERATION WIPE OUT brings together partners from across academic, healthcare, nonprofit, and public health sectors to improve access to lifesaving prevention services and reduce cervical cancer disparities across the state.

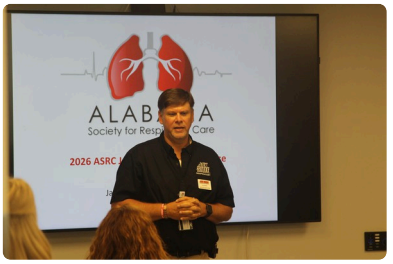
Through student engagement, community outreach, and public health advocacy, Jax State Public Health contributes to efforts that increase awareness of HPV prevention, promote routine screening, and support evidence-based strategies to improve women's health outcomes. The partnership reflects the program's commitment to workforce development, community engagement, and advancing population health throughout Alabama.

Together, Jax State Public Health and OPERATION WIPE OUT are helping build healthier communities and working toward a future where cervical cancer is no longer a public health threat in Alabama.

Check out our Department of Kinesiology's programs at Kinesiology - Kinesiology.

Respiratory Therapy Department Update:

Jax State Respiratory Therapy Department hosted ASRC Mini-Conference



Jax State RT was honored to host colleagues from across Alabama and neighboring Georgia for a day of learning, collaboration, and professional connection. Thank you to all the attendees, presenters, and supporters who helped make this event such a

success. We're proud to support Alabama RTs and look forward to continuing to grow and strengthen our professional community.
Check out the Jax State Respiratory Department:
Respiratory Therapy - Respiratory Therapy

Alumni Spotlight

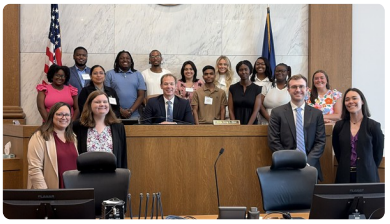
REACH WORKS Fellow



Congratulations to Isobel Spray, one of our Sports Management Alums from York, England, was selected as a REACH WORKS Fellow for the PGA of America. This is opportunity allows Issie to support and execute philanthropic initiatives for the charitable foundations of their respective PGA Sections. This includes assisting with marketing, communications, and fundraising activities, as well as PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere) programming for Veterans and junior golf initiatives such as PGA Jr. League and Drive, Chip & Putt.

Student Spotlight

LEAD (Leadership, Education, and Development) Program



Two students from Jacksonville State University's College of Health Professions and Wellness recently completed the LEAD (Leadership, Education and Development) Program, a partnership between the Calhoun County Area Chamber & Visitors Center and Jacksonville State University that helps students develop leadership skills, build professional networks, and gain a deeper understanding of the Calhoun County community.

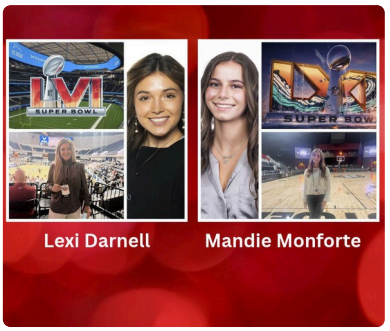
Paige Glaspie, a Master of Public Health (MPH) student , and Joy Lawrence, a Nursing student, were selected to participate in the program alongside undergraduate and graduate students representing a variety of academic disciplines across the university.

The LEAD program provides juniors, seniors, and graduate students with an immersive experience focused on leadership development, civic engagement, career readiness, and community awareness. Throughout the program, participants interacted with local leaders, businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and community partners while exploring issues related to economic development, quality of life, and opportunities within the region.

One of the program's experiential learning activities was a poverty simulation conducted in partnership with United Way of East Central Alabama, giving participants a firsthand perspective on the challenges faced by individuals and families living with limited financial resources. The

experience encouraged students to consider the social and economic factors that influence health, well-being, and community outcomes.

Two Sport Management Students Selected to Volunteer at the Super Bowl



Big things are happening in Sport Management! Two of our students have been selected to volunteer at the Super Bowl in Los Angeles this February!

Meet our outstanding students:
Mandie Monforte – Senior Sport Management student
Lexi Darnell – Junior Sport Management student

We're proud to see our SMR students gaining valuable hands-on experience and representing the program on such a big stage! Best of luck to Mandie and Lexi!

Student Scholarship and Recognition Corner

Cocky Cares



At Jacksonville State University's Cocky Cares for Calhoun County Health Fair, held October 6–7 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.

National Respiratory Care Week Oct 25 - Oct 31



October 25–31, we celebrated the incredible respiratory therapists and future respiratory therapists who help patients breathe easier every day. From hospitals and emergency rooms to critical care and beyond, respiratory therapists play a vital role in patient care—often being there during some of life's most critical moments.

Nexus Athletic Training Kits

Our Jax State Athletic Training students are officially geared up for clinicals with their new Nexus Kits!

These kits are more than just supplies; they're tools our students will use as they continue developing their hands-on skills, caring for patients, and growing into confident future athletic trainers. A HUGE thank you to Nexus for our sponsorship and everyone else that continues to invest in our students and their clinical education. Your support gives our students the resources they need to learn, practice, and succeed both in the classroom and out in the field.



Public Health Students Make an Impact Through Community-Based Experiences



This fall, Jacksonville State University's Public Health Program is proud to support students as they apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings through internship and applied practice experiences. These partnerships provide valuable opportunities for students to address community health needs while developing professional skills and workforce readiness.

MPH student Eden Sample is completing her Applied Practice Experience (APEx) at Quality of Life Health Services, focusing on public health dentistry and oral health promotion. BPH student Tyra Watkins is also serving at Quality of Life Health Services, engaging in public health administrative and health promotion activities. Additional internship placements include Jakayliah Paige with the Boys & Girls Club of East Central Alabama, Jessica Fuller with the Jacksonville Christian Outreach Center, and Jakya Willie with Grace Klein Community in Birmingham.

Through these experiences, students are engaging in community assessment, health promotion, program planning, stakeholder engagement, and service initiatives that address important public health issues throughout Alabama. The Public Health Program is grateful for the community partners who invest in student learning while helping prepare the next generation of public health professionals.

Jax State Public Health and NMDP Student Organization Host Upcoming Donor Registry Drives



The **Jacksonville State University Public Health Program** and the **Jax State NMDP Student Organization** partnered to host **NMDP donor registry drives**, providing students, faculty, staff, and community members an opportunity to help save lives.

NMDP (formerly Be The Match) is a global nonprofit organization that connects patients with blood cancers and other serious blood disorders to life-saving blood stem cell and marrow donors. Many patients are unable to find a matching donor within their family and depend on volunteer donors registered through NMDP.

Individuals interested in joining the registry can learn more about the donation process, eligibility requirements, and the critical need for a diverse pool of potential donors. Every new registrant increases the possibility that a patient searching for a match will receive a second chance at life. For additional information about NMDP, visit https://www.nmdp.org.

Together, Jax State Public Health and the Jax State NMDP Student Organization are working to raise awareness, expand the donor registry, and help bring hope to patients and families in need.

Cherokee Rock Village



Students in Dr. Gregor Kay's Outdoor Education class spent the day at Cherokee Rock Village in Cherokee County Alabama, helping construct approximately one-tenth of a mile of new recreational trail as part of a hands-on service-learning project.

The project brought together *Jacksonville State University, Yellowhammer Outdoor Development,* and *Cherokee Rock Village*. Students worked alongside Yellowhammer Executive Director Jared Carter, Regional Coordinator Christy Cochran, and Cherokee Rock Village Park Director Andrew Bieber.

Yellowhammer Outdoor Development supports outdoor recreation through trail development, kayak landings/launches and related projects. Cherokee Rock Village is best known for its world-class rock climbing, distinctive rock formations, scenic views, and other outdoor recreation opportunities, making it an ideal setting for this partnership.

Throughout the day, students learned the principles of sustainable trail construction, including how trail alignment, slope, drainage, and soil conditions influence environmental impacts and long-term maintenance. They also gained practical experience using professional trail-building tools and techniques.

The work involved clearing vegetation, preparing the trail corridor, cutting a stable walking surface into the hillside, and shaping the trail to allow water to drain naturally. These practices help minimize erosion while creating trails that can be enjoyed for years to come.

"It went really well! I look forward to the next one!" said Cochran.

"Come back any time — next time for fun!" said Bieber.

The project also demonstrated one of the many settings in which Outdoor Education can take place. This semester, students explored how outdoor education occurs in diverse environments and through different approaches, including adventure-based education, natural interpretation, and environmental education. Working at Cherokee Rock Village allowed them to experience these concepts in a real-world setting while connecting classroom learning with outdoor recreation, stewardship, and community engagement.

For the students, the experience offered something that cannot be fully replicated in a classroom: the opportunity to learn by doing while leaving behind something of lasting value. In addition, they can take pride in knowing that their hard work helped build a section of trail that will serve visitors for many years to come.

Faculty and Staff Recognition

Congratulations to our CHPW Staff on your outstanding service to Jax State

We are proud to celebrate these incredible members of the College of Health Professions and Wellness for their dedication, commitment, and years of outstanding service to Jacksonville State University!



Dr. Betsy Gulledge
Associate Dean/Chief Nursing Administrator
20 years of service



Mrs. Tammy Johnson
Director of Academic Resources
20 years of service



Dr. Gina Mabrey
Department Head, Kinesiology
20 years of service



Mr. Ed Goodwin
Department Head and Associate Professor, Respiratory Therapy
10 years of service



Mrs. Christy Mobbs
Paraprofessional Advisor, Academic & Career Advising
10 years of service

Jax State Professor Jennifer Burgett Earns National Outstanding Teacher Award



From the Red and White

Dr. Jennifer Savage Burgett's "ability to transform complex scientific concepts into engaging, clinically relevant, and interactive learning experiences" has earned her national recognition.

Read the full article by Brett Buckner here:
https://www.jsu.edu/news/articles/2026/08/jax-state-professor-jennifer-burgett-earns-national-outstanding-teacher-award.html

Congratulations Dr. Dave Yeager

We are excited to celebrate Dave Yeager, adjunct professor in the Jacksonville State University Master's in Athletic Training Program, on his election to the At-Large 3 position with the Alabama Athletic Trainers' Association (ALATA)!

Dave's dedication to the athletic training profession, leadership, and commitment to educating future athletic trainers make him an incredible asset to our program and the profession. We are proud of him, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact he will continue to make across Alabama!



Faculty Research and Recognition

Dr. Kelley Swatzell publishes



Kelley E. Swatzell, Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Public Health Program at Jax State, recently co-authored the article, *"An Evidence-Based Master of Public Health Curriculum,"* published in *Public Health Reports*. The paper describes a systematic approach to developing MPH curricula that align with workforce needs, accreditation standards, and evidence-based educational practices. By examining evidence-based approaches to curriculum design, the authors provide insights for institutions seeking to align public health education with evolving workforce needs. The work reflects a shared commitment to continuous improvement in public health education and workforce preparation.

Richardson, M. B., Chambliss, J. T., Austin, E. L., Brisendine, A. E., Fifolt, M., McCormick, L., Pavela, G., Preskitt, J. K., Swatzell, K. E., & Erwin, P. C. An evidence-based Master of Public Health curriculum. Public Health Reports.2026;141(5):737-747. doi:10.1177/00333549261446616 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42218773/

In Loving Memory



Dr. Laura Walker

Jacksonville State University mourns the loss of Dr. Laura Pruitt Walker, Professor of Nursing in the College of Health Professions and Wellness, who passed away in April of this year.

Dr. Walker served Jax State with dedication for more than 18 years, first teaching in undergraduate nursing programs from 2008 until joining the graduate faculty in 2019. Over the course of her career, she made a lasting impact on students across the MSN and DNP programs, sharing her expertise in psychiatric nursing, population health, leadership, and nursing education. She also served as MSN Program Coordinator from 2019 to 2023, helping guide the program and support student success.

A nurse for nearly three decades, Dr. Walker brought a wealth of real-world experience to the classroom, having served in a variety of leadership roles including charge nurse, house supervisor, and nurse manager. Her commitment to teaching, mentorship, and research shaped the careers of countless students and strengthened the School of Nursing.

“Dr. Laura Walker made a lasting difference in the lives of our students and in the strength of our nursing programs,” said Jax State President Dr. Don C. Killingsworth, Jr. “She brought experience, compassion, and a deep commitment to teaching that shaped the next generation of nurses and leaders in healthcare. She will be remembered not only for her contributions to Jax State, but for the care and mentorship she showed to so many. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and loved ones.”

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dr. Walker was known for her deep care for others—her students, colleagues, and family. Jacksonville State extends its deepest condolences to Dr. Walker's family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time

Jax State College of Health Professions and Wellness
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