

Continuing Medical Education is among best in class nationally

By Larry Wood

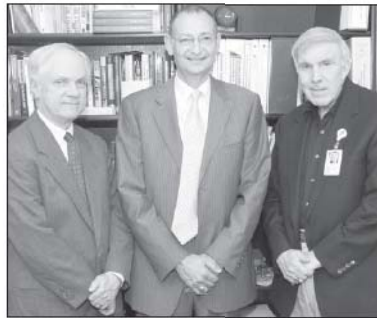
For the second time in a row, the USC School of Medicine-Palmetto Health Richland Continuing Medical Education Organization has accomplished two significant achievements.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), a national agency based in Chicago, has accredited the program for the maximum six years instead of the usual four and awarded accreditation "with commendation." Of the 729 programs the ACCME accredits across the country, only 6 or 7 percent receive accreditation with commendation. The School of Medicine is the only such program in the state to have its continuing medical education program accredited for six years.

"It's wonderful to have the recognition," said Morris J. Blachman, assistant dean for Continuing Medical Education and Faculty Development. "This achievement recognizes that the work we are doing is high-quality work."

The difference between a four-year and a six-year accreditation and receiving or not receiving commendation involves two different compliance levels. The USCSOM-PHR CME Organization not only met 15 "must have" criteria that everyone must meet but also excelled at seven other "stretch goals." The additional criteria address the extent to which a CME organization is integrated in their sponsoring institutions to achieve systemic change and improvements in quality of patient care.

"If you are just putting on programs on your own, that's a good thing, but if you're able to engage the wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in continuing medical education, you enhance your program," Blachman said. "In our case, for example, on our steering committee, we have a member from DHEC, someone from the Department of



Richard Hoppmann, left, dean of the School of Medicine; Morris J. Blachman, assistant dean, Continuing Medical Education and Faculty Development, in the School of Medicine; and James Reynolds, senior vice president for quality medical education and research and chief academic officer for Palmetto Health Richland celebrate continuing education's six-year accreditation with commendation.

Mental Health, representatives from Baptist and Richland hospitals, people in quality, and the key leadership from Palmetto Health. We've been able to demonstrate engagement with our work environment, and that's why we received commendation."

The Continuing Medical Education Organization provides strategic value to the USC School of Medicine and Palmetto Health Richland.

"We help promote quality medical performance," Blach-

man said. "We assist physicians in their quest for life-long learning, and we assist physicians in their ability to better serve their patients."

Receiving accreditation for six years is not only an honor but also saves the University money. "The accreditation process takes well over a year and requires a substantial amount of time and work," Blachman said. "But by being awarded two extra years, we will only have to go through the accreditation process twice every 12 years, unlike most schools, with four-year accreditations, who will go through the process three times."

Blachman credited the continuing medical education staff for making such achievements possible. Current staff members are Elizabeth S. Hipp, administrative assistant; LouAnn Morris, director of Training and Development; Donna D. Ray, director of Faculty Development; Cheryl L. Sniegoin, administrative assistant; Lauren Vincent, program coordinator; and Nancy L. Williams, administrative coordinator.

"The entire office was involved in the accreditation process," Blachman said. "It took teamwork."

In a letter announcing the accreditation, the chief executive of ACCME wrote: "The ACCME congratulates you and commends your organization for not only meeting ACCME's accreditation requirements, but for demonstrating that yours is a learning organization and a change agent for the physicians you serve. You have demonstrated an engagement with your environment in support of physician learning and change that is a part of a system for quality improvement."

"It's nice to have someone outside—on a national level—take a really long, hard look at us and say we're doing a great job," Blachman said.

Going with the flow Scientists study climate and sea level change effects on major river

By Chris Horn

Imagine turning on the faucet and pouring yourself a tall, cool glass ... of saltwater.

That's what happened in 2002 when drought conditions turned the Pee Dee River's normal flow of freshwater into a trickle. The reduced river flow allowed Atlantic Ocean seawater to move upstream and into municipal intake pipes.

Climate change, rising sea levels, and increasing demand for freshwater could make that unwanted salty intrusion a more frequent scenario in the future. That's why a new study by Carolina scientists will be important for municipal water managers who rely on rivers for water supply.

"There's not much anyone can do about weather and climate change, but we can think in terms of adaptation," said Dan Tufford, a biology associate professor at Carolina who is leading a team of researchers in a study of the Yadkin-Pee Dee River basin, which feeds into Winyah Bay on the South Carolina coast. "We want to give water planners the ability to make informed decisions based on scientific predictions."

The research, funded by a two-year grant from the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium, is examining the multiple factors that affect the Pee Dee River's flow, including seasonal rainfall, summer heat and evaporation, agricultural irrigation wells that reduce nearby stream flow, rising freshwater demand, and rising sea levels. The study is a microcosm of what's happening at similar coastal watersheds around the country in an era of climate change.

"Even with normal precipitation patterns, there will be a net decrease in river flow at the coast. That's because water demand is rising—which removes freshwater from the river—and sea levels are rising, which pushes saltwater further upstream," said Kirstin Dow, a geography associate professor and co-principal investigator on the study.

What is a coastal water manager to do?

"They need to make informed decisions, but climate modeling isn't quite up to the task; neither is watershed modeling," Dow said.

For coastal towns that depend on adequate river flow for freshwater, moving intake pipes further upstream to avoid saltwater intrusion from the ocean is a possible but very costly solution. With a refined climate and watershed model, water managers could potentially leave water intakes in place and simply turn them off when conditions point to brackish or saltwater intrusion in the river.

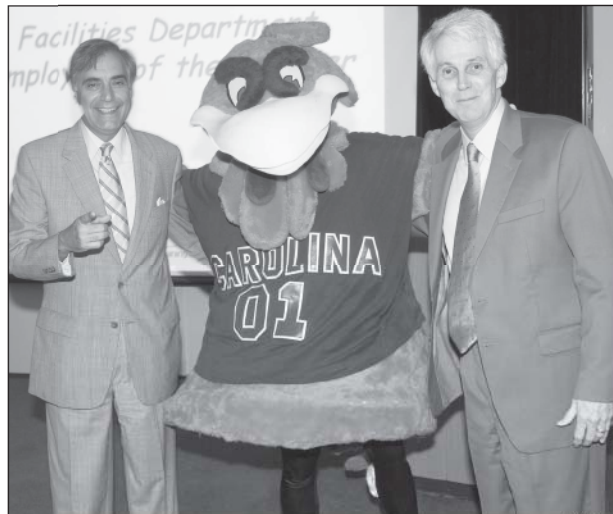
"What we especially want from a climate model is a forecast of the persistence of dry periods, and the models are not quite able to provide that," said Greg Carbone, a geography associate professor and co-principal investigator. "There is uncertainty with each step, and the best we can do for now is to offer a range of plausible scenarios."

Carbone, Dow, and Tufford hope to make incremental improvements in water flow models for the Pee Dee River and pass along the information to municipal decision makers.

"This is one small piece of a larger issue," Tufford said. "There are implications for population growth in coastal areas and the growing demand for freshwater in areas that are hard pressed to supply it under certain conditions."

USC grad student vies for dream wedding

Want to help make a USC graduate student's wedding dream come true? Alex Fleming, a master's student in public health, and her fiancé, Trey Delage, are one of four couples who are finalists to receive a holiday season wedding at Mitchell House and Gardens this December. The contest, sponsored by WIS-TV and Mitchell House, will be decided with online voting, which ends at noon Aug. 10. To see the story and cast a vote, go to www.wistv.com/Global/category.asp?C=172216.



Cocky, with a little help from President Pastides and Ted Moore, vice president for finance and planning and interim provost, stirred up some excitement and entertained facilities employees at the quarterly call meeting July 22.

Reorganization puts campus infrastructure under new VP, aligns finance and planning

By Larry Wood

President Harris Pastides has reorganized a number of offices related to the campus' physical infrastructure under a new vice president position.

Tentatively titled the vice president for facilities and campus management, the as-yet unnamed person will be responsible for facilities; law enforcement and safety; health and safety; transportation, including parking; and sustainability. The University soon will launch a national search to fill the position. Until then, Ted Moore, vice president for finance and planning and interim provost, will oversee those areas. On July 22, President Pastides and Moore, accompanied by Cocky, appeared at the quarterly Facilities Call meeting to introduce the facilities staff to the new organization.

"Each of these areas has clear responsibility for an important aspect of the University infrastructure," Moore said. "That's why it's important to put them all under one organization."

Mike Koman has been named director of sustainability. New associate vice presidents will head the other four areas:

- Ernie Ellis, law enforcement and safety
- Derrick Huggins, transportation
- Tom Quasney, facilities
- Tom Syfert, health and safety.

Before the reorganization, those offices reported to the University's chief financial officer (CFO) Rick Kelly until his July 1 retirement.

"We've taken the physical infrastructure of the campus and put it under a new vice president, and the CFO position has been combined with the strategic planning function," Moore said. "We've always had a good linkage between finance and planning, but this reorganization, by aligning these two functions, makes that connection stronger."

"It's particularly important now given where we are financially, not just the world but especially here in South Carolina. We have to be more careful than ever with laying out very well thought out strategic plans and making every dollar go as far as it can."

Moore became vice president for finance and planning July 1. The finance and planning office now includes Bill Hogue, vice president for information technology, and associate vice presidents Leslie Brunelli (finance and planning), Ed Walton (resource planning), and Helen Zeigler (business affairs). The University's government relations officers, Shirley Mills and Casey Martin, also join this group.

Moore will continue as interim provost until Aug. 20 when Michael Amiridis, who had been dean of the College of Engineering and Computing, assumes responsibilities as provost.