



# College of Health Sciences Newsletter

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Duo seeks success on cellular level

By Irvin B. Harrell



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Please welcome Tyisha Heriveaux to the staff of the College of Health Sciences. Heriveaux, who arrived at Old Dominion University in July, will serve as the undergraduate program coordinator for the School of Nursing.

Heriveaux received her Bachelors in English Arts at Hampton University and her Masters of Business Administration at American InterContinental University. She hails from Long Branch, N.J., and says she felt like a good fit for her new job.

“I have always wanted to work in higher education environment,” she said. “ODU is a good school and I have many friends who either attended the university or worked for the university. Everyone that I have spoken with about ODU has only had nice and pleasant things to say about the school.”

When she’s not on the job, Heriveaux enjoys spending time with her husband and 2-year-old son, sin,

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# Duo seeks success on cellular level

55 to 65 percent of women who inherit the BRCA1 mutation will develop breast cancer by age 70 and 39 percent will develop ovarian cancer by the same age.

Many of the mutations are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer for women and men, as well as several other types of cancer. These mutations are present in every cell in the body and can be passed from generation to generation. But not everyone who inherits a mutation gets cancer. Other genetic, environmental and

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Dominion in 2013 as an assistant professor and director of the graduate program in molecular diagnostics at the School of Medical Diagnostic & Translational Sciences.

Sachs received his Ph.D. in human and molecular genetics from the Medical College of Virginia in 2010. He was recruited by ODU in the summer of 2013 by Roy Ogle, chair of the School of Medical Diagnostic & Translational Sciences. At that time, Sachs was working at LifeNet Health in Virginia Beach, a non-profit organ procurement organization providing donation systems for organ transplants.

Sachs says the grant money's importance is threefold. "It gives us the money necessary to carry these studies over into National Institutes of Health funding, it's the first CHRB grant for ODU, and the topic of the grant is an underrepresented subject matter in cancer research," he said.

Bruno and Sachs are a dynamic duo of sorts for the school, and their collaborative qualities have made them exemplary researchers, Ogle said.

"Regenerative medicine is highly collaborative or interprofessional ...," Ogle said. "Rob and Patrick's skill sets complement one another nicely. They have also begun to collaborate with an MD from EVMS, Dr. Vivian Wu. For our school, they demonstrate the power of inter-professional scholarship, which is a great example for colleagues and students."

### **A change in research philosophy**

The signing of the National Cancer Act of 1971 by then-President Richard Nixon tolled the beginning of the nation's war on cancer.

Much of the war was waged from the presupposition that cancer was a disease caused by a rogue cell that divided and multiplied until it destroyed its host.

However, almost 10 years before the U.S. launched its war, Dr. D.W. Smithers – who was then at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London – proclaimed: "Cancer is no more a disease of cells than a traffic jam is a disease of cars. A lifetime of study of the internal-combustion engine would not help anyone understand our traffic problems."

It was not until recently that cancer research has taken a turn to address Smithers' once-controversial observations. Bruno and Sachs have made Smithers' words their mantra.

"Breast cancer research to date has largely focused on the internal, genetic changes that lead to uncontrolled cellular growth and function," Sachs said. "A unique aspect of our project is to refocus on the signaling controls found in the microenvironment surrounding the cells. This understudied subject could allow for us to derive better methods of predicting tumor emergence leading to advanced preventative screening."









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Rebecca Poston, who has been a lecturer with Old Dominion University's School of Nursing since 2010 and an assistant professor since January 2015, prides herself in having the "dream job."

Besides teaching nursing students and doing research in the College of Health Sciences, she also works as a pediatric nurse practitioner at Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters (CHKD).

"Not only do I get to work in an educational setting, but CHKD allows me to continue engagement with patients and families in a face-to-face, real-time way and that to me is a priority in terms of staying abreast of new modes of treatment and technology and what's happening on the ground," she said.

But her dedication to healthcare doesn't stop there. Poston was recently appointed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe to the Virginia Board of Nursing, where she will be able to have an impact on the future on nursing in the state of Virginia. The four-year, prestigious appointment was a welcomed surprise for Poston.

Poston, who is married to Norfolk's Commissioner of



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# All Smiles

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