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59th Medical Wing: Air Force's premier medical wing welcomes new Commander

JBSA NEWS | Sept. 12, 2023. By Senior Airman Melody Bordeaux and Tech. Sgt. Tory Patterson 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs. Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, TX

Members of the Air Force's sole medical wing reflected on achievements of the past two years, as well as the team's readiness for the future during a change of command ceremony on Sept. 6, 2023, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

Lt. Gen. Brian Robinson, commander of Air Education and Training Command, presided over the ceremony in which Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Harrell took command of the 59th Medical Wing. The outgoing commander is Brig. Gen. Jeannine M. Ryder.

During the ceremony, Robinson outlined the wing's many responsibilities and highlighted achievements.



Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Harrell (middle) assumes command of the 59th Medical Wing with a ceremonial hand-off of the unit guidon from Lt. Gen. Brian S. Robinson, commander of Air Education and Training Command (left), during a change of command ceremony at Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Sept. 6, 2023. As the commander of the 59th MDW, he commands the Air Force Medical Service's largest healthcare, medical education and readiness platform comprised of six groups with a staff of 8,400 personnel executing a \$317 million budget, the wing provides 900,000 clinic visits, 18,000 surgical procedures and supports more than 300 worldwide deployments annually. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Melody Bordeaux)

"In periods of calm, in periods of natural response, and in preparation for periods of great conflict, you have one of the most sacred missions - the provision of physical and mental healthcare for the men and women of the United States Air Force," Robinson said. "The incredible 59th Medical Wing team delivered safe, quality care to 258,000 beneficiaries across the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center and 11 other clinics throughout the San Antonio community. Truly, as the face of the medical expertise and care for our people, the Airmen of this wing represent some of the most professional and dedicated members of our services.

"Harrell is no stranger to Air Education and Training Command, having served at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, as the commander for the 81st Medical Group and Keesler Medical Center, from 2014 to 2016, and then as the Headquarters AETC command surgeon at JBSA-Randolph, Texas, from 2016 to 2018.

"The Department of the Air Force, and more broadly, the DOD, deserves and rightly expects from us to be ready to deliver combat medical capability and humanitarian relief anywhere in the world at a moment's notice," Harrell said. "We have a mission to accomplish, and many of them are no-fail. We will execute those missions effectively."

Harrell's most recent assignment was as the commander of the Air Force Medical Readiness Agency at Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia.

"After 25 years in the Air Force medical community, you've arrived to lead what has been and will prove to be one of the most impactful organizations in the lives of millions," Robinson said in his remarks to Harrell. "The changing nature of the global strategic landscape is going to bring unprecedented challenges in the near and distant future. Under your thoughtful leadership and stewardship, I have no doubt that the 59th Medical Wing will continue to flourish and innovate, with tenacity and a focus on what's most important - our Airmen and their families.

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"The 59th MDW is comprised of six distinct groups located across San Antonio and is the Air Force's premier healthcare, medical education and research, and readiness wing. Most of the wing's military personnel are assigned to one of several readiness teams, building blocks to form expeditionary medical support hospitals and several specialized units, including Critical Care Air Transport Teams.



Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Harrell delivers his first remarks as commander of the 59th Medical Wing during a wing change of command ceremony Sept. 6, 2023, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. As the commander of the 59th MDW, he commands the Air Force Medical Service's largest healthcare, medical education and readiness platform comprised of six groups with a staff of 8,400 personnel executing a \$317 million budget, the wing

The wing has the largest medical mobility commitment in the U.S. Air Force and maintains about 1,250 mobility positions. At any one time, there are about 100 medics deployed worldwide, executing a joint U.S. mission in support of global operations. Outreach teams are regularly dispatched all over the globe to respond to emergencies, assist in DOD contingency missions, and reinforce readiness training through real-world civil and humanitarian assistance missions.

In cooperation with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, the wing provides a wide array of training programs ranging from general surgery to emergency medical services administration. At any given time, there are roughly 900 residents enrolled in 37 graduate medical education programs, of which 60 percent are Air Force members. The 59th MDW is the largest of 15 clinical training sites in the Air Force, graduating an average of 750 officers and enlisted students in various dental and allied health programs each year.

At nearby JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, about 1,600 warrior medics work side-by-side with their Army counterparts to provide patient care at Brooke Army Medical Center. BAMC is the DOD's largest inpatient medical facility and the 59th's highly specialized trauma surgeons staff the defense department's only joint service level 1 trauma center in the United States.

Ryder, during her tenure oversaw the historical activation of the San Antonio Market - a unified military medical system focused on improving access to healthcare - and led 14,000 team members in support of about 260,000 beneficiaries. Her next assignment is in Falls Church, Virginia.

NAMRU San Antonio welcomes new Commanding Officer

JBSA NEWS | Aug. 7, 2023. By Burrell Parmer Navy Medical Research Unit San Antonio Public Affairs. Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, TX.

A new commanding officer took command of Navy Medical Research Unit San Antonio during a Change of Command Ceremony held at the Fort Sam Houston Theatre Aug. 4.

During the ceremony, Capt. Gerald DeLong, Medical Service Corps, relinquished command to Capt. Jennifer Buechel, Nurse Corps.

Commanding NAMRU San Antonio since May 2021, DeLong took command during the COVID-19 pandemic with limited and or suspended research projects with less than 50 percent facilities occupancy for unit personnel. DeLong led the command out of the pandemic and into full operations while regaining the confidence of research sponsors.



Capt. Robert Hawkins, director, J3/5/7, Defense Health Agency (DHA) and director, U.S. Navy Nurse Corps (NC), served as the presiding officer during a Change of Command Ceremony held at the Fort Sam Houston Theatre where Capt. Gerald DeLong, Medical Service Corps, of Belvidere, Ill., relinquished command of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to Capt. Jennifer Buechel, NC, of Woodhaven, Mich. NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under NMRU in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

Capt. William Deniston, MSC, commander, Naval Medical Research Command presided over the ceremony and Capt. Robert Hawkins, director, J3/5/7, Defense Health Agency and director, U.S. Navy Nurse Corps, served as the guest speaker. "I have had the privilege of receiving multiple tours of NAMRU San Antonio over my career, not just since I've been the commander of NMRC, but several times over the past two decades," Deniston said. "The amazing work conducted here never ceases to amaze me." According to Deniston, today is not only a Change of Command but also the celebration of the incredible work of the NAMRU San Antonio staff under the leadership of DeLong.

Remarking on his tenure as commanding officer, DeLong spoke on the uniqueness of the command and its personnel. "Our diverse makeup includes military, civilian, and contractors," DeLong said. "Although we are organized in separate directorates...their expertise often spans many of our research and business lines, and that gives NAMRU San Antonio a deep bench to answer many complex and integrated research questions." According to DeLong, there are consistencies that can be found among all NAMRU San Antonio's mission accomplishments which are resilience, teamwork and spirit of the NAMRU San Antonio crew. "Whether the challenges are minor or major, we find our way to accomplish the mission," DeLong said. "Teamwork and resilience come easier because of the spirit of our individuals and the collective group spirit to care for each other that is resident at this command." Directing his remarks to Buechel, DeLong stated, "You will be leading the command at a very exciting time with many new potential research projects visible on the horizon or just over it. The command will benefit greatly

from your passion for research, relationships already established with research leaders, and prior leadership experience with a medical research command."

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Capt. Jennifer Buechel, Nurse Corps, of Woodhaven, Mich., speaks to Sailors, Soldiers, and guests after assuming command of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio from Capt. Gerald DeLong, Medical Service Corps (MSC), of Belvidere, Ill., during a Change of Command Ceremony held at the Fort Sam Houston Theatre. Capt. William Deniston, Medical Service Corps, commander, Naval Medical Research Command (NMRC) presided over the ceremony and Capt. Robert Hawkins, director, J3/5/7, Defense Health Agency (DHA) and director, U.S. Navy Nurse Corps, served as the guest speaker. NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under NMRC in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

Buechel, who previously served as the executive officer of Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut, said it was a great honor to serve as the new commanding officer. "I am humbled by the opportunity to lead such dedicated professionals, and I am excited to embark upon this journey as we continue our mission of advancing medical research and innovation for the benefit of our nation's warfighters." Buechel stated to achieve innovation, the command must focus on three guiding principles: people, mission, and culture.

"As we embark on this journey together, I have the utmost confidence in the collective talent, dedication, and resilience of our unit," said Buechel. "I am inspired by the extraordinary work I have witnessed thus far, and I am honored and privileged to be entrusted with the responsibility of leading NAMRU San Antonio."

NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap-driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under NMRC in Silver Spring, Md.

AFRL to Welcome New Lab Commander During June Ceremony

Published May 31, 2023 - Air Force Research Laboratory Public Affairs, WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFRL)

Brig. Gen. Scott A. Cain will assume command of the Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL, during a change of command ceremony hosted by Gen. Duke Z. Richardson, commander, Air Force Materiel Command, June 5.

Cain will assume command of AFRL from Maj. Gen. Heather L. Pringle, who has led AFRL since June 2020.

Cain received his commission from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1995, and he is assuming command from Pringle, who is retiring after 32 years of service.

With a background in aeronautical engineering, aerospace engineering and national resource strategy, Cain is coming to AFRL after serving as the director for Air, Space and Cyberspace Operations, Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, where he was responsible for shaping the workforce and cyber infrastructure to test, field and sustain agile war-winning capabilities.

As AFRL commander, Cain will lead a workforce of more than 11,500 Airmen, Guardians, DOD civilians and contractors, and manage an annual budget of \$3 billion. Cain will lead a science, technology and innovation enterprise in accelerating the discovery and development of solutions for Airmen and Guardians.

Cain will be responsible for formulating a comprehensive technology portfolio that anticipates future warfighter needs, while promoting risk-taking and problem-solving. He will accelerate the delivery of cross-domain solutions through partnerships with industry, academia and international allies, and execute an additional \$3 billion in externally funded research and development. Through the laboratory's technology and functional directorates, AFWERX and the 711th Human Performance Wing, Cain will oversee a team that produces a deep technical and medical bench, pushing the boundaries of modern technology and improving science.

Immediately after the change of command ceremony, Lt. Gen. Tom D. Miller, deputy chief of staff for Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection, Headquarters United States Air Force, will preside over Pringle's retirement ceremony.

About AFRL. The Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL, is the primary scientific research and development center for the Department of the Air Force. AFRL plays an integral role in leading the discovery, development and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air, space and cyberspace force. With a workforce of more than 11,500 across nine technology areas and 40 other operations across the globe, AFRL provides a diverse portfolio of science and technology ranging from fundamental to advanced research and technology development. For more information, visit www.afresearchlab.com.



USAMRDC and Fort Detrick Host Change of Command

USAMRDC Public Affairs Office. June 23, 2023.

The U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command hosted a Change of Command ceremony at Fort Detrick, Maryland, on June 23. During the event, held at the CPT Jennifer J. Shafer Odom Fitness Center, responsibility of both USAMRDC and Fort Detrick was transferred from Brig. Gen. Anthony L. McQueen to Brig. Gen. Edward H. Bailey.



Brig. Gen. Edward Bailey (foreground, third from left) assumes command of USAMRDC during a ceremony at Fort Detrick, Maryland, on June 23. (Photo credit: Ramin A. Khalili, USAMRDC Public Affairs)

"We bid farewell to one great leader and their family, and also the familiarity that comes with that experience," said Maj. Gen. Edmond Brown, Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army Futures Command, who officiated the event. "But we also welcome a new leader into our family and build a new relationship based on mutual respect."

By assuming the role of MRDC's new leader, Bailey is also stepping into a new community. He comes to Fort Detrick from Honolulu, Hawaii where he served as Commanding General of the Medical Readiness Command, Pacific and Deputy Director for the Indo-Pacific Defense Health Agency. "You heard [BG McQueen] talk about how important the community is," said Bailey. "I recognize that and look forward to meeting and working with all of you."

Bailey began his military career serving in the 82nd Airborne Division. After commissioning in 1993, he attended the Uniformed Services University and completed a residency in family medicine at Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg (known as Fort Liberty since 2023). In his distinguished military career, Bailey also commanded the U.S. Army Health Clinic in Baumholder, Germany, the 86th Combat Support Hospital and Task Force Med Eagle in Operation United Assistance and the 18th Medical Command (Deployment Support) in Hawaii.

From these experiences and his many other assignments, Bailey shared a few lessons learned with those in attendance at today's ceremony. "It does not matter what the organization name is. It matters what the mission is – that will not change," said Bailey. "Second, transition is very hard. The better we plan and prepare for the fog and friction to come, the easier the transition will be. And lastly, really the most important thing is the people. We cannot achieve our mission without the talented workforce that is here at Fort Detrick and throughout MRDC."

Bailey also took time to thank his predecessor. "[BG McQueen] thank you for the phenomenal job you have done. Transition is very hard, and you have done the hard work of planning and setting us up for success. I greatly appreciate that," said Bailey. McQueen now moves on to the Office of the Surgeon General of the Army to serve as a deputy. During his two-year assignment at MRDC, McQueen was notably tasked with navigating the command through the latter stages of the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring work continued on major efforts in the areas of medical research, development and acquisition for the current and future fighting force.

In his remarks to the audience, McQueen thought back to his own transition to MRDC and Fort Detrick.

"At the time, I knew this assignment was special, but I didn't realize how extremely proud I would quickly become of this place, these people and the work that we do here on behalf of the Warfighter and the nation," said McQueen. "This has truly been a one-of-a kind assignment with a one-of-a kind workforce."

With heartfelt gratitude, McQueen expressed his thanks to Bailey for dedicating time during this transition to maintain the momentum of the USAMRDC team and their lifesaving work. McQueen brought his remarks to a close praising USAMRDC for making the impossible feel possible and for always pushing to be better than yesterday.

Attended by more than 150 people and reaching another 75 via Facebook live, the ceremony was a testament to the first priority of both McQueen and Bailey – people.

Ceremony signals leadership change for BAMC

By Lori Newman / Published June 22, 2023. JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas.



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. E. Darrin Cox (right), Medical Readiness Command, West commanding general, passes the guidon to U.S. Army Col. Mark Stackle (left) during a change of command ceremony at Brooke Army Medical Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 21, 2023. Stackle will also serve as the deputy market director of the Defense Health Agency's San Antonio Market.

Brooke Army Medical Center held a change of command ceremony June 21 to bid farewell to one leader and welcome another.

On the field in front of the Garden entrance to the hospital, Army Brig. Gen. Deydre Teyhen relinquished command of BAMC to Army Col. Mark Stackle. Army Brig. Gen. E. Darrin Cox, Medical Readiness Command, West commanding general, was the presiding officer for the ceremony.

Cox praised Teyhen for her leadership, noting that she wore multiple hats during her time at Joint Base San Antonio. In addition to being the commanding general of BAMC, Teyhen also served as the deputy market director of the Defense Health Agency's San Antonio Market and the 20th chief of the U.S. Army Medical Specialist Corps.

"During her time as commander, Brig. Gen. Teyhen set the conditions for BAMC to achieve sustained excellence as a high-reliable organization," he said. "She embraced the Army's People First priority with an emphasis on leader development at every level, creating opportunities to empower her staff and unlock their potential to 'be all that you can be.'"

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Cox touted Teyhen's many achievements during her tenure as BAMC's commanding general including garnering multiple individual and organizational awards, creating training and sustainment programs, and participating in readiness exercises.

"As the deputy market director, Brig. Gen. Teyhen worked to optimize personnel and resources and improve care for more than 250,000 military beneficiaries across the San Antonio region," he said. "I could go on and on ... but it shows you that Brig. Gen. Teyhen's actions truly speak for themselves."

Cox thanked Teyhen and the BAMC staff for their commitment to excellence and wished her well in her next assignment.



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Deydre Teyhen, outgoing Brooke Army Medical Center commanding general, addresses the crowd at a change of command ceremony at BAMC at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 21, 2023. Teyhen acknowledged that Team BAMC has triumphed over numerous challenges in recent years and encouraged staff members to make time for self-care.

Teyhen began by recognizing many individuals for their ongoing support. "It warms my heart to know I'm leaving Team BAMC in good hands and with the right person for this job," Teyhen said. "Today marks a bittersweet moment for me as I relinquish command of this stellar organization. It has been the greatest honor of my career to serve as your commanding general, working alongside the incredible men and women who serve on the frontlines of military medicine at the DoD's premier medical facility."

Teyhen acknowledged that Team BAMC faced and overcame numerous challenges in recent years, including the DHA transition, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the implementation of MHS GENESIS, the military's new electronic health record. "As I reflect on our journey together, there is a theme that resonates deeply within me – the importance of taking care of ourselves so that we can continue to take care of others," Teyhen said. "In a world that often demands so much from us, it is easy to neglect our own well-being. You've heard me say it before and I will say it again – it's time to bring the joy back to medicine."

Teyhen also touched on Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. R. Scott Dingle's five priorities – Readiness, Reform, Reorganize, Responsive, and Relevant, highlighting all that BAMC has accomplished in the respective areas.

"When I think of Team BAMC, one word comes to mind – excellence," she said. "Team BAMC, you should be proud of what you have accomplished."

In closing, Teyhen encouraged everyone to stay connected, support one another, invest in their family and friends, and make time to cultivate their own happiness and well-being.

Cox also welcomed Stackle and his family to MRC, West. "I know you possess the knowledge, leadership, and strategic vision necessary to ensure this command continues to maintain its status as a premier medical platform for the world's best expeditionary and globally integrated fighting force," Cox told Stackle. "Know that the MRC, West family is here to support you and your team."

"This is a critical time in the history of our world," Cox said. "We are adapting who we are, how we fight, and what we fight with in preparation for future operational challenges. Your leadership will be vital to the ongoing successful modernization of the Army and Army Medicine."

Stackle thanked everyone for their support and warm welcome. He also praised Teyhen for her leadership. "It is clear to me that with your steadfast guidance and exceptional leadership, BAMC has achieved remarkable success and continued to provide unparalleled healthcare to all of the beneficiaries under our care," the incoming commander said. "Your dedication and commitment to excellence have left an indelible mark on this organization, and I am humbled to be following in your footsteps."

Stackle also thanked his family for their love and support. "As I step into this new role, I am fully aware of the legacy and strong reputation of BAMC," Stackle said. "This organization has long been recognized as a beacon of excellence, a place where world-class medical care and cutting-edge research converge to shape the future of military medicine."

To the entire BAMC team, "I want to express my deep gratitude for your unwavering commitment and selfless service," he added. "You are the heartbeat of this organization, and together, we will build upon the remarkable foundation laid by our predecessors." Stackle also praised BAMC's community partners and patients for their continued support.

"Col. Stackle, I'm confident that under your leadership, the BAMC team will continue to excel as a key partner with Joint Base San Antonio, community stakeholders, and the entire Military Health System in support of our service members and their families," Cox said. "I am honored to serve our great Nation alongside you."



U.S. Army Col. Mark Stackle, Brooke Army Medical Center commander, addresses the crowd at a change of command ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 21, 2023. Stackle thanked Team BAMC for their support and warm welcome and praised outgoing commanding general, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Deydre Teyhen, for her leadership.

59th MDW: Chief Scientist's Medical Director Selected as DARPA Program Manager

JBSA News NEWS | Oct. 4, 2023. By 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs. JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas –

Lt. Col. (Dr.) Adam Willis, formerly a Medical Director and Clinician Scientist of the 59th Medical Wing Chief Scientist's Office, now serves as the program manager at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency in the Biotechnologies Office.



Lt. Col. (Dr.) Adam Willis, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency program manager, poses for an official photo. As the DARPA program manager, Willis will focus on the challenges of casualty care within the near-peer environment, biomechanics of brain injury, neuroergonomics of operational tasks, and more. (U.S. Air Force photo)

His role in the BTO is developing new programs to push technology development and generating new technology solutions for the warfighter. He also oversees existing programs, creates training for faculty, and builds Small Business Initiative Research and Small Business Technology Transfer opportunities, with a focus on operational needs.

In 2022, Willis was one of four officers in the Air Force selected for the DARPA Service Chiefs Fellows Program, which immerses military officers and government civilians in innovative, fast-paced science and technology research. This three-month fellowship provided Willis with insight into cutting-edge technology while potentially facilitating the development of future DARPA technologies. This experience led to his recruitment as a DARPA program manager in 2023.

During his time at the 59th MDW Chief Scientist's Office, Willis was highly productive. At Brooke Army Medical Center, he worked as a staff neurointensivist and neurologist. He also executed clinical research in the biomechanics of brain injury and neuroergonomics of operational tasks to improve overall warfighter brain health for performance and readiness.

Additionally, Willis is a trained flight surgeon and holds the Special Experience Identifier as a physician member of a Critical Care Air Transport Team.

In 2020, Willis was accepted as a fellow to the Clinician Scientist Opportunity Network which trains and mentors clinicians in executing research within the Department of Defense. He quickly ramped up his research program into a nearly \$10 million dollar research portfolio while at the 59th MDW, with over 30 collaboration agreements between universities, Biotech companies and other DOD research laboratories.

As his experience grew, he published more than 20 peer-reviewed journal articles, several book chapters and gave numerous technical presentations. Always looking to the future of research, Willis has mentored numerous military officers, medical residents, and engineering graduate students to develop the next generation of biomedical researchers.

Willis began his journey as an officer in the Air Force in 1999. His education includes a bachelor's degree in physics from the University of Notre Dame, a Master of Science, and a Doctor of Philosophy in theoretical and applied mechanics from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He also obtained his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Illinois Chicago. During his clinical residency, he specialized in neurology, and his fellowship training was for neurocritical care with an active board-certification in both.

Throughout his career, Willis received several notable awards including recognition for his achievements in operational and scientific research. As the DARPA program manager, Willis' focus remains on challenges of casualty care within the near-peer environment, biomechanics of brain injury, neuroergonomics of operational tasks, and more.

'CSION' Develops Leaders in Military Medical Research

JBSA NEWS | Sept. 19, 2023. By 59th Medical Wing Chief Scientist's Office. JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas –



Airmen participate in a special warfare training wing assessment and selection course at Joint Base San Antonio, March 14, 2023. Clinician Scientist Investigator Opportunity Network (CSION) fellow, U.S. Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Nicholas Villalobos, received research funding to study swimming-induced pulmonary edema in special warfare trainees, a poorly understood health condition that can occur while swimming or scuba diving. The CSION program is a two-year additional-duty research fellowship intended to teach clinicians how to conduct "requirements-driven" research within the Department of Defense. (U.S. Air Force photo by Jennifer Gangemi)

The ability of military clinicians to conduct medical research is often limited by competing demands and a lack of mentorship opportunities. The 59th Medical Wing's Chief Scientist's Office, or 59 MDW/ST, is working to remove these barriers and improve the realm of health care with the Clinician Scientist Investigator Opportunity Network or "CSION."

The Clinician Scientist Investigator Opportunity Network is a two-year additional-duty research fellowship that teaches clinicians how to conduct 'requirements-driven' research within the Department of Defense.

To be eligible for the program, applicants have to have completed residency graduate medical or dental education training, not be currently enrolled as a graduate medical or dental education trainee, and have their department leadership's approval to focus 25% of their duty hours on CSION participation. The total commitment is approximately 900 hours of duty time dedicated to research over the span of two years.

Between January 2019 and December 2022, 12 CSION fellows graduated from the program. With the support of their mentors, the fellows initiated 204 research protocols, created 489 publications and presentations, and secured 33 research grants. All graduates of the program have remained active in clinical research and multiple graduates are currently assigned to research

positions.

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The 59 MDW/ST's vision is "to grow medical leaders." The CSION program helps realize that vision by improving the quality of military medical research and health care. The program is co-sponsored by 59 MDW/ST and the San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium dean and includes partnerships with the United States Army Institute of Surgical Research and the Naval Medical Research Unit-San Antonio – each a valuable source of program mentors.

The CSION program also offers a unique pathway to research funding. Through a Technology Transfer Agreement, 59 MDW/ST partnered with the nonprofit organization Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc. to create a seedling proposal program. This funds two research projects through a competitive selection process open only to current CSION fellows. This year, the seedling proposal program awarded project funding to U.S. Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Emilio Fentanes at Brooke Army Medical Center's cardiology department and U.S. Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Nicholas Villalobos, a 59th MDW member at Brooke Army Medical Center's internal medicine department. Both fellows are conducting research that seeks to improve the health care of service members.

The CSION program was formally launched in 2019 and is open to all clinical specialties, including dentists, physicians, psychologist, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants serving in the Army, Air Force, or Navy.

SAUSHEC graduation ceremony celebrates 261 residents, fellows

JBSA News, June 12, 2023, By Lori Newman Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs, SAN ANTONIO, Texas

The San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium celebrated military medical professionals during a graduation ceremony June 8 at the Lila Cockrell Theatre in downtown San Antonio.



U.S. Air Force Capt. (Dr.) Madushani Belt receives her graduation certificate from Air Force Maj. Gen. John DeGoes, U.S. Air Force Deputy Surgeon General; Army Brig. Gen. Deydre Teyhen, Brooke Army Medical Center commanding general; Air Force Col. Kristen Beals, 59th Medical Wing vice commander; and Dr. Mark True, San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium dean, during a ceremony at the Lila Cockrell Theatre in San Antonio, Texas, June 8, 2023. The graduation ceremony honored 261 residents and fellows from 57 diverse physicians and allied health specialty programs.

The ceremony honored 261 residents and fellows from 57 diverse physician and allied health specialty programs. SAUSHEC is the organization responsible for military graduate medical education and graduate allied health education in San Antonio with two major training sites at Brooke Army Medical Center and the 59th Medical Wing.

"It's been a long road," said Dr. Mark True, SAUSHEC dean. "If you count all the way back to kindergarten, your training years total up to 24 to 28 years of education bringing you to this point in your lives."

True reminded the graduates that they are ready for independent practice. "You are now the authority for the care you provide to your patients," he said. "With this authority comes great responsibility, and we know you will rise excellently to this occasion. Our patients deserve the best ... we are proud to present them our best – that's you!"

The dean praised the instructors for their efforts. "I would also like to acknowledge that our graduates would not be able to walk across this stage this morning without the tireless efforts of our program directors and our faculty, and also our program coordinators."

True told the graduates that their instructors would continue to guide and support them as they move forward in their careers. His advice was to "stay connected and never stop learning."

The keynote speaker for the event was U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. John DeGoes, the Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force. DeGoes praised the faculty for their efforts and stressed the importance of having mentors to turn to for help throughout their military medical career.

"As you enter staff practice, have enough confidence to not be afraid to ask for help," DeGoes said. "But don't have too much that you don't know if you ever need a second opinion. Either extreme may lead to preventable problems."

The general touted SAUSHEC and the San Antonio area as a key training location for military medical training. "Your San Antonio military health system is the center of gravity and a key enabler to our national defense strategy through its role of supporting world-class health education," DeGoes said. "I am convinced there is no better training environment in the Department of Defense," he added. "From my vantage point the future of military graduate health education remains bright."

DeGoes touched on the roles of the Defense Health Agency and the individual services, as well as the challenges that lay ahead. "From an Air Force perspective, at the headquarters level, we are working closely with the DHA to ensure our medical treatment facilities have the healthcare resources to meet their local installation mission and produce ready medics and medical ready Airmen for any future contingencies," he assured them.

DeGoes noted that no matter what the future holds, "the commitment to excellence" will not change. He advised the graduates to "be humble, approachable and credible, and continually learning leaders."

DeGoes concluded by thanking them for accepting the challenge to be military medical professionals and for all they will do for those they serve. "With your SAUSHEC training, I know you have the right stuff to deliver excellent care and make successful all the missions you will medically support."

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Along with the graduation certificates, five Commander's Awards for Research, two Housestaff Hall of Fame awards, and eight merit awards were presented during the ceremony (see list below).

Pediatric resident Air Force Capt. Madushani Belt said she is grateful for the opportunities that she has received. The Louisiana native came to the United States from Sri Lanka when she was 2 ½ years old. “My parents were refugees,” she explained. “They received asylum because of the civil war going on there. I’m very thankful for that and for all the opportunities that I have been given.”

Belt believes the training she received at BAMC has set her up for success. “I have been able to have a bunch of interactions with the different sub-specialties and hear different people’s perspectives on how to manage a patient,” she explained. “Something that we have been doing in our pediatric program specifically is incorporating an operational mindset -- like discussing how we could care for this patient if we were in a remote setting or what would we do if this were in a deployment type of setting.”

Belt said she is excited about her next assignment as a pediatric flight surgeon with the 673rd Operational Medical Readiness Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska. “It’s such a blessing to go to such a unique location and have a career with the Air Force,” she said. “My position is actually operational pediatrics, which means that I’m filling a flight surgeon billet. It’s a pretty non-traditional way to complete a pediatric residency.”

“I’m really looking forward to being able to actually get out and fly,” Belt said.

The SAUSHEC graduation award recipients include:

Commander’s Research Award Graduate Allied Health Education (GAHE):

Lt. Commander Rebecca Rausa, General Surgery Physician’s Assistant

Commander’s Research Award Quality Improvement Patient Safety (QIPS):

Air Force Capt. Joshua Luster, Neurology

Air Force Capt. Dakota Tomasini, Pediatrics

Commander’s Research Award for Primary Care (Resident):

Air Force Capt. Andrew Moulton- 3rd Place, Pediatrics

Air Force Capt. William Hoffman- 2nd Place, Neurology

Army Capt. Michael Povlow- 1st Place, Radiology

Commander’s Research Award for Surgical (Resident):

Army Capt. Justin Harris- 3rd Place, Ophthalmology

Air Force Capt. Justin Sleeter- 2nd Place, General Surgery

Army Capt. R. Connor Chick- 1st Place, General Surgery

Commander’s Research Award for Animal/Basic Science:

Air Force Capt. Kyle Stigall, General Surgery

Commander’s Research Award for Clinical (Fellow):

Air Force Capt. Zahari Tchopjev- 3rd Place, Sleep Medicine

Air Force Maj. Daniel Cybulski- 2nd Place, Infectious Disease

Air Force Maj. Adam Kruse- 1st Place, Emergency Medical Services

Housestaff Hall of Fame Resident:

Army Maj. Philip M. Kemp Bohan- General Surgery

Housestaff Hall of Fame Fellow:

Army Maj. Mary Ford- Infectious Disease

Merit Awards**Army Maj. John H. Gillespie Outstanding GME Intern:**

Air Force Capt. Rachel Tindal, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Army Maj. David S. Berry Outstanding GME Resident:

Air Force Capt. William Hoffman, Neurology

Air Force Col. Donald M. Null Outstanding GME Fellow:

Army Maj. Mary Ford, Infectious Disease

Air Force Col. Woodson Scott Jones Outstanding Junior GAHE Trainee:

Air Force Capt. Samuel Alex, Clinical Psychology (Air Force)

Air Force Col. John L. Chitwood Outstanding Senior GAHE Trainee:

Air Force Maj. Jeremy Jinkerson, Clinical Neuropsychology

Ms. Ylida A. Benavides Outstanding Program Coordinator:

Ms. Teresa Fite, Dermatology

Army Col. Gail D. Deyle Outstanding GAHE Program Director:

Air Force Maj. Jared Bueche, Ortho Physical Therapy

Army Col. John D. Roscelli Outstanding GME Program Director:

Air Force Col. Dale Capener, Anesthesiology

59th Medical Wing, VelocityTX partner to advance military research

JBSA News, July 11, 2023, By 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas

The 59th Medical Wing recently entered a new partnership with Texas nonprofit organization, VelocityTX, to advance military medical research and development.

In a Military Cooperative Agreement announced in Spring 2023, the 59th MDW's Chief Scientist's Office - Science and Technology and VelocityTX, a subsidiary of the Texas Research and Technology Foundation, signed a Technology Transfer Agreement (TTA). Through the agreement, the organizations will collaborate to improve patient outcomes on and off the battlefield.

"This partnership will facilitate interaction between the 59th MDW and key members of the San Antonio business community," explained David Fonseca, VelocityTX chief operating officer.

One example of the agreement's value is the planned research and development collaborations set to take place at VelocityTX's Innovation Center located in San Antonio. 59th MDW Science and Technology researchers will have improved access to innovators from private industry, academia, and the nonprofit sector to better address the healthcare needs of military members, their families, and all Defense Health Agency beneficiaries.

VelocityTX also partners with the City of San Antonio to lead the San Antonio Military Medical Innovation (SAMMI) initiative and hosts an annual Military Medical Industry Day conference. These efforts impact medical innovations that enhance and save lives across the globe.

"Working with VelocityTX, we'll be able to better address military medical capability requirements through cooperative research and development, while supporting the local life science and healthcare community," explained Dr. Debra Neimeyer, 59th MDW chief scientist.

The TTA will also help civilian organizations by streamlining the process of engaging with San Antonio's military medical community. "This agreement greatly enhances our collaborative relationship with the City of San Antonio and its various partners," Neimeyer added.

Both Neimeyer and Fonseca said the agreement will accelerate the development of critical battlefield technologies and grow San Antonio's local bioscience ecosystem.

For more information about the 59th Medical Wing, visit <https://wilfordhall.tricare.mil/>.

TriService Nursing Research Program cultivates medical innovative solution through evidence-based practice, research

JBSA News, By Staff Sgt. Kelsey Martinez / Published June 1, 2023, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas,

The TriService Nursing Research Program held its annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course April 4-6, 2023, in San Antonio, Texas. This course included keynote lectures by military leaders and nationally known clinical experts, along with plenary sessions featuring research and EBP presentations from tri-service active, reserve, guard, and retired military nurse scientists and researchers.



TriService Nursing Research Program annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course. The TriService Nursing Research Program held its annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course April 4-6, 2023, San Antonio, Texas. The course serves as an opportunity for military nurse scholars to come together to discuss ongoing and past research, as well as plan future efforts to conduct operationally relevant research and EBP that improves the quality of care provided to service members. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kelsey

TSNRP is the country's only Department of Defense program that supports and fund armed forces nurses to conduct operationally relevant military nursing research and EBP that improves the quality of care provided to service members. TSNRP is led by Executive Director Col. Young Yauger, PhD, CRNA, and is governed by an Executive Board of Directors that is compromised of the nursing corps chief or directors of each service.

The annual Dissemination Course serves as an opportunity for military nurse scholars to come together to discuss ongoing and past research, as well as plan future research efforts.

"Army, Air Force, and Navy officers, and even Canadian Armed Forces nurses were all in attendance," said Yauger. "It is important to have that partnership because many of the challenges that we're experiencing our allies are facing as well."

The program fosters and funds collaborations to solve complex problems in both operational and garrison environments to provide better care and plan for upcoming operational needs.

"Nurses are in every aspect of the medical field and are responsible for carrying out the duties given to us by the Nurse Corps Chiefs and focus our research on their specific priorities," he said. "The research and EBP is used to identify and address the current gaps in nursing practice."

Ongoing research is being conducted by military nurses across the country and outside of the continental United States in US military facilities. Military nurses come together through TSNRP's six Research Interest Groups- Anesthesia, Biobehavioral Health, Expeditionary Care, Health Systems Informatics, Military Family and Women's Health. All the groups play an important role in enhancing quality of care for patients and the work-lives of nurses.

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“Our nurses are doing research right now to identify effective strategies to employ or improve resiliency within our military forces,” he said. “Utilizing system informatics to analyze data plots, we are able to better understand burnout for nursing care, how it affects our practitioners and clinicians, and the overwhelming changes within the medical field, particularly with the incorporation of the Defense Health Agency as the primary provider of Garrison Medicine within the DoD.”



TriService Nursing Research Program annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course. The TriService Nursing Research Program held its annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course April 4-6, 2023, San Antonio, Texas. The course serves as an opportunity for military nurse scholars to come together to discuss ongoing and past research, as well as plan future efforts to conduct operationally relevant research and EBP that improves the quality of care provided to service members. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kelsey back to the present, and applying them to the future.”

It was a sentiment that was echoed by the nurse corps leaders who were present for the course. “Tri-Service Nursing Research Program created evidence on the best practices on communication for women’s health concerns in combat and shaped policies through evidencebased solutions for resilience, recruitment, and retention of nurse corps officers,” said Brig. Gen. Jeannine Ryder, Chief Nurse of the Air Force. “Findings from nursing anesthesia, women’s health, nursing workload, and behavioral health are informing the Defense Health Agency guidance and emergency trauma nursing guidelines with resources.”

Col. Yaeger believes that the issues being discussed by the RIG membership take on a think-tank mentality because members of TSNRP are addressing questions that senior leaders are intrigued by and attempting to find feasible solutions, for example combat palliative care.

“We’re shaping the narrative on combat palliative care as we move forward,” said Yaeger. “There aren’t many people who are thinking about these concerns, which provides ample opportunity to demonstrate our innovative thought on how to reincorporate these efforts, potentially, from the past, by bringing those ideas

Col Yaeger and TSNRP representatives are working to increase the reach and knowledge of the program among military nurses, and the officers they serve. “We’ve created the Early Career Investigator Coaching Program dedicated to the recruitment of junior officers by providing an immersive experience that emphasizes the value of nursing research and EBP,” he said. “Along with inspiring them to view TSNRP as an asset that contributes to the overall efforts of the Military Health System in the DoD.”

Major Enesha Hicks, Clinical Inquiry in Nursing Readiness Fellow, 59th Medical Wing, became familiar with TSNRP five years ago. She was presented with the Karen Rieder Outstanding Poster Award for her presentation on “Accelerating Evidence-Based Practice Through a San Antonio Market Council” during the dissemination course.

“Dr. Rieder was an exceptional nurse who significantly impacted military nursing well beyond her service in the Navy,” she said. “I am humbled and thankful to receive this award and would like to bolster other nurses and interdisciplinary team members to continue her legacy.”

Hicks commented that those who are associated with the program have been a supportive community that has broadened her reach as a professional and has inspired her to optimally support junior members, peers, and leaders. That push for junior officers to become involved in research and EBP, as well as the TSNRP community, was also discussed by Brig. Gen. Ryder.

“We encourage junior officers to cultivate innovation, ideas, and solutions to practical nursing problems concerning operational and garrison nursing paradigms, while senior officers leverage their skills and advanced education to utilize these concepts,” said Ryder.

Collaboration among all military nurses and military nurse retirees is essential for fostering innovative nursing science solutions and relies on every member to contribute to the overall success. Once you’re a member of TSNRP, you can always contribute and give back to the organization through mentorship.

“The value of nursing research and EBP in the DoD are ubiquitously recognized throughout the Military Health System, and we need to ensure we as a community disseminate that information to increase the general awareness of potential solutions,” said Yaeger. “TriService Nursing Research Program is a community of individuals with warm, embracing arms that are working together to address different medical concerns...we have a lot to offer, and our nurses are working hard to ensure our voices are heard.”



TriService Nursing Research Program annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course. The TriService Nursing Research Program held its annual Research and Evidence-Based Dissemination Course April 4-6, 2023, San Antonio, Texas. The course serves as an opportunity for military nurse scholars to come together to discuss ongoing and past research, as well as plan future efforts to conduct operationally relevant research and EBP that improves the quality of care provided to service members. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kelsey Martinez)

Air Force Medical Service Welcomes New Chief Scientist

By Kira Baldau, Published June 13, 2023, Air Force Surgeon General Public Affairs, FALLS CHURCH, Va.

Tanisha L. Hammill was inducted as chief scientist, the first permanent senior-most scientific advisor to the Air Force Surgeon General, during a ceremony June 9, 2023, at the Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia.



This is the official portrait of Dr. Tanisha L. Hammill.

"This is a chance of a lifetime to bring together her background in humanities and ethics while exploring new frontiers in science," said Lt. Gen. Robert I. Miller, U.S. Air Force Surgeon General, during the induction. "I have no doubt I have found the right person for the job for the long-term success of the AFMS."

In her role as chief scientist - a civilian scientific and professional career service position - Hammill will develop the Air Force Medical Service's strategic vision for medical requirements, research and development, as well as acquisition and sustainment. She will advise the Air Force Surgeon General on collaboration and resource coordination across service, joint, federal and international organizations, integrating research priorities and provide guidance to planning, programming and budgetary processes that implement AFMS programs.

"I think to myself, 'what we can accomplish in new technology and new solutions to detect and identify threats on the battlefield, diagnose injuries, provide acute life-saving care and move patients, provide that world-class care anywhere, anytime,'" said Hammill.

Hammill has 19 years' experience in the Military Health System. She began her career with at Navy Medical Center San Diego, where she conducted laboratory, pre-clinical and clinical auditory and vestibular research. She holds a doctorate in translational science from the University of Texas where she studied pharmaceutical interventions for hearing loss. She has also earned professional certifications as a clinical research administrator and project management professional. Additionally, Hammill is pursuing Defense Acquisition University certification in program management.



Air Force Medical Service welcomes new chief scientist Tamisha Hammill, Ph.D., the Air Force Medical Service's chief scientist, speaks during her induction ceremony held at the Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, June 9, 2023. (U.S. Air

"It wasn't until I stepped into that contract support role with clinical studies for the Navy that I felt that true sense of purpose for the first time," said Hammill. "And I think all of you who wear the uniform feel that sense of purpose and you wear it every day. I just try to live up to that same dedication and service."

Following Miller's opening remarks, he issued the appointment order and administered the oath of office to Hammill. After Miller pinned on Hammill's insignia, she ended the ceremony with closing comments.

"I know I cannot fail in this job," said Hammill. "Both current and future service members depend on us being successful in our development of new technologies."



Lt. Gen. Robert Miller, U.S. Air Force Surgeon General, left, presents Tamisha Hammill, Ph.D., right with a certificate appointing her as the Air Force Medical Service's chief scientist during an induction ceremony held at the Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, June 9, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo by Josh Mahler)

METC Program Creates Path to College Degrees

Davids, Story by Lisa Braun, 06.27.2023, Joint Bas San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, TX

When the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) first stood up on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, 13 years ago, it became the world's largest enlisted medical education campus. Boasting both institutional and programmatic accreditation and credentialing, METC's academic programs must meet rigorous educational quality standards. Even so, many military medics transitioning into the civilian work force have historically found themselves unemployed due to the difficulty of transferring their military experience into civilian jobs. Sometimes there is no civilian job equivalent for a military healthcare occupational specialty.

After participating in the 2013 White House Roundtable for Veteran Credentialing and Licensing, METC established the Strategic Planning and Partnerships (SPP) department in 2014 to continue supporting that effort. "The initiative focused on service members earning their credentials and licenses in their career fields before exiting the military, empowering them to better compete with their civilian counterparts in the job market," explained Dr. Barry Moore, METC SPP Chief. One thing that was born from this initiative, said Moore, was the METC Degree Bridge Program. Many career fields require degree completion to acquire licenses and other credentials. In medicine, the credential determines whether someone can qualify for civilian employment.

The METC Degree Bridge Program is a collaborative effort between METC's SPP staff and program directors, and civilian colleges and universities throughout the country to develop degree pathways for service members. The program provides active duty, National Guard, and Reserve service members and veterans a means to earn a college degree in a variety of allied health and related career fields more quickly by receiving credit for their military service and training.

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A service member does not have to be a METC graduate to participate; they only need to have graduated from a program that has a degree bridge created for it. Members who graduated from a program before it transferred to METC or from a program that no longer exists can still qualify; however, there is no guarantee that a school will offer the same amount of credit that a recent METC graduate would earn. Master Sgt. Adrian Welch, U.S. Army Reserve Senior Career Management Non-Commissioned Officer at the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence, took advantage of the METC Degree Bridge program years after graduating from the Army's 91W Healthcare Specialist course (now the 68W Combat Medic Specialist Training Program) in July 2003, several years before METC was established.



Courtesy Photo | Master Sgt. Adrian Welch, center, grades Soldiers conducting trauma lane training when he was an instructor for the U.S. Army 68W Phase 3 Advanced Leaders Course. Currently serving as the Army Reserve Senior Career Management Non-Commissioned Officer at the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence, Welch earned two college degrees through the Medical Education and Training Campus' Degree Bridge program years after graduating from the

In fact, Welch earned two college degrees through the METC Degree Bridge program. "I previously had bad experiences with traditional brick and mortar schools after high school," shared Welch. "I ended up dropping out of college to enlist in the Army. I also found it frustrating when I went back to college in my early 20's and attended a community college that didn't accept any of my previous college credits. I didn't want to start from scratch, so I jumped at the opportunity when I first learned about (METC) degree bridge programs that accepted my military education as constructive college credit."

Welch earned an Associate of Science in Health Science degree in November 2017, followed by a Bachelor of Science in Health Science degree in January 2022. "After completing my associate degree and being comfortable with the online education platform, I started future planning what I wanted to pursue with my post-military career. After researching various bachelor's degree plans, I found one that correlated with where I wanted to be after I retire and, honestly, was worth the time and effort to earn it."

After completing both degrees while only utilizing tuition assistance, Welch didn't have to use any part of his Post-9/11 GI Bill and had the option to transfer those benefits to his son if he chooses to attend college when he gets older. "Giving him that option and providing him opportunities I never had alleviated a lot of financial stress when I start long term planning for my next chapter after the military," he stated.

The Degree Bridge program has grown exponentially since Welch earned his degrees, from 60 academic partners in 23 states and 1,000-degree pathways in 2017, to 90 partners in 32 states and Washington, D.C. in 2023, offering more than 2,645-degree bridge pathways supporting METC graduates. A new Doctor of Health Science degree bridge was recently added, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Health Science – Military Physician Assistant Preparation (BSHS MPAP) to help fill a void in strongly compatible degree bridges for graduates of the METC Air Force Independent Duty Medical Technician program.

According to Moore, METC instructors and graduates of METC programs receive credit hours for completion of their military medical training and can pursue associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. There are even unique options empowering graduates to move from an associate to master's degree in a single program.

"There is an abundance of options for most graduates to earn degrees within their specific occupation or to earn global healthcare, leadership, management, business administration, and other degrees," stated Moore. "Our partnering efforts and the granted transfer credits save the government and service members thousands in tuition fees and empower some students to earn degrees in half the time when compared to most traditional degree plans."

Welch said he recommends other service members investigate the METC Degree Bridge program. "Having completed two degrees in a four-year timeframe was stressful and difficult at times but setting those goals and achieving them is beyond personally rewarding, not only for being competitive in my current military career but also setting myself up for success in my post-military career."

Take advantage of the METC Degree Bridge program by visiting <https://www.metc.mil/Academics/Degree-Bridge-Program>, then clicking on the relevant training department name followed by program name.

Naval Medical Forces Support Command welcomes new commander

JBSA News, May 31, 2023, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas,

Navy Capt. Walter D. Brafford relieved Rear Adm. Cynthia A. Kuehner as commander, Naval Medical Forces Support Command, in a ceremony at the historic Quadrangle at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston on May 25, 2023.

Rear Adm. Anne Swap, Director, National Capital Region Market, presided over the ceremony, while Army Lt. Gen. John P. Evans Jr., U.S. Army North commanding general, was the guest speaker.

Brafford thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication and outlined his expectations for the path ahead. "We are tasked with an important mission of developing and delivering education and training across the enterprise," Brafford said. "I know that you will continue to perform as true professionals, continue to excel, and bring it every day!"

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Brafford, a native of southwest Missouri, previously served as the lead for the Commander's Action Group at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, or BUMED, in Falls Church, Virginia. He previously was the commanding officer of the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Annapolis, Maryland. On April 14, 2023, Brafford became the 40th Dental Corps Chief. He is the first dental officer to serve at NMFSC's helm since the command was established in San Antonio in July 2012.

As commander, Brafford will oversee and manage all medical training, education and instruction to produce competent medical personnel. He will also oversee four Echelon IV commands and their subordinate units where Navy Medicine Sailors continue to receive exceptional training to meet the operational requirements of the Force. This training occurs even while simultaneously maintaining technical specialties that require continuous modification to adapt to emerging technologies, improved healthcare delivery methods and new operational requirements.

In her remarks, Swap spoke about the seamless transition from Kuehner to Brafford. "We depend on this command to ensure Navy Medicine has well-trained medical professionals to execute our mission of force development, force generation and force preservation," said Swap. "I can think of no worthier – and no more capable successor — than Capt. Walter Brafford. Like [Rear Adm. Kuehner], he is a leader with high expectations and a proven track record."

As senior commander of JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, Evans hosted the change of command ceremony at his command headquarters. During his and Kuehner's time serving together as senior leaders of their respective services, the two had developed a genuine friendship.

"She has absolutely wrapped herself around this community, she, and [her husband] Carl. They have been incredible members of this joint group of people we have here in 'Military City, USA' and Joint Base San Antonio," he said. He highlighted details of her service history and concluded, "It will be our great loss as a military service as the Navy and certainly as a member of our joint community when you hang up your hat."

Kuehner, a native of Fort Rucker, Alabama, assumed duties as commander in August 2020. She also served as the 26th Director of the Navy Nurse Corps.

She spoke of NMFSC's mission, highlighting the role of each subordinate command and thanking their leadership. In closing remarks, she stated, "Naval Medical Forces Support Command proper, what a whirlwind these last three years have been for me! I arrived in the COVID cloud, and it persisted way too long for all of us. Your ability to drive through, adapt to the rollercoaster of ever-changing force health protection requirements and achieve results have been an eye-watering feat."



Naval Medical Forces Support Command changes Command Navy Capt. Walter D. Brafford (second from right), incoming commander, salutes during the National Anthem with Rear Adm. Cynthia A. Kuehner (second from left), Rear Adm. Anne Swap (left), and Army Lt. Gen. John P. Evans Jr.



Navy Capt. Walter D. Brafford arrives at the change of command ceremony for Naval Medical Forces Support Command. Brafford took command of the unit during a ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

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