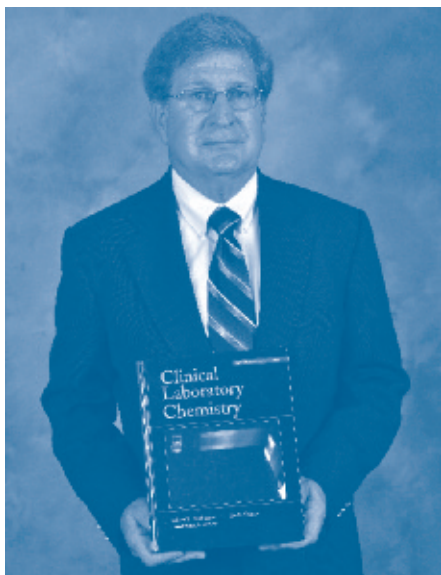




## Leader, Educator in Laboratory Science Retires

A national leader in his field and dedicated educator, professor of Clinical Laboratory Science, Robert L. Sunheimer, is retiring in August after 30 years of service. He has taught courses in clinical chemistry and laboratory instrumentation, and holds a specialty in lab safety.



Robert Sunheimer, MS '74, MT(ASCP)SC, SLS, with *Clinical Laboratory Chemistry* text he co-authored.

Involved in every aspect of CLS, Sunheimer has taught and supervised chemistry labs and traveled the US presenting chemistry workshops. Also a prolific scholar and author, he most recently co-authored the textbook, *Clinical Laboratory Chemistry*, 1st edition. He wrote chapters on Principles of Instrumentation and Laboratory Automation in the 22nd edition of Dr. John Bernard Henry's *Clinical Diagnosis and Management by Laboratory Methods* (2011). His research interests include cardiac biomarkers (e.g., troponin and CKMD) and prostate specific antigen.

Sunheimer was selected for the Blue Ribbon Panel at the Centers of Disease Control on Issues of Clinical Laboratory Safety, and the American Society of Clinical Pathology's Board of Certification Laboratory Management and Safety Examination Committee. This past year, he was appointed to the Document Development Committee for the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute's project, "A Framework for CLSI

Evaluation Protocols." Appointed to university leadership posts, he most recently served on the Disaster Preparedness, and Research Advisory committees.

"Bob's most important legacy is the generation of medical technologists he has prepared who will contribute to health care for years to come," commented Sue Graham, CLS chair. "His professional career has touched individuals well beyond the classroom."

"What will be most missed and memorable for me," said Sunheimer, "will be all the people I've worked with throughout my decades as a clinical laboratorian and educator—from the students, faculty, student affairs and library staff, hospital employees, as well as all our maintenance and environmental services staff."

"We will feel a huge vacuum for Bob's 30-plus year commitment to the college and university, particularly his unique faculty leadership capabilities," said Dean Hugh Bonner, PhD. "He has played a major role in strengthening our college."

## Cell Phone Use Safe in the OR?

The dangers of driving while texting is often in the news, but what about texting or emailing during a heart bypass? While a student in clinical rotations, Trevor Smith had noticed some colleagues using cell or smartphones during cardiopulmonary bypass (CPB). "I wondered if this was occurring frequently and having an effect in the intensive perfusion setting."

Collaborating with Upstate's perfusion program chair, Bruce Searles ('93), and clinical coordinator, Ed Darling, Smith surveyed 439 perfusionists across the country to co-author, "Cell Phone and the CPB: Dangerous or the New Normal?" published in *Perfusion Journal* (September 2011). Smith also presented his findings at the 2011 American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusionists conference. With the prevalence of electronic devices in hospital



Trevor Smith, CCP '11, LP

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## Health Professions Alumni Connection

The SUNY Upstate Medical University Health Professions Alumni Association publishes Alumni Connection quarterly. Distribution is free to college alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends.

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## Alumna Serving US and Lab Profession

Fascinated as a child by her mother's stories describing bacteria that "smelled like Fritos" and looked like grapes, and the incredible destruction they could cause, Christina Encina knew what lay in her future. "My mother, a microbiologist in the Air Force, was the inspiration for my career choice." I loved to read and look at the pictures in her pathology books."

Encina obtained a BS degree in medical laboratory science at the University of Albuquerque, NM in 2001. With financial support from the Air Force Institute of Technology, she went on to earn an MS in medical technology at Upstate. A US Air Force Major, she currently serves at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi as Chemistry/Hematology Officer-in-Charge of the Core Laboratory with the 81st Diagnostics and Therapeutics Squadron. She supervises 26 lab personnel and day-to-day operations to ensure smooth workflow and accuracy of patient samples. She also develops and implements quality control programs.

"Achieving the MS degree," Encina said, "opened up more career opportunities for me. Upstate's program had everything I needed to succeed, with a student-to-teacher ratio to maximize my learning." Even with the military's financial support, Encina had to overcome numerous



Air Force Major, Christina Encina, MS, CLS '11

challenges in returning to college.

"In addition to having to learn to study all over again, attending was tremendously difficult for me because my husband, Ronald Brosius, was completing his 22 years of army service at Fort Benning, Georgia. We were in our first year of marriage, and I found out our first baby was on her way – Lily, now 16 months old!"

Encina persevered, including through difficult course work. "The professors supported my goals from day one and worked with me to ensure I succeeded."

Her military career has taken her to Texas, Iraq, Ohio, and to Mississippi after graduation last May. Initially, she had managed lab services for in-processing new military trainees. Then she was deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom to support the Tallil AFB medical treatment facility in Nashiriyah, Iraq. At Wright Patterson AFB, she managed the Point-of-Care program to ensure accurate bedside patient testing. She has received medals of achievement for her work performance.

With her advanced degree, Encina plans to transition to the research side to work at an Air Force Battlelab, "where I would join with people from different Air Force specialties to investigate new technologies to improve military readiness."

"My life could not be in a better place," Encina said.

## New for 2012 –We Double Your Gift!

The Foundation for Upstate Board of Directors has established a Matching Gifts program to directly benefit scholarships. Gifts made to an established scholarship fund for \$250 to \$5,000 will be matched up to \$100,000. A \$5,000 gift will be matched to bring it to the \$10,000 level required to establish an endowed scholarship. An endowment ensures that scholarships are consistently available to deserving students while recognizing a person's legacy for generations to come. Consider giving and call 315-464-4416 for details, or give secure online at [www.foundationforupstate.org](http://www.foundationforupstate.org).

## Investigating Fatigue Factor in Perfusion

Undecided on a medical discipline to pursue with a BS degree in health science, Ashleigh Trew investigated the surgical arena when her beloved grandfather underwent triple bypass surgery. “I was intrigued by the heart-lung machine and the tremendous advantage this brought to cardiac surgery.”

A Syracuse native, Trew now finds herself on the West Coast living her dream to work in an operating room on behalf of children’s health. “With my compassion for children, I feel lucky to be able to work in pediatric perfusion at Doernbecher Children’s Hospital in Portland,” where she was offered a job after a clinical rotation there.

During her senior year at Upstate, Trew received the Lawrence Award at the American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusion (AACVP) meeting for her research on perfusion and the fatigue factor. Titled, “Fatigue and Extended Work Hours Among Perfusionists: 2010 Survey,” it was published in the journal *Perfusion*.

Conducting a 50-question survey among 445 perfusionists across the US, Trew addressed concerns that perfusionists experience working extended hours on lengthy CP bypass procedures and on-call schedules. Actual performance of CPB after 17, 23 or 36 hours of wakefulness was reported by 82 percent, 63 percent and 14.8 percent of respondents, respectively. Microsleep during CPB was reported by nearly half of respondents, with another 44 percent having observed another perfusionist nodding off.

Nearly 90 percent reported they had no departmental or hospital policy on work hours. Forty-eight percent believe that workplace management should do what it can to provide mandated rest cycles, but acknowledged it is “impractical” for the profession to set work limits. In the meantime, perfusionists commonly use caffeine (94 percent), along with other measures to combat fatigue: hydration and food, stretching, social interaction and naps in-between cases.

Based on preliminary data, Trew said: “It appears that fatigue or acute sleep deprivation is a significant safety concern in the perfusion community and further research must be performed to understand actual performance degradation during CPB.”



Ashleigh Trew, CP '11

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## Cell Phone Use Safe in the OR?

settings, the New York Times also delved into the issue to include Smith’s findings in, “Medical Devices Raise Potential for Distraction.”

Why are cell phones even “on” in the OR? “Cell phones are often favored over the traditional pagers because they are quicker in reaching people when perfusion staffs are short. Cell phones have become embedded in the culture as well, with most students in the last decade never knowing life without this constant communication,” Smith noted.

Cell (voice or text) messaging has been adopted by 44 percent of perfusionists as

their primary work communication device, the survey reports. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported using a cell phone while on the pump, with nearly as many having texted. A drop occurs in texting with those 50 and older. With smartphones, as many as 31 percent have accessed email, and 21 percent have been on the internet during procedures.

The study reveals a paradox, however. A majority, 78 percent, believe cell phone use during CPBs introduce a “potentially significant safety risk” to patients.

Since graduating last May, Smith has been a perfusionist at Brigham and Womens Hospital in Boston, MA, which performs over 1300 complex heart surgeries a year. Its policy forbids cell phone use in the OR, allowing pagers only.

“I am absolutely against cell phone use in the OR,” Smith agreed. “While a third of perfusionists have witnessed another perfusionist distracted by cell phone use while on CPB, very few perfusion departments (16.5 percent) and only 37 percent of hospitals have cell phone policies.” Smith’s research may help to change that.

# Alumni Connection

Health Professions Alumni Association News

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## Alumni Connection

Spring 2012

### Faculty Notable News

**R**ecent recognitions for College of Health Professions (CHP) departmental chairs:

**Sandra Banas, MST, RPA-C, MT '77**, chair of Physician Assistant Studies, received the 2011 Faculty Gold Standard Award that recognizes dedication, integrity and service to the profession (see photo).

**David Clemente, MEd, RT(R), MR '93**, chair of Medical Imaging Sciences, is the Health Professions Alumni Association President.

**Susan Graham, MS, MT(ASCP), SH**, chair of Clinical Laboratory Science, was appointed CHP Associate Dean.

**Susan Miller, PT, DPT, MS, OCS**, chair of Physical Therapy Doctorate Program, was elected chair of the NYS

Board of Physical Therapy and as delegate to the NYS APTA 2012 House of Delegates Conference this June. **Dale Avers, PT, DPT, PhD**, director of T-DPT Program, co-authored/contributed four chapters to the 3rd edition of Geriatric Physical Therapy and received APTA's 2011 Lucy Blair Service Award.

**Joan O'Brien, MEd, RT(T)**, chair of Radiation Therapy, was appointed CHP Senior Associate Dean.

**Bruce Searles, BS '93, CCP**, chair of Cardiovascular Perfusion, presented on simulation training at the AmSECT International Meeting and the Society for Cardiovascular Anesthesiologists.

**Joe Sorbello, MEd, RT, RTT, AAS'75/BS '77**, chair of Respiratory Therapy, is board member and elected



Sandra Banas presented Faculty Gold Award from Dean Hugh Bonner, PhD and President David R. Smith, MD (right).

chair of the Education Specialty Section, American Association of Respiratory Care. He is a member of the Steering Committee for the Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate RT Education and on its Founding Board of Directors.