For Leonard Furlow, MD, medical education is a lifetime passion.

The retired Gainesville plastic and reconstructive surgeon and his wife, Libby, are longtime supporters of the University of Florida.

“We feel strongly about giving back to the places where we were educated,” said Furlow, who completed his plastic and reconstructive surgical residency at UF in 1969. He was on the faculty for six years, including one year as the acting chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery, before leaving to open a private practice.

In 2011, the couple was instrumental in establishing the Maurice J. Jurkiewicz Professorship in Reconstructive Plastic Surgery, in honor of Furlow’s professor and mentor. Jurkiewicz, who trained Furlow as a resident, came to the UF College of Medicine as chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery in 1959. In 1964, he instituted its residency program in plastic surgery and remained at UF until 1993.

Bruce Mast, MD, a professor and chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery, currently holds the endowed professorship.

Mast said the Jurkiewicz professorship fosters research and education, facilitating attendance and presentation of research at various conferences and meetings. The resources have also supported research projects, he noted, allowing high-level academic pursuits that often involve residents and medical students.

“As such, the regional and national exposure of the UF plastic and reconstructive surgery program has increased tremendously,” Mast said.

Most recently, the Jurkiewicz professorship has supported a study on outcomes research aimed at reducing hospital readmissions after plastic surgery. The work will be presented at the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons conference in June 2016.

“It’s important for surgeons to connect with their peers and hear about research and practice at other institutions — nationally and internationally,” Furlow said. “Learning from colleagues and hearing different perspectives on treatment helps them to become better doctors, piques their curiosity, makes them think and broadens their perspectives.”

Although Furlow is retired from full-time practice, he continues to contribute to his field.

“Reconstructive plastic surgery was an interest I couldn’t get over. I had the opportunity to keep practicing by volunteering on overseas trips, which was a wonderful experience,” he said.

He recently wrote a chapter for a book, edited by Mast, on plastic and reconstructive surgeries, and he also participates in an academic journal club.

As a volunteer surgeon, Furlow made more than 50 mission trips to Central and South America, Africa and Asia, repairing children’s cleft lips and palates. He stopped performing surgeries about six years ago.

He also backs the Furlow-Bingham Plastic Surgery Education Endowment, a fund that supports the education of UF plastic surgery residents — including conference attendance.

“Education is a lifelong pursuit, and we hope to instill that habit while doctors are still in residencies,” he said.

“As residents keep going to meetings, they realize that they can contribute. We can help to build the next generation of surgeons.”
Hugh Walters, MD, had an innate sense of compassion and humility. His peers remember the former UF College of Medicine surgical resident as a selfless caretaker. He was the first to help someone in need — and the last to back away from a challenging patient case.

In 2008 — halfway through his surgical residency — Walters was killed in an accident when the SUV he was driving hit a culvert and rolled over. To honor his memory, the UF Department of Surgery established the Hugh A. Walters, MD, Humanitarian Fund. The fund supports humanitarian efforts in surgical education.

The award is given annually to a surgical resident who embodies Walters’ qualities of compassionate care and selfless dedication to excellence. Recipients return the following year to lead a Grand Rounds presentation at the department of surgery.

“Hugh was always so patient, soft-spoken and encouraging,” said Alex Cuenca, MD, PhD, the 2015 Walters award recipient. “He took personal ownership of patient care.” Cuenca is a former chief resident in the department and now a pediatric surgery fellow at Boston Children’s Hospital.

Cuenca knew Walters and called him a friend. He said Walters inspired him to do the best he could for his own patients.

“You need your patients to be certain they’re getting first-rate treatment from their surgical care team,” Cuenca said.

The stories about Walters’ compassion are numerous, said his parents, Curtis and Margaretta Walters. After losing their son, the couple said nurses and other clinicians spoke about Walters’ willingness to help wherever he was needed.

“Whenever he passed the nurses’ station, he always asked, ‘Can I help with anything?’” Curtis Walters said. “If the nurses needed help making a bed or turning a patient, he would help. Hugh would do anything for his patients or co-workers.”

The words “It’s not my patient” were not in Walters’ vocabulary. When he encountered a patient who was not doing well — whether it was his patient or not — he would stay at the hospital and work with the nurses through their entire shift, medical team members told Walters’ parents.

His interest in medicine began at a very young age, said Margaretta Walters. “He was just 4 years old,” she said.

At the time, his mother worked as a registered nurse and midwife at a maternity center in Jamaica. Once a week, the clinic provided free health care and medication to an underprivileged community. “He sat under a table at my feet,” Margaretta Walters said. “You wouldn’t know he was there unless you looked.”

His natural inquisitiveness prompted him to ask his mother about the diagnosis and treatment of her patients.

continued on page 5
A skilled and compassionate surgical team turned a near-death experience into a generational relationship with the University of Florida.

The Cracchiolo Foundation, founded by Annita and Sam Cracchiolo Sr., is dedicated to religious, charitable, scientific, literacy or educational purposes, said Jim Cracchiolo, son of the founders and a director of the foundation. In 1994, the foundation established the Cracchiolo Family Professorship in Surgery at UF to recognize the outstanding care provided to Lena Testa, a sister of Sam Cracchiolo Sr., by Edward M. Copeland III, MD, Stephen B. Vogel, MD, and their surgical team.

“Dr. Vogel and Dr. Copeland subscribed to excellence in care, and they were great at building relationships with their patients,” Cracchiolo said. “As a result of their dedication, my father felt compelled to endow the professorship. Since the original endowment, continued excellence has strengthened the relationship established more than 22 years ago between the university and the Cracchiolo family.”

The current holder of the endowed professorship is Steven J. Hughes, MD, an associate professor of surgery and chief of the division of general surgery at the UF College of Medicine. He also serves as vice chair for the department of surgery.

“Dr. Hughes has fostered work in translational scientific labs while mentoring surgeon-scientists to make relevant contributions in the detection, prevention and treatment of pancreatic disease,” Cracchiolo said. “Seeing results is rewarding and has motivated us to continue supporting the surgeons and researchers at UF.”

Hughes said the Cracchiolos’ funding fosters research and education of UF faculty and surgeons.

“The benefit is both professional and academic,” he said. “This funding allows our surgeons to regularly exchange knowledge at national and international conferences for basic science, translational studies and clinical outcomes. The funding also helps cover the costs of publishing articles in various professional and clinical journals.”

The Cracchiolo funding mostly supports research projects through the UF Department of Surgery. For instance, Hughes is currently performing research that targets the connection between protein levels in pancreatic tissue and pancreatic disease.

“We found significant differences in protein levels between pancreatic cancer and other diseases of the pancreas. Variations in those levels within pancreatic cancer can also predict a patient’s prognosis,” Hughes said. “We are in the process of sorting out how best to use this new knowledge for diagnosing and personalizing treatments for pancreatic cancer patients.”

In addition to the support of scientific advancements, Cracchiolo also emphasized the importance of mentoring the next generation of surgeon-scientists like Dan Delitto, MD, a general surgery resident who is also working on obtaining a PhD. Delitto’s research centers on triggering the immune system to fight pancreatic cancer. He is currently working in Hughes’ research lab and is the first UF student supported by the Cracchiolo Foundation.

The important thing is to take advantage during one’s lifetime of those talents allotted to each of us.”
— Sam Cracchiolo Sr.
Steve Pavlik will soon see a decade-long dream come true when UF Health opens its state-of-the-art heart and vascular hospital. The facility, and a companion neuromedicine hospital, are scheduled to open in 2017. Steve and his wife, Trish, are longtime Gainesville residents who have continually supported UF Health’s cardiovascular programs and building a new facility in the city.

“Shands is a wonderful facility, and we wanted to support UF Health’s growth,” Trish Pavlik said. “We are blessed. We don’t have to travel to other cities or out of state for medical care. We want to make sure to keep local health care to a higher standard.”

The UF Health Heart & Vascular Hospital will focus solely on patients with heart and vascular needs while the UF Health Neuromedicine Hospital will focus on patients with neurologic needs. Housed in one contiguous building, each hospital’s focus will give patients concentrated care for some of the most complex health conditions. Consolidating cardiac and neurologic experts in one location will help provide shorter procedure times for patients and a variety of treatment options. It also will promote shorter hospital stays and faster recovery.

The Pavliks know firsthand the impact of heart surgery and how it can affect both patients and families.

Steve’s experience started with a mild heart murmur. At the time, his cardiologist was not alarmed. He scheduled a baseline echocardiogram and yearly follow-up exams and diagnostics. But the heart murmur got progressively worse.

During one follow-up visit, “my cardiologist advised me to consult a cardiothoracic surgeon,” he said. He needed an aortic valve replacement. Surprised by the diagnosis, the Pavliks quickly searched for a hospital that could perform the necessary surgery and provide subsequent aftercare.

The Pavliks sent Steve’s medical records to the Cleveland Clinic, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, North Florida Regional Medical Center and UF Health Shands Hospital. Ultimately he chose UF Health because of the surgeon’s reputation, the personalized treatment he would receive and the health system’s commitment to excellence.

“My prospective cardiothoracic surgeon was very patient at my first appointment. He spent an hour and 40 minutes with me, explaining my options and answering my questions,” Steve said. “He cared, and his calm demeanor and quiet self-confidence made the difference. It was clear that UF Health was the place to have the surgery.”

Steve’s first surgery was in 2003. He had a second procedure last year to replace the original aortic valve and add a pacemaker implant.

“The caregivers at UF Health are so dedicated — I can’t say enough good things about the doctors and nurses,” he said. “The staff on the cardiac unit deserves a lion’s share of the credit. The registered nurses, patient care techs and other support staff spend the most time with patients. They’re just incredible.”

Mr. Pavlik has dreamed of having a state-of-the-art cardiovascular hospital for more than 10 years — and now we can realize that dream together.” — Thomas Beaver, MD
His wife also appreciated the experience at UF Health. “When you or someone you love is sick, it can be very scary. You will be nervous,” Trish said. “You can feel confident that you are where you need to be, getting the best possible care you can have. We did our research and knew Steve was in the best of hands.”

Once he had fully recovered, Steve became a volunteer on the cardiac unit, and Trish volunteered as a cuddler on the neonatal intensive care unit.

“Steve would ask the charge nurse (on the cardiac unit) about any patients who were undergoing surgery or ones that had no family — someone who might need a visit,” Trish said. “It’s a scary time, but if you see someone healthy who you can talk to, it helps to alleviate some of the apprehension. Steve might say, ‘I had the same surgeon and the same procedure.’”

Steve agreed with his wife’s observations. “It was rewarding,” Steve said. “It helped me as much — if not more than — it helped the patients.”

Encompassing a total of 521,104 square feet, the new hospitals will have a combined 216 rooms. Radiology, presurgery, laboratory and other support services will be on the first floor of both hospitals, so patients can have most of their health care needs met in one building. Inpatient rooms will be on the upper floors of the hospitals. The hospitals also will feature multiple hybrid operating rooms with the capability of adapting to rapidly changing medical technology.

“Mr. Pavlik has dreamed of having a state-of-the-art cardiovascular hospital for more than 10 years — and now we can realize that dream together,” said Thomas Beaver, MD, chief in the division of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the UF College of Medicine. “We are looking for friends of the university to help support this vision. It’s not just for people in Gainesville. UF Health serves people in Florida and the Southeast. We are one of the few hospitals that received patients from nearly every state in the union last year.”

WALTERS continued from page 2

“At home, he would take my stethoscope and perform checkups on his older brother Mark and me,” she said. “He always asked very sensible questions. Hugh said when he grew up, he wanted to be a doctor.”

By his teenage years — now in the United States — Walters volunteered at a Central Florida hospital during school breaks. Because he was a minor, he was not in direct patient contact — but that didn’t stop him from helping. He pitched in with office work or wherever else he was needed.

Ultimately, Walters received his undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University.

During his second year of medical school at the UF College of Medicine, he was accepted into the Research Scholars Program, sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the National Institutes of Health. In addition to his surgical residency at UF, Walters also completed one year of training in critical care medicine. His lifelong ambition was to be a trauma surgeon in an academic setting, where he could continue to do research.

The Walters hope their son’s legacy will inspire others. “We never knew he was involved in so many things until he passed away,” said Margaretta Walters. “He quietly worked and helped in any way he could. He never said, ‘I am Hugh Walters, MD,’ or ‘I am Dr. Walters.’ It was always just, ‘I am Hugh Walters.’”

“We taught him not to boast about what you can do. Just do the best you can, as long as you can.”

Past recipients of the Walters award include Makesha Miggins, MD; Claire L. Griffin, MD; Tad Kim, MD; Dean J. Yamaguchi, MD; and Darryl L. Hunt, MD, PhD.

CRACCHIOLO continued from page 3

“I never knew I had a passion for research until I came to UF. I couldn’t have gone into this lab without the Cracchiolos’ support,” Delitto said. “The Cracchiolos’ generosity is why I’m here at all.”

Pancreatic cancer is associated with extremely poor survival, Delitto explained, and about 80 percent of cases are diagnosed in the advanced stages — excluding any possibility for a cure. He hopes that his research will provide treatment alternatives to toxic chemotherapies.

“It’s rewarding to watch a young resident grow scientifically and gain confidence in their field,” Cracchiolo said. “It is most gratifying when we can help inspire a young doctor to challenge their scientific curiosity. By doing so, we know we are making a difference in their lives and the lives of future patients.”
Department of Surgery Names
New Chief of Pediatric Surgery

A University of Florida Health pediatric surgeon, who serves as director of pediatric minimally invasive surgery and leads the pediatric surgery fellowship at the UF College of Medicine, has been named chief of the department of surgery’s division of pediatric surgery.

Saleem Islam, MD, MPH, a professor of surgery who joined UF’s College of Medicine in 2007, has replaced longtime division chief, David Kays, MD.

“As the new chief of the division of pediatric surgery, Dr. Islam brings a unique skill set that will promote growth in children’s surgical services clinically and academically,” said Kevin Behrns, MD, chair of the UF Department of Surgery. “He is an outstanding clinician who excels at minimally invasive techniques and gastrointestinal surgery. In addition, he has a superb national reputation in outcomes research, which will advance our academic efforts. We look forward to working with Dr. Islam to continue building an ever more excellent pediatric surgery team.”

Islam is board-certified in pediatric surgery and is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the American Academy of Pediatrics. He earned his medical degree from the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan. He completed his general surgery residency at the University of Massachusetts, later becoming a research fellow in pediatric surgery at Harvard Medical School, and completed a pediatric surgery fellowship at the University of Michigan. He obtained his master’s degree in public health from the University of Massachusetts.

He also serves as chair of the American Pediatric Surgical Association’s Outcomes and Evidence Based Practice Committee and the Publication Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Surgery. In addition, he’s trained as an advanced trauma life support instructor for the American College of Surgeons.

As a researcher, Islam’s clinical interests include studying gastrointestinal motility disorders and how care can be advanced to improve outcomes for children with these conditions. He has published more than 100 papers in peer-reviewed journals, focusing on outcomes-based research as well as multicenter studies and trials.

As division chief, Islam aims to build more clinical collaborations between pediatric surgery and various specialties within the department of pediatrics, to help further the vision and mission of UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital. He also hopes to bolster already successful programs within the division, such as the UF Health Pediatric Burn Center. The center is the only program of its kind in North Florida and treats patients from across the region.

Other goals Islam has for the division include expanding educational efforts and devising more innovative ways of teaching, building on existing educational strengths in the division. He also hopes to broaden the division’s involvement in quality improvement research, ensuring surgeons are providing the best care possible to patients.
George Sarosi, MD, the Robert H. Hux Professor in the UF Department of Surgery, has been elected to the American Board of Surgery’s, or ABS, board of directors. He will serve a six-year term.

“It’s a huge honor. There is a lot of thought going into the structure of surgical training, and the American Board of Surgery plays a role in that. From the perspective of a program director, it’s exciting to have the opportunity to participate in national processes,” Sarosi said. The American Medical Association nominated the UF professor to the ABS board of directors. “With two directors on the ABS, the UF Department of Surgery is only one of four institutions currently represented by multiple board members,” said Kevin Behrns, MD, the Edward R. Woodward Professor and chairman of the UF Department of Surgery. Behrns is currently on the ABS board of directors. Since 1984, the department has had a director on the ABS board for all but five interspersed years, he noted.

Other UF surgeons appointed to the ABS board include Edward M. Copeland III, MD, a former Edward R. Woodward Distinguished Professor of Surgery and chairman of surgery at the UF College of Medicine; Kirby Bland, MD, a former professor and associate chairman at the UF Department of Surgery; and Timothy C. Flynn, MD, senior associate dean for clinical affairs at the UF College of Medicine and chief medical officer at UF Health Shands Hospital.

The department of surgery is grateful for the many gifts that patients, friends, faculty, trainees and others have bestowed upon us. This generosity represents thoughtful acts of kindness that allow us to advance our clinical, research and education missions. This issue of The Stitch includes several stories about how and why our benefactors have decided to share their resources with UF Health and the department of surgery.

Importantly, I wish to recognize the numerous faculty, staff and trainees who share nonmaterial resources with us on a daily basis. Words of encouragement from a supervisor, time a surgical resident spends with a patient and family long after their duties are complete and volunteering time for hospital-related charities are just a few examples of giving that occur without notice or recognition. Thank you to all of you who give so freely!

Similarly, larger material gifts are investments in our future and should prominently enhance our academic reputation within a defined time period. Increasingly, we will be dependent on philanthropic efforts for innovative care. Major advances in surgical care will come through a shared vision between donors and faculty who recognize new opportunities for surgical treatment.

The shared vision between donors and faculty results in a trusted relationship that envisions great possibilities. Let’s continue to build these relationships and make major advances in our discipline.

Again, thank you to all who have so generously shared your valuable resources!
JESSICA CIOFFI, MD, is an assistant professor in the division of general surgery at the UF College of Medicine. She specializes in pancreatic, biliary and liver surgery. Dr. Cioffi earned her medical degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine. She completed her general surgery residency at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a hepato-pancreato-biliary fellowship at Indiana University. Dr. Cioffi is board-certified in general surgery and is a member of the Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association, the International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association, the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract and the American College of Surgeons. She has received numerous awards and honors, including the Nathan A. Womack Scholarship Award and the H. Max Schiebel, MD, Award for Surgical Professionalism.

Dr. Cioffi’s clinical interests include general surgery, acute and chronic pancreatitis, pancreatic cancer, bile duct cancer, gallbladder cancer, liver metastases, cholangiocarcinoma, and bile duct injuries or strictures. Her research interests include the management and outcomes of pancreatic necrosis, postoperative outcomes after liver and bile duct surgery, and techniques to improve outcomes after pancreatic surgery.

LINDSEY GOLDSTEIN, MD, is an assistant professor in the division of general surgery at the UF College of Medicine. Dr. Goldstein received her medical degree from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She completed her general surgery residency at the University of Florida, where she also served as administrative chief resident. She went on to Brown University, where she completed a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery. Dr. Goldstein has a joint appointment with the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center. Dr. Goldstein is board-certified in general surgery through the American Board of Surgery. Additionally, she is a resident member of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, the American College of Surgeons, the Florida Chapter of the American College of Surgeons and the American Medical Association.
EDDIE W. MANNING, MD, is an assistant professor in the division of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the UF College of Medicine. Dr. Manning has a joint appointment with the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center.

Prior to his current appointment with the VA, he served in the U.S. Army as chief of general surgery at Reynolds Army Community Hospital, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. During that time, Dr. Manning also completed a tour in Afghanistan. He completed his cardiothoracic surgery fellowship and general surgery residency at the University of Miami, Jackson Memorial Hospital. He also completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Miami’s Department of Cardiothoracic Transplant Surgery. Dr. Manning earned his medical degree from Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Dr. Manning is a member of the American College of Surgeons, the Florida Medical Association and the American Medical Association. His interests include adult cardiac surgery, general thoracic surgery and robotics.

RYAN MESSINER, DO, is an assistant professor in the division of vascular surgery and endovascular therapy at the UF College of Medicine. He will practice at UF Health Heart and Vascular Surgery at Halifax Health and will begin seeing patients on July 1, 2016. Dr. Messiner earned his doctor of osteopathic medicine degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Medicine. He completed a one-year osteopathic internship and his surgical residency at the UF College of Medicine - Jacksonville, as well as a vascular surgery fellowship at Pennsylvania State College of Medicine. Prior to joining UF, Dr. Messiner served as an assistant professor of vascular and endovascular surgery at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa School of Community Medicine. His clinical interests include abdominal aortic and peripheral aneurysms, peripheral arterial disease, carotid artery disease, vascular access and varicose vein disease.

RICK BRIAN STEVENS, MD, PHD, FACS, has joined the UF College of Medicine as a clinical professor for the division of transplantation surgery. Stevens previously served as the surgical director of the Miami Valley Hospital transplant program in Dayton, Ohio. He also was a professor of surgery at the Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine, also in Dayton.

Dr. Stevens earned his PhD in surgery (transplant immunology) from the University of Minnesota Medical School and received his medical degree from the University of California Davis School of Medicine. He is a fellow in the American College of Surgeons and a member of numerous medical societies. His research interests are translational and clinical research aimed at optimizing cellular and solid-organ transplant outcomes.

Stevens will perform surgeries on behalf of the UF Department of Surgery at Sacred Heart Health System in Pensacola, Florida.
UF Health Department of Surgery Issues 2016 Research Awards

The department of surgery held its 12th annual Research Day on March 16, 2016. Michael T. Longaker, MD, MBA, FACS, the Deane P. and Louise Mitchell Professor and vice chair of the department of surgery at Stanford University School of Medicine, was the Lester R. Dragstedt Visiting Professor for the event. This year’s award recipients are:

**CLINICAL/TRANSLATION ABSTRACT ($500):**
- Tyler Loftus, MD (surgery resident and research fellow, Laboratory of Inflammation Biology and Surgical Science): “Early routine bronchoalveolar lavage improves outcomes for a select cohort of intubated trauma patients”

**BASIC SCIENCE ABSTRACT ($500):**
- J. Christian Brown, MD (surgery resident and research fellow, research lab of the division of plastic surgery): “Characterization of adipose derived cells from a novel mammalian model of regeneration”

**MCGRAY PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH ABSTRACT ($500):**
- Song Han, PhD (assistant professor, division of general surgery/GI, oncologic and endocrine surgery): “Mir-205 derived from pancreatic cancer cells induces cxcl10 production by the associated stroma”

**MENTORED RESIDENT RESEARCH AWARD ($25,000):**
- Resident: David J. Hall, MD (surgical resident), Faculty mentor: Tiago N. Machuca, MD, PhD (assistant professor, division of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery): “Ex vivo modulation of the Endothelin-1 Axis in a pre-clinical lung transplantation model”

**RESEARCH CAREER DEVELOPMENT AWARD ($25,000 EACH):**
- Sooyeon Lee, PhD (assistant professor, division of general surgery/GI, oncologic and endocrine surgery): “The role of mitofusin-1 and mitochondrial dynamics in ischemia/reperfusion injury in old hepatocytes”
- Elizabeth M. Thomas, DO (assistant professor, division of transplantation surgery): “The use of microfluidics and transcriptomics to implement precision medicine in post solid organ transplant patients”

Surgery Resident Presents at National Conference

Jonathan Rehfuss, MD, a general surgery resident at the UF College of Medicine, recently presented a research project at the Academic Surgical Congress, held Feb. 2-4 in Jacksonville, Florida. His work targets the relationship between monocyte gene expression and lower extremity vein graft outcomes. Selected among the best basic science research presented at the meeting, Rehfuss was awarded a travel scholarship and invitation to share his work at the Society of Black Academic Surgeons Annual Scientific Session, scheduled from April 28-30 in Columbus, Ohio.

Rehfuss and the research team identified a small, core set of genes within a monocyte that “likely influences the fate of a vein graft,” he explained. “We know from existing research that the body’s immune response following surgery plays some role in determining whether the graft will remain patent as intended or will gradually narrow and become useless.”

Using a series of mathematical models, the researchers were able to predict whether silencing each of these genes “might increase or decrease the chances of the graft remaining patent,” Rehfuss said. “By predicting which genes, when altered, might increase the chances of a bypass graft remaining open, we’ve identified targets for medications which could be given to improve the chances of a patient’s graft remaining open.”

Rehfuss’ mentor is Scott Berceli, MD, PhD, a professor of surgery in the division of vascular surgery and endovascular therapy at the UF College of Medicine. Rehfuss will graduate in 2019.

“The process that leads to vein bypass graft failure involves multiple systems within the body and is continually changing in the days to weeks to months following the initial surgery,” Berceli said. “The current work demonstrates that the first several days following graft implantation is the critical time at which we can change the trajectory of those patients who are ultimately destined to have their graft occlude in the coming months.”
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
How acts of kindness and generosity fuel education, research and patient care
New pediatric surgery chief named...and more

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THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY SPRING 2016

The Stitch

Advancing the Science of Surgical Care

Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world.

For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.

— Margaret Mead