University of Pittsburgh

# FACETS

School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
Spring/Summer 2015

## Elevating the Student Experience

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SPRING/ SUMMER 2015








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## FROM THE DEAN

*Greetings,*

Each fall, Provost Beeson provides the Deans' Council with data on the entering class of the University of Pittsburgh. Each year, the test scores, number of class valedictorians, diversity, and other relevant quality data provide a profile of the incoming class that reflects a continuous, substantial, and persistent improvement in these metrics.

While SHRS does not admit students until their third year, a sizeable majority of our undergraduate admissions are to Pitt students. This alone ensures that SHRS will admit enlightened, accomplished, and highly motivated students to our undergraduate programs. The enrollment of SHRS upon my arrival as dean for the 1991–1992 academic year was on the order of 300 students, of which approximately 75 percent were enrolled as undergraduates. The graduate enrollment included a rather small Master of Science program and the newly approved Master of Physical Therapy, our first graduate professional program.

It is noteworthy that SHRS undergraduate students also constitute a substantial part of our current graduate professional enrollment that, together with our highly competitive admissions, ensures an equally highly accomplished graduate enrollment. Completion of any of our current graduate professional programs qualifies these graduates to practice one of 15 accredited professions. It is further relevant that five of our 15 graduate professional programs for which credible measures exist are ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*, ranging from third to 23rd in the most recent rankings among U.S. institutions (**www.shrs.pitt.edu/academics.aspx**).

Enrollment for SHRS for the current year is more than 1,460 students. This reflects a near five-fold increase over the past 20 years. SHRS enjoys substantial diversity with 65 percent graduate, 65 percent female, and 10 percent international enrollment. This has also resulted in significant ethnic diversity that provides a unique environment for social enlightenment.

As one would expect—and as articulated in these pages—SHRS students are bright, engaging, and highly motivated. Their impressive individual and collective accomplishments are appropriately acknowledged in this issue of *FACETS*.

Warm regards,


Clifford E. Brubaker, PhD
Professor and Dean
cliffb@pitt.edu

# giving

"My, how time flies!"

I remember my mother making that statement when I was a young girl. I begged to differ with her … as a preteen, time was dragging on. It seemed like forever before I would be entering high school, or learning to drive, or going on a first date.

Today, however, I couldn't agree more with my mother! It seems like yesterday we were planning the school's 40th anniversary. And here we are again … planning for the 45th. Where does the time go?

I hope you consider the importance of time and choose to devote a few hours attending the SHRS 45th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, May 16, 2015, in the Connolly Ballroom, Alumni Hall, on Pitt's campus. Join your fellow classmates, SHRS faculty members, and staff as we gather to mark this milestone in SHRS' history. Come see how much we've grown and accomplished from our earliest beginnings. To take the opportunity to reflect on the past enables us to appreciate the present and anticipate the future even more. Your attendance at your alma mater's anniversary will enhance all of our reflections on the past.

I extend a personal invitation to join us on May 16. In addition to a reception and dinner, we will present awards including Distinguished Alumni Awards from each of our academic departments, a Philanthropy Award, and a Dean's Choice Award.

We have a block of rooms reserved at select hotels in the area and we're on hand to help you plan other activities during your visit to Pitt and the city of Pittsburgh. If you've not been back for a while, I'm sure you'll be pleasantly surprised by the transformation of the city and the growth of the university and SHRS.

If you'd like more information about our 45th celebration, please let me know.

I encourage you to call some of your former classmates and plan to return for this very special occasion in the life of SHRS. You're all a part of our family and we look forward to you returning for an overdue visit!

Sincerely,

Patty Kummick
Director of Development

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*What happens when SHRS graduate students from all disciplines sit in the same room and hear firsthand about the psychological and social issues of disability that affect the everyday lives of leaders in the Pittsburgh disability community? A conversation ensues that would not have otherwise taken place.*

*Sometimes it's a bit uncomfortable, especially when topics like substance abuse and human sexuality are broached. In last semester's Individual & Social Experience of Disability course, engineering students started talking to rehab counseling, audiology, and occupational therapy students. And everyone engaged with guest presenters, which included a person with quadriplegia, a recovering drug addict, individuals with bi-polar disorder and depression, and parents of children with cerebral palsy and autism.*

*On a cold January evening, some of these students shared their insights about the experiential value of this class as a bridge between "gown and town."*

# ACCESS

## Dr. Kate Seelman

**Dr. Seelman: Why is it valuable to hear firsthand about the experiences of people with disabilities and their families?**

"It added depth to my learning experience."

"It made me feel more comfortable about discussing taboo topics."

"It's one thing to read about a certain diagnosis, but to look into a person's eyes and see exactly what they're going through in their daily lives, it was inspiring."

"The sexual life of people with disabilities surprised me. I didn't know that people with cognitive disabilities could have sexual desire."

**Dr. Seelman: In your opinion, how do best practices evolve when you have firsthand experiences like this?**

"This experience changed my attitude. I think all of us are naturally judgmental, even though we don't want to admit it. Now I'm more aware. I check myself and think twice about how I approach other people."

"I learned the importance of not labeling people or ostracizing them because of their disability. As a health care professional, there's a need to treat every individual as a person, not as a diagnosis."

"I'm more aware of empathy as a best practice."

**Dr. Seelman: How would you incorporate what you've learned in this course in your field of rehab?**

"I will ask more about what's going on with the patient besides the disability—prepare a mental as well as physical checklist."

"I will take a step away from the science and talk about the psycho-social aspects of my patient's disability."

"I will think more creatively about how to accommodate people with disabilities in my future practice, even if it means modifying equipment or the way testing is administered."

**Dr. Seelman: What memory will you carry away?**

"The persistence of parents who came in and their desire to make things better for their children and others like them."

"The fact that people grow beyond their disability … that they look at life in a different way and still strive to achieve."

"Dan McCoy, the Pitt student born with spina bifida, who brought in his gold medals from the 2014 Paralympic Games in Sochi, Russia."

"The graceful way two people with disabilities discussed sexuality."

"The openness and welcoming environment in this class."

"The great community resources we have in Allegheny County for people with disabilities."

"How we as future health care providers need to volunteer with organizations that support people with disabilities."

"Watching my classmates' faces change from fear of who we might have to interact with to sheer joy at the prospect of who will be in our next class!"

"I remember every lecture with its details; actually it was the best course I have taken in my educational life, both the undergrad and grad."

**Dr. Seelman: Final thoughts?**

"I hope the presenters left feeling that they helped grow the community of health care clinicians who will eventually help all of us."

"This course should be a health care model that goes global!"

# Alumni News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Lisa Evangelista** (CScD '14) has been awarded board certification in swallowing disorder from the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders. She presented on the analysis of videofluoroscopy with objective measurements at UC Davis Medical Center in October 2014. Evangelista also co-presented on radiographic chest imaging with Dr. Towino Paramby at the 2014 ASHA Convention in Orlando Fla. She was an invited Grand Rounds speaker on localized and systemic variables impacting tracheoesophageal voice prosthesis following total laryngectomy at UC Davis, Department of Otolaryngology, in January 2015.

**Kendrea Focht** (CScD '10) successfully defended her dissertation in November 2014 and earned her PhD in health and rehabilitation science from the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Also in November 2014, Focht was invited to present on a panel discussion at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., on "Neurodegenerative Diseases and Dysphagia Rehabilitation: Applying Evidence to Clinical Practice." She also served as moderator for the session "Swallowing Grand Rounds: Case-based Learning and Interdisciplinary Collaboration." She had a manuscript recently accepted for publication in *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* and in January 2015, she became a research health scientist at the Ralph H. Johnson Veteran Affairs Medical Center after being awarded a CDA-1 (Career Development Award-1) to examine age-related variations in oropharyngeal swallowing in veterans. At that time, she also transitioned from a graduate research assistant position to a post-doctoral fellowship position in the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery in the College of Medicine at MUSC, and began her second year as lead clinician on an industry-sponsored randomized, placebo, double-blinded efficacy clinical trial examining serum-derived bovine immunoglobulin/protein isolate effects on oropharyngeal swallowing and voice production in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cachexia (secondary outcome). She also continues to work as the Lead Speech-Language Pathologist in the MUSC Muscular Dystrophy Association sponsored Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis clinic.

**Rachel Harkawik** (CScD '12) delivered a weeklong workshop in Saint Petersburg, Russia, titled "Enhancing Communication for Non-verbal Children" to the staff of the first specialized school in Russia for children with disabilities. The focus of the workshop was to provide the staff with education about language development in non-verbal children and augmentative and alternative communication strategies to help enhance the children's ability to communicate. She also presented a lecture at the 2014 ASHA Convention in Orlando, Fla., titled "Can Abandonment Be Avoided?"

**Towino Paramby** (CScD '13) has been awarded board certification in swallowing disorder from the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders. He presented two lectures at 2014 ASHA Convention in Orlando Fla., and he was the invited speaker on "Dysphagia Screening" at the Annual Stroke Symposium at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock, Ark., in October 2014.

**Samantha Procaccini** (CScD '12) has been appointed to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Supervision Training. She presented three lectures at the 2014 ASHA Convention in Orlando Fla., and she is the president-elect for South West Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association and has been appointed the associate editor of the *PSHA Journal*.

**Dr. Shelly Chabon** (CSD '80) was recently named vice provost for Academic Personnel and Leadership Development, Office of Academic Affairs, Portland State University, Portland, Ore.

## Health Information Management

**Tabitha (Holnaider) McDaniel** (HIM '07) is president-elect of the Western Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association.

**Dr. Daihua Yu** (PhD '14) received the 2014 Pitt Innovator Award in recognition of her contributions to innovation commercialization at the University.

**Sarah Winski** (BS '94) recently accepted the position of HEDIS business information consultant at WellPoint.

## Occupational Therapy

**Mike Balandiat** (OT '98) achieved re-certification as a Certified Hand Therapist (CHT), marking his 20th anniversary as a CHT. This certification indicates credentialing as an expert in upper limb rehabilitation and a commitment to continued professional excellence in hand therapy. Balandiat works with the Centers for Rehab Services – UPMC St. Margaret at Chapel Harbor in North Pittsburgh.

## Physical Therapy

**Andrew (A.J.) Grzesiak** (DPT '08) teamed up with his wife, Melissa, to create the STEPRIGHT Stability System for functionally specific balance training. They were on hand to discuss their system at the APTA Combined Sections Meeting in Indianapolis, Ind.

**Michael Gans** (DPT '06) was elected president of the Connecticut Physical Therapy Association.

**Dr. Julie Fritz** (PhD '98) was named associate dean for Research in the University of Utah College of Health. Fritz is a professor in the Department of Physical Therapy with a successful track record of securing research funding from a variety of federal agencies and foundations.

**Dr. Gregory Hicks** (PhD '02) has accepted the position of chair in the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of Delaware. Hicks also serves as associate professor and director of Advancing Diversity in Physical Therapy.

**Faith Goldman** (PT '66) was named the Excellence in Arts Literary Arts Winner. The award honors artists in the Torrance, Calif., community who have made an impact in the arts community.

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Ben Salatin** (MS '11) recently traveled to Korea to serve as keynote speaker at RESKO's annual conference and then lectured on 3-D printing capabilities at universities in Daegu and Busan.

**Domenic G. Mercuri** (Rehab Counseling MS '12) recently earned the 2014 Customer Achievement Award from the Reading Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Maggie Casteel** (Rehab Counseling MS '07) received the 2014 Belle Greve Memorial Award by the National Rehabilitation Association. The award recognizes persons who have shown unusual initiative or creativity in developing and/or administering a service program for people with disabilities. Casteel is currently the program manager for the National Organization on Disability's Wounded Warrior Careers program.

**Catherine Armstrong Getchell** (Rehab Counseling MS '04) has been appointed district manager of the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Pittsburgh District Office. She began her career with the OVR in 2004.

## Sports Medicine and Nutrition

**Dr. David H. Perrin** (PhD '85) is the new dean of the College of Health and professor of Exercise and Sport Science at the University of Utah. Previously, Perrin served in academic leadership positions at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the University of Virginia.

**Dr. Kysha Harriell** (BS '96) was recently "tapped" for membership into the Iron Arrow Honor Society at the University of Miami. The society, the highest honor attained at the University of Miami, recognizes individuals from the university community who exemplify love of alma mater, character, leadership, scholarship, and humility.

**Dr. Judith M. Lukaszuk** (MS '94, PhD '99) was promoted to professor at Northern Illinois University. Lukaszuk has been with the university for 14 years and also serves as didactic program director in the School of Family Consumer & Nutrition Sciences.

# Faculty News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Dr. Elaine Mormer**, assistant professor, received the 2014 Award for Excellence in Research, Clinical, and Teaching Posters during the American Academy of Audiology annual conference for her poster "Creation and Validation of an Educational Audiology Skill Set."

**Dr. Paula Leslie**, professor, was named the 2014 Distinguished Visitor by the University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom, for promoting international collaborations for research, knowledge transfer, innovation, and enterprise.

**Dr. Leslie** provided a seminar, "What on Earth are Speech-Language Pathologists Good For?" in October 2014 for Community LIFE - East End, Pittsburgh, PA. She also helped present a short course for the Gerontology Special Interest Group, an invited session for the Swallowing Disorders Special Interest Group, and three other seminars at the 2014 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention in Orlando, Fla.

**Dr. Ellen R. Cohn**, associate dean for Instructional Development and professor, CSD, has been named a faculty fellow by University Honors College as "a public recognition of a valued relationship." Cohn also presented an invited seminar at the Illinois Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Rosemont, Ill., in February titled "Telepractice and Tele-Ethics: Circa 2015." In 2014, she provided an invited commentary on that topic to the *Journal of the International Society for Telemedicine and E-Health*. She serves as (founding) editor of the *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*, and on the UPMC Telemedicine Advisory Committee. In 2014, as a member of the American Telemedicine Association's (ATA) Board of Directors, she served on a four-member committee to draft the first "ATA Accreditation Program for Online Patient Consultations." She also served on the ATA working group for the recently published "Practice Guidelines for Live, On Demand Primary and Urgent Care."

**Dr. J. Scott Yaruss**, associate professor, was invited to speak on stuttering treatment strategies at the 5th Emirates Otorhinolaryngology Conference in Dubai, UAE. He also presented for the Baltimore County Public Schools, the Ohio School Speech Pathology Educational Audiology Coalition, and several other organizations. Forms and summary sheets from his book *School-Age Stuttering Therapy: A Practical Guide* were recently published in Spanish.

**Dr. James Coyle**, associate professor, received the honor of Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) at its annual convention in November 2014. He presented several seminars and daylong conferences for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Advocate Health Care System in Chicago, the Colorado Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Fall Conference, and the Iowa Speech-Language-Hearing Association's annual convention in the area of swallowing function and disorders, their diagnosis and treatment. Coyle presented five seminars at the 2014 ASHA convention in Orlando, daylong seminars at the Speech and Hearing Association of Alabama and the Georgia Speech-Language-Hearing Association in February 2015. His research group, in collaboration with Dr. Ervin Sejdic of the Swanson School of Engineering, has published four papers in the past year from their NIH-funded investigation of acoustic and vibratory signals that occur during swallowing, including one study published in the journal *Brain Research*. Dr. Coyle is the research mentor for undergraduate student Sarah Pomfret in her pursuit of a Bachelor of Philosophy degree through the University Honors College. Pomfret will be working in Coyle's swallowing research laboratory investigating changes in swallowing function following single lung transplantation, and expects to defend her thesis in early 2016.

## Health Information Management

**Dr. Dilhari DeAlmeida**, assistant professor, and Dr. Mervat Abdelhak, department chair and associate professor, presented "A Study to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) Alert: A Use Case Example for a Learning Health System" at the Hawaii International Conference on System Science in Kauai, Hawaii in January 2015.

**Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, presented "Physicians' Outlook on the ICD-10-CM/PCS System and its Effect on their Practice" at the AHIMA Annual Meeting. This research was also in *Perspectives in HIM* in January 2015 with additional author Zahraa Alakrawi (HIM doctoral student). Watzlaf also presented "HIM Leaders and the Practice of Leadership" and was the moderator for a panel titled "HIM without Walls: Building Expertise for the Future" at the AHIMA Annual Meeting, San Diego, Calif., September in 2014.

**Dr. Bambang Parmanto**, professor, received a NIDRR grant award from the Department of Education for his proposal titled "From Cloud to Smartphone: Accessible and Empowering ICT." This five-year, $4.75 million grant supports a proposal to mitigate barriers to information and communications technologies (ICT) access for persons with disabilities and to harness the power of ICT to improve health and function, social participation, and employment of persons with disabilities. Parmanto also received the 2014 Pitt Innovator Award in recognition of his contributions to innovation commercialization at the University.

**Dr. Leming Zhou**, assistant professor, presented "The Genomics Education Partnership (GEP): An Undergraduate Bioinformatics Research Network Providing Transformative Course-based Research Experiences" at the 2014 American Society for Cell Biology meeting in Philadelphia, Pa., in December 2014. Zhou also presented "Comparative Genomics of the Muller F Elements among Four Species" at the Annual Drosophila Research Conference, Chicago, Ill., in March 2015.

## Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor, was awarded the inaugural Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Research Award at the annual conference in King of Prussia. The award recognizes an occupational therapy practitioner who has made a significant contribution to the science of occupational therapy. Skidmore's research examines cognitive and mood changes after acquired brain injury, and interventions designed to reduce disability.

**Dr. Skidmore** gave the Caroline Thompson Lecture to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Occupational Therapy. Her lecture was titled "Acute Cognitive Impairments: New Approaches to Intervention."

**Dr. Nancy Baker**, associate professor, was awarded the Ann Kunkel Advocacy Award, an Award of Merit from the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals at its 2014 Annual Meeting in Boston. The award is presented to an ARHP member with a history of advocating at local, regional, and national levels. Baker has advocated for awareness and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders through her participation in the U.S. Bone and Joint Initiative, the Arthritis Foundation, and the CDC Arthritis Branch, through research targeting interventions for musculoskeletal disorders, and through direct education of consumers in methods to prevent musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace.

**Dr. Margo Holm**, professor emerita, recently spent two months as a Fulbright Specialist, working with faculty and students at Soonchunhyang University and Yonsei University, South Korea. She taught a course to undergraduate occupational therapy students and she conducted a workshop on the Performance Assessment of Self-Care Skills for clinicians, occupational therapy faculty, and graduate students.

**Drs. Holm** and **Ketki Raina**, associate professor, along with colleagues, were invited to present on "Targeted Temperature Management" at the 12th Annual Neurocritical Care Society Meeting in Seattle, Wash.

**Dr. Pam Toto**, assistant professor, was invited by the American Occupational Therapy Association to serve as a panelist/expert for a 1-hour Twitter session on falls prevention. #FallsPrevention reached more than 866,000 Twitter accounts and had an overall impression of more than 3 million.

**Drs. Ketki Raina**, associate professor, **Juleen Rodakowski**, assistant professor, **Joan Rogers**, professor and chair, **Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor, and **Pam Toto**, assistant professor, presented at the Gerontological Society of America's 67th Annual Scientific Meeting in Washington, D.C.

**Drs. Joanne Baird**, assistant professor, **Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, **Mary Lou Leibold**, assistant professor, and **Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor, presented at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association 2014 Conference in Valley Forge, Pa.

## Physical Therapy

**Dr. Joel Stevans**, assistant professor, received a North American Spine Society's 2014 Translational Research Grant Award at its annual meeting in San Francisco. The $35,880 grant supports Stevans' research project, "The Comparative Effectiveness of Reduced Patient Copayments and Bundled Provider Reimbursements as Agents of Behavior Change during Low Back Pain Rehabilitation in the Outpatient Physical Therapy Setting."

**Dr. Michael Schneider**, associate professor, and **Dr. Joel Stevans**, assistant professor, are part of a group that received the 2015 Jerome F. McAndrews, D.C., Memorial Research Fund, NCMIC Group Inc. Award at the ACC-RAC conference in Las Vegas. The North Carolina Employee Health Plan Research Study Group was selected for advancing research and exchange of scientific information, promotion of high ethical standards in research, contributing to practical applications in chiropractic practice, and interaction professionally with other individuals and groups in relevant research and application.

# Faculty News *(continued)*

**Dr. James J. Irrgang**, professor, physical therapy, and professor and director of clinical research, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, received the Paris Distinguished Service Award at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in February in Indianapolis, Ind. Honoring an orthopaedic section member whose contributions are of exceptional and enduring value, the award provided an opportunity for the recipient to present a lecture at the meeting. Irrgang presented "Innovations and Implementation Strategies for Assessing and Improving the Value of Care Provided by the Physical Therapists."

**Debora Miller**, associate professor, served as lead faculty for the HPA Section's LAMP Institute for Leadership in Physical Therapy 101 and 201 for "Personal Leadership Development: The Catalyst for Leading Within" and "Advanced Leadership Development: The Catalyst for Leading Others" at the APTA Combined Sections Meeting in Indianapolis, Ind.

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Rory Cooper**, distinguished professor and FISA/PVA chair, has been named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI). Election to NAI Fellow status is accorded to academic inventors who have demonstrated a prolific spirit of innovation in creating or facilitating outstanding inventions that have made a tangible impact on quality of life, economic development, and the welfare of society. Those named on December 16, 2014, bring the total number of NAI Fellows to 414, representing more than 150 prestigious research universities and governmental and nonprofit research institutions.

### Sports Medicine and Nutrition

**Dr. Kevin Conley**, associate professor, SMN, and associate dean for Undergraduate Studies, has been appointed chair of the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition. Conley was appointed following the departure of Dr. Scott Lephart who accepted the position of dean of the College of Health Sciences, University of Kentucky. Thank you, Scott, for your many contributions and years of service to Pitt and SHRS. And continued success to Kevin in his new role.

# Student News

### Communication Science and Disorders

**McKenzie Troutman**, CSD student, was nominated by SHRS for the University's 2015 Emma W. Locke Memorial Award. Troutman, completing her senior year, has demonstrated strong leadership skills through a variety of activities including former vice president and current president of the Pitt Chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association. Troutman has volunteered and/or worked in departmental research labs, daycare and after-school programs, and summer camps, while maintaining an exceptionally strong GPA. The Emma W. Locke Memorial Award is presented to a graduating senior in recognition of high scholarship, character, and devotion to the ideals of the University.

**Hyunsoo Yoo** (doctoral student) was selected as a Student Fellow of the Academy of Neurologic Communication Disorders and Sciences.

**Sujini Ramachandar** (doctoral student) has received two grants from The National Stuttering Association Research Fund to support her research on neural structures and function in individuals who stutter. The two studies, "Identifying Neuroanatomical Differences in People who Stutter Using High Definition Fiber Tracking (HDFT)" and "Temporal Activation Differences in People Who Stutter Using MEG," will help to identify structural connectivity and activation timing differences in the brains of people who stutter.

**Danielle Jones** (MA-SLP student) had a poster accepted for the Dysphagia Research Society in Chicago in March 2015 with **Dr. Paula Leslie** and Dr. David Smithard (UK).





# Student News *(continued)*

**Abigail Cryan** (MA-SLP student) has been awarded one of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation's new Fellowships on Death and Dying: the Elephant in the Room. This is an opportunity for students from a diverse array of health-related graduate programs to take on a key challenge: the reality that health care professionals are not well-prepared to deal with death, dying, and grieving families as it relates to their role as health care professionals.

The CSD Department hosted three Brackenridge Fellows, **Shawn Gyke**, **Jessica Jordan**, and **Allison Smith** (CSD students) during summer 2014. The Brackenridge Fellowship is a competitive and highly prestigious summer fellowship program enabling undergraduates to spend their summers working on mentored research projects carried out in close collaboration with faculty. Gyke worked with **Dr. Michael Walsh Dickey** in the Language and Brain Lab. Jordan worked with **Dr. Sheila Pratt** in the Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Lab. Smith worked with **Dr. Connie Tompkins** in the Adult Language Lab. All four students are also completing Bachelor of Philosophy theses.

### Health Information Management

**Carey Johnson** (HIM undergraduate student) received the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Browne Leadership Fellowship aimed at preparing students to be engaged civic leaders working for economic and social justice.

**Justin Klimchak** (HIM undergraduate student) represents HIM on the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Student Committee. Klimchak has also been accepted as a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and the Sigma Alpha Lambda Honors Society and he has completed the University of Pittsburgh's Emerging Leaders Program.

**Zanub Malik** (HIM undergraduate student) was inducted into Sigma Alpha Pi in recognition of her commitment to personal growth and academics, positive change in the community, and strong leadership goals. Malik also completed the University of Pittsburgh's Emerging Leaders Program.

**I Gede Pramana** (doctoral student) received the 2014 Pitt Innovator Award in recognition of his contributions to innovation commercialization at the university.

**Erh-Hsuan Wang** (doctoral student) was awarded funding through the SHRS Research Development fund to support her research entitled "Communication App for People with Communication Disabilities – Usability Study."

### Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, and MOT students **Julie Banyas**, **Rachel Bender**, **Ciara Brown**, **Elizabeth Carroll**, **Abigail Darin**, **Hadley Dean**, **Kaitlyn Goerl**, **Melissa Jenkins**, **Kelsey Laubham**, **Holly Peters**, **Cara Poli**, **Rachel Popovich**, **Rachel Sexauer**, **Ann Stankiewicz**, **Joelle Urquhart**, and **Emily Williamson** joined the more than 550 occupational therapy practitioners and students from across the nation for this year's American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Capitol Hill Day in Washington, D.C. This annual event is focused on meeting with legislators to advocate for Occupational Therapy and the laws and bills that are currently affecting the profession.

**Abigail Darin**, MOT student, was selected as a 2014 Jewish Healthcare Foundation Patient Safety Fellow.

**Jaclyn Mazza**, MOT student, was selected for the 2014-2015 Jewish Healthcare Foundation Jonas Salk Fellowship.

**Joelle Urquhart**, MOT student, was the 2015 recipient of the Award of Scholarly Excellence for scholarly contributions to occupational therapy research and practice.

MOT students **Kaitlyn Goerl** and **Rachel Popovich** were the 2015 recipients of the Award of Professional EXCELLENCE. Goerl was recognized for student leadership and promotion of occupational therapy awareness at the local, state, and national levels, and Popovich was honored for promotion of occupational therapy through leadership in community service.

**Melissa Swafford**, MOT student, was awarded the K. Leroy Irvis Fellowship for the 2014-2015 academic year. The K. Leroy Irvis Fellowship Program serves to enhance the diversity of the University of Pittsburgh's graduate student population and eventually the professorate.

MOT Students **Joelle Urquhart** and **Abigail Tuttle** presented at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association 2014 Conference in Valley Forge, Pa.

MOT Students **Julie Schubert** organized and led the SHRS Hat/Gloves/Socks/Scarf drive for a domestic violence shelter; and **Carolyn Mayer** organized and led a toy drive for the Alliance of Infants and Toddlers.

# Department News

### Communication Science and Disorders

The 2014 Matthews-Rubin Lecture in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders was held on September 4. Susan Langmore, PhD., professor of otolaryngology and director of Speech Language Pathology Services, Boston University Medical Center, and clinical professor, speech, language and hearing sciences, Sargent College, Boston University, presented "How Dysphagia Research Has Changed the Practice of Medicine."

Alumni, students, faculty, and friends of the Department of Communication Science and Disorders celebrated our new ASHA Fellows during the CSD Open House at the Annual Convention of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Orlando, Fla., in November 2014. Pitt alumni **Kathleen Helfrich-Miller** (MS '77, PhD '83), **Elizabeth Gavett** (MA '73) and **James Coyle** (PhD '08), who also is a current CSD faculty member, were honored as ASHA Fellows for outstanding contributions to the discipline of communication sciences and disorders.

*Dr. James Coyle, associate professor, CSD, Dr. Susan Langmore, and Dr. Herbert Rubin, professor emeritus, CSD, at the Matthews-Rubin Lecture.*

### Occupational Therapy

The Department of Occupational Therapy's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Program has been granted 10 years of continued accreditation status—the most years possible by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). ACOTE is recognized as the accrediting agency for occupational therapy education by the United States Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Of the nearly 70 million people worldwide who require wheelchairs for mobility and function, most lack access to appropriate wheelchairs, services, and providers. Now, a handful of University of Pittsburgh scientists are working with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under a two-year, $2.3 million sub-award to develop the new International Society of Wheelchair Professionals, a global network to ensure a level of standardization, certification, and oversight; to teach and professionalize wheelchair services; and to build affiliations to put better equipment in the right hands.

In January, the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals was launched and is administered by faculty members from the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology. **Dr. Jon Pearlman**, assistant professor and associate director of Engineering at the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), and **Dr. Rory Cooper**, HERL founding director and distinguished professor and chair, RST, will serve as director and co-director, respectively.





# Calendar of Events

## MAY

Saturday, May 16, 2015

**SHRS 45th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony** *5–8:30 p.m., Connolly Ballroom, Alumni Hall, University of Pittsburgh, $65 per person. Help us celebrate our 45th year, recognize our 2015 Distinguished Alumni award recipients, and honor Dean Cliff Brubaker for 24 years of outstanding leadership to SHRS. Call 412-383-6565 or email sjakiel@pitt.edu for details.*

## JUNE

Wednesday, June 24, 2015

**Athletic Training and Sports Medicine Alumni Reception** *Ballpark Village, St. Louis, Mo., 6 – 8 p.m., held in conjunction with the NATA Conference. For details, contact Amy Aggelou at aaggelou@pitt.edu.*

## SEPTEMBER

Thursday–Saturday, September 24–26, 2015

**Fourth Annual Symposium on Regenerative Rehabilitation** *Doubletree by Hilton, 150 South Broadway, Rochester, Minn. Hosted by Mayo Clinic, organized by UPMC Rehabilitation Institute; SHRS, University of Pittsburgh; The McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine; and Rehabilitation R&D Center of Excellence, VA Palo Alto Health Care System. For more information, email rehabmtg@pitt.edu.*

Monday, September 28, 2015

**Health Information Management Alumni Reception** *New Orleans, La., held in conjunction with the AHIMA Conference. For details, contact Patti Grofic at pgrofic@pitt.edu.*

## OCTOBER

Monday–Sunday, October 5–11, 2015

**University of Pittsburgh Homecoming 2015**

Friday–Saturday, October 23–24, 2015

**Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association 2015 Annual Conference** *Scranton, Pa.*

**Pitt & SHRS Ranked #1**
College in U.S. to Study Health Professions by *College Factual*.
**- MARCH 24, 2015**

## 2014–2015
# SHRS Scholarship and Award Recipients

**The following is a listing of SHRS scholarships and awards granted to students during the 2014–2015 academic year.**

**Bruce Baker Education Travel Award** *(school-wide)*
Shannon Achille
Kendall Cutrona
Brendan Doksa
Kristin Graham
Alexis Joseph
Karl Kemmerer
Justin Klimchak
Heather Livengood
Sujini Ramachandar
Whitney Rowley
Kaitlyn Stiefvater
James Thornburg
Valerie Williams

**Joyce and Andrew J. Kuzneski Jr. Student Resource Award** *(school-wide)*
Sharon Bomberger

**Anne Pascasio Scholarship** *(school-wide)*
Abigail Cryan
Sherry Greek
Shane Jordan

**SHRS Alumni Endowed Scholarship** *(school-wide)*
Stephen Rayner
Alexandra Savkova
Kristen Schaffer
Kirsten Stevenson

**UPMC Endowed Scholarship** *(school-wide)*
Kelsi Bubb
Alyssa Giegerich
Lyncoln Polkabla
Anthony Sowers
Sabrina Swoger
Stephanie Zmuda

**Mildred L. Wood SHRS Endowed Student Resource Award** *(school-wide)*
Muhammad Al-Heizan
Julia Barry
Rachel Kurtter
Lisa Martich
Rebecca Miller

**AVADA Book Award** *(CSD)*
Naomi Fireman
Elizabeth Haley
Rebekah Seger

**Emeritus Award** *(CSD)*
Julia Barry
Sarah Kelly

**Audrey Holland Endowed Student Resource Award** *(CSD)*
Kimberly Meigh

**Lisa Levy Memorial Award** *(CSD)*
Sarah Brand
William Martin

**Walt A. Stoy Award for Scholarly Activity** *(EM)*
Alison Cahalin

**Denise A. Dunyak Student Award** *(HIM)*
Kimberly Peterson

**Laurine M. Johnson Endowed Student Resource Award** *(HIM)*
Kimberly Peterson

**Cindy Zak Student Resource Award** *(HIM)*
Kimberly Peterson

**Joan Rogers Award** *(OT)*
Abigail Darin

**Dorothy Bradley Brown Scholarship** *(PT)*
Lauren Curatolo
Jenna Scanlan
Ari Silbermann
Maria Wright
Megan Zartman

**Mary Behling Browne Scholarship** *(PT)*
Jesse Smartt

**Pat Croce Scholarship** *(PT)*
Rebecca Russell
Rebecca Slater

**Mary K Daly-Crum Student Award** *(PT)*
Julie DeMarke

**David Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine Center/ Joseph M. David Endowed Scholarship** *(PT)*
Tessa Murray

**Anthony Delitto Scholarship** *(PT)*
J. Anthony Sinacore

**Victoria Green Memorial Student Resource Award** *(PT)*
Craig Soriano
Rebecca Slater

**Patricia Leahy Memorial Scholarship** *(PT)*
Kelsey DeLave
Sara Lippert

**Pearl Cricco Mann Scholarship** *(PT)*
Shawnee Good
Ryan Vietmeier

**Alice Chagnot Oulette Endowment Award** *(PT)*
Kristen Dengler

**PT Class of 2009 Student Award** *(PT)*
Robyn Szablewski

**PT Leadership Development Award** *(PT)*
Natalie Novak

**Paul and Judy Rockar Scholarship** *(PT)*
J. Anthony Sinacore

**D.T. Watson Alumni Scholarship** *(PT)*
Natalie Novak
Melissa Waters

**AAC Institute Student Award** *(RST)*
Szu-Han Kay Chen

**Rory A. Cooper and Dion Johnson Student Award** *(RST)*
Nathan Hogaboom
Maria Toro-Hernandez

**Todd Hargroder Endowed Internship Award** *(RST)*
Maria Toro-Hernandez

**Virginia Kaufman Scholarship** *(RST)*
Ava Constantino
Mariah Freeze
Sherin Heric
Samantha Kerin
Sara Lustusky
Victor Rivera
Celeste Rovito
Sarina Sechrist

**Thomas J. O'Connor Award** *(RST)*
Yu-Kuang Wu

**Sean and Stephanie Shimada StudentAward** *(RST)*
Jessica Burkman

**Freddie H. Fu Athletic Training Scholarship** *(SMN)*
Kinsey Dunst
Greg Kunis

**Freddie H. Fu Sports Medicine Graduate Research Award** *(SMN)*
Beth Abbott
Heather Bansbach
Amy Kalajainen
Erin Pletcher
Mallory Sell
Paul Whitehead

**Tim Kerin Memorial Athletic Training Scholarship** *(SMN)*
Mikayla Rosencrans



# In Memoriam

## Betty Jane McWilliams

Betty Jane McWilliams, professor emeritus in communication disorders and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, died February 20, 2015, at Longwood at Oakmont, Verona, Pa. She was 93.

A native of Martins Ferry, Ohio, McWilliams earned a master's degree at Pitt in 1950, and a PhD in speech-language pathology in 1953. She joined the Pitt faculty as an assistant professor in 1954. She was promoted to associate professor in 1959, and to full professor in 1967. McWilliams was named professor emeritus in 1991. In 2000, the University of Pittsburgh recognized her as a Distinguished Alumna, and honored her again in 2004 as a Distinguished Alumni Fellow.

Internationally recognized as an expert in cleft palate and craniofacial disorders, McWilliams was director of the University of Pittsburgh Cleft Palate Center from 1969–1991. She led a multidisciplinary team that included the professions of audiology, dentistry, nursing, otolaryngology, pediatrics, plastic surgery, psychology, psychiatry, radiology, social work, and speech-language pathology.

McWilliams authored numerous articles and other publications, coauthored a textbook, *Cleft Palate Speech*, in 1964, and edited the Cleft Palate Journal from 1975–1981. She served as president of the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA), the ACPA Educational Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Federation of Cleft Palate Clinics. A Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), McWilliams was awarded the 1996 Frank R. Kleffner Lifetime Clinical Career Award for "exemplary contributions to clinical science and practice."

A descendant of the Wall family of 19th century landscape artists, McWilliams collected their paintings. In 2000, the University of Pittsburgh Press published her monograph, "The Four Walls: The Lives and Work of a Family of Western PA Artists." McWilliams enjoyed travel, antiques, opera, and historical mysteries. In later years, she was an avid fan of Pitt and Pittsburgh team sports. McWilliams maintained lifelong connections with former coworkers, students, and friends.

## George H. Shames

George H. Shames, professor emeritus in communication disorders and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, died March 1, 2015. He was 88.

Shames served in the U.S. Navy in World War II at Pearl Harbor, 1944–1966. He later earned all of his degrees at the University of Pittsburgh: BS in psychology, 1948; MS in speech pathology and psychology, 1949; and PhD in speech pathology and psychology, 1952. Shames held professional licenses in both speech-language pathology and psychology.

Shames joined the Pitt faculty as an instructor in 1950. He progressed to the rank of assistant professor in 1952, associate professor in 1958, and professor in 1965, and was named professor emeritus upon retirement. From 1962–1968 he served as director of Pitt's speech and hearing clinic, and in 1967 he became chairman of the Graduate Training Program in Speech Pathology and Audiology—the precursor of the current SHRS Department of Communication Science and Disorders. In 1973, Shames was a visiting professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, School of Medicine, Australia.

Shames was renowned as an expert in stuttering. He developed an innovative therapy technique in the 1970s (with C. Florance) about which he delivered numerous invited guest lectures nationally and internationally. He was named a Fellow of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) and in 2006 received ASHA's highest recognition, "Honors of the Association" for lifetime achievement. Shames was a prolific author of research articles and other publications. He was the senior author of several editions of a popular textbook in speech-language pathology, several books on stuttering, and a textbook on interviewing and counseling persons with communication disorders. His treatment approach and a patented device were featured on ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, and other national media.

Shames had a lifelong interest in sports. A gifted athlete, he was approached to enter the draft as a professional baseball player. Instead, he chose to enroll in the University of Pittsburgh where, as an undergraduate, he lettered in baseball. Shames later served as a member of the University Senate's committee on athletics and as an academic advisor to Pitt's basketball players. He was elected to the Western PA Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

After his retirement, Shames wrote mystery novels, including *The Company of Truth*, published in 2005. He treasured time spent with his surviving wife Joan "Josie" Shames, children Hilary Shames and Matthew Shames, and his grandchildren and extended family. He also enjoyed traveling, watching sports, and "a good cigar." Contributions can be made to the Alzheimer Disease Research Center, 200 Lothrop Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

# H2P!

## Alumna Salutes the Pitt Philosophy

*It didn't take long for Dr. Kysha Harriell (AT '96) to become adjusted to life in balmy Miami, Fla. But the University of Pittsburgh—and the lessons she learned here—are always on her mind.*

As assistant clinical professor and program director of the Department of Kinesiology and Sport Sciences at the University of Miami, Harriell follows a student-centric philosophy that she attributes to her mentor, Dr. Kevin Conley, associate professor and chair of Pitt's Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition.

"I strive to show students that I want them to succeed, and that I will do everything I can to help them," begins Harriell.

"More than 18 years ago, Dr. Conley helped me secure an internship as an athletic trainer at the University of Miami, which eventually turned into my dream job," she continues.

"It proved to me that building positive relationships with faculty members is an important part of a student's college experience."

Conley gently reminds Harriell that she was not always the most motivated student! At a certain point, they decided together that it would be best if she take some time away from the program.

"It was a short break," Conley reports, "but when she returned, she was like a whole new person—very enthusiastic, motivated, and much more confident in her decision to pursue a career in athletic training.

> *"I tell [my students] that it's not who you know—it's who knows you!"*

"Kysha was, and to me still remains, one of the greatest success stories in the history of our program," boasts Conley. "I'm always thrilled to see her name in professional trade publications or journals because I know she's just done something great."

With her personal experience in mind, Harriell encourages students to do their part if they want to succeed.

"I tell them that it's not who you know—it's who knows *you*!"

She prompts them to become student members of professional organizations, and participate in events and conferences. "More importantly," she urges, "while you're there, network, network, network!"

Harriell says that when she interviews students for jobs or graduate assistant positions, she looks to see how involved they are. "This gives me insight into their dedication and passion for their profession."

As a faculty master at the Stanford Residential College at Miami, Harriell and her dog, Patella, live on campus and interact with students on a daily basis. She serves as a resource and advocate for students, and helps plan and implement regular educational, intellectual, and cultural programs.

*Dr. Kysha Harriell is assistant clinical professor and program director of the Department of Kinesiology and Sport Sciences at the University of Miami.*

"It's important for students to get involved on campus," declares Harriell. "I call it 'taking care of home.'"

She cites the many activities that she was involved with as a student at Pitt, including the Athletic Training student group, her sorority, and the Black Action Society.

"These organizations gave me opportunities to leave a mark," Harriell explains. "The positions I held taught me valuable organizational skills, and some of the ideas and events that I helped to create are still in place."

"Kysha is passionate about diversity and women's issues in athletic training, and is a tremendous role model and mentor for her own students," adds Conley.

Harriell believes she would not be where she is today if it were not for the generosity of the people she encountered at Pitt.

"I have a genuine love for Pitt and I feel the need to make sure the current AT students have the same wonderful opportunities that I had," she declares.

"As a senior at Pitt, I was fortunate to get funded to travel to Orlando to attend the National Athletic Trainers' Association convention. It made such an impact on me, both personally and professionally. This is why I give to the NATA fund at SHRS."

Patty Kummick, director of development at SHRS, points out that Harriell not only makes a financial commitment. "Kysha meets with our students at the conference to mentor them and encourage their involvement in their professional organizations. And she's still a huge fan of Pitt athletics!"

"I can honestly say I have never been as proud of any student as I am of Kysha Harriell," Conley admits with a smile. "And more than her accomplishments in school and as an educator and administrator, she is a beautiful person as well." ■

# Personalizing the Clinical Experience

## No two patients are alike.

No one knows that better than Deanna Schiff-Pasekoff, lead speech-language pathologist-REHAB in UPMC's Department of Otolaryngology, Division of Speech-Language Pathology. In her position, Schiff-Pasekoff sees a variety of post-acute patients on the Inpatient Rehab Unit at UPMC Rehabilitation Institute at Montefiore, including those recovering from strokes, brain surgery, and transplants.

"Most of our cases are medically complex," explains Schiff-Pasekoff. "There is no single solution or strategy that works for every patient. We must be very in tune with their individual needs."

As a clinical instructor, Schiff-Pasekoff applies the same philosophy to the students she supervises.

"Students come to me with various levels of skill," she notes. "They're all nervous until they get here. But they learn very quickly and do very well."

Associate Professor Cheryl Messick, director of Clinical Education in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD), attributes student success to Schiff-Pasekoff's unique approach.

"One of Deanna's greatest strengths is that she works effectively with all types of students," states Messick. "She meets them at their individual level and promotes their growth based on the skills they each bring to the table."

Laura Molin (CSD '13) came to Schiff-Pasekoff in the summer of 2014 as a new graduate student in the Master in Speech-Language Pathology program. "Since this was my first outplacement, I wasn't sure what to expect," recalls Molin. "But I soon discovered that Deanna is a great listener and looks out for her students.

"She encouraged me to trust what I had learned in class and apply it to my patients. I tend to be on the shy side, but Deanna gave me the confidence to recognize my success in my clinical placement."

Schiff-Pasekoff challenges her students to make every experience fun, functional, and memorable for their patients.

"It's a very intense environment," observes Schiff-Pasekoff. "We want the patient to do well because our goal is to get them home in a timely manner."

"Deanna encouraged me to find out the patient's interests, previous occupation, pre-morbid skills, and so on," explains SLP graduate student Dana Hughes. "By doing this, I was able to infuse these things into treatment. For example, if I found out a patient enjoyed traveling, I would ask him or her to walk me through preparing to leave for a trip in a sequencing task."

"Deanna taught me that it's important to lead with your heart when interacting with patients," adds Molin. "She taught me first and foremost to make a connection with the patient in order to make them comfortable. We achieve this by listening to the patient and altering our therapy to meet their specific needs."

Schiff-Pasekoff's current student, Lauren Gigliotti, also appreciates her preceptor's caring attitude. "She demonstrates how your relationship with your patients can make all the difference in their outcome," reports Gigliotti.

"Deanna takes the time to truly get to know and care for her patients, and you can see how much that means to them."

To further enhance their skills, Schiff-Pasekoff incorporates the graduate student clinicians into the rehabilitation team providing intensive speech-language intervention services.

Says Schiff-Pasekoff, "The graduate student clinicians see the dynamic relationship that exists between all members of the rehab team—speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, physicians, and nurses—and participate fully in the team. Students come to understand that, through our interdisciplinary team efforts, we ensure the patient is receiving the best possible care.

*Deanna Schiff-Pasekoff, clinical instructor, is surrounded by (from left to right) Laura Molin, Rachel Henney, Lauren Gigliotti, and Dana Hughes, CSD students who completed clinical rotations under her leadership.*

"Our students are very well trained when they leave here. In fact, they could work anywhere!"

Messick praises Schiff-Pasekoff. "She sees her role as an SLP in a teaching hospital as an opportunity to help train the next generation of SLPs.

"Over the years, Deanna has worked with more than 50 student clinicians from Pitt," states Messick. "Many of those alumni maintain their relationship with Deanna long after they graduate, as she continues to guide them in their professional lives."

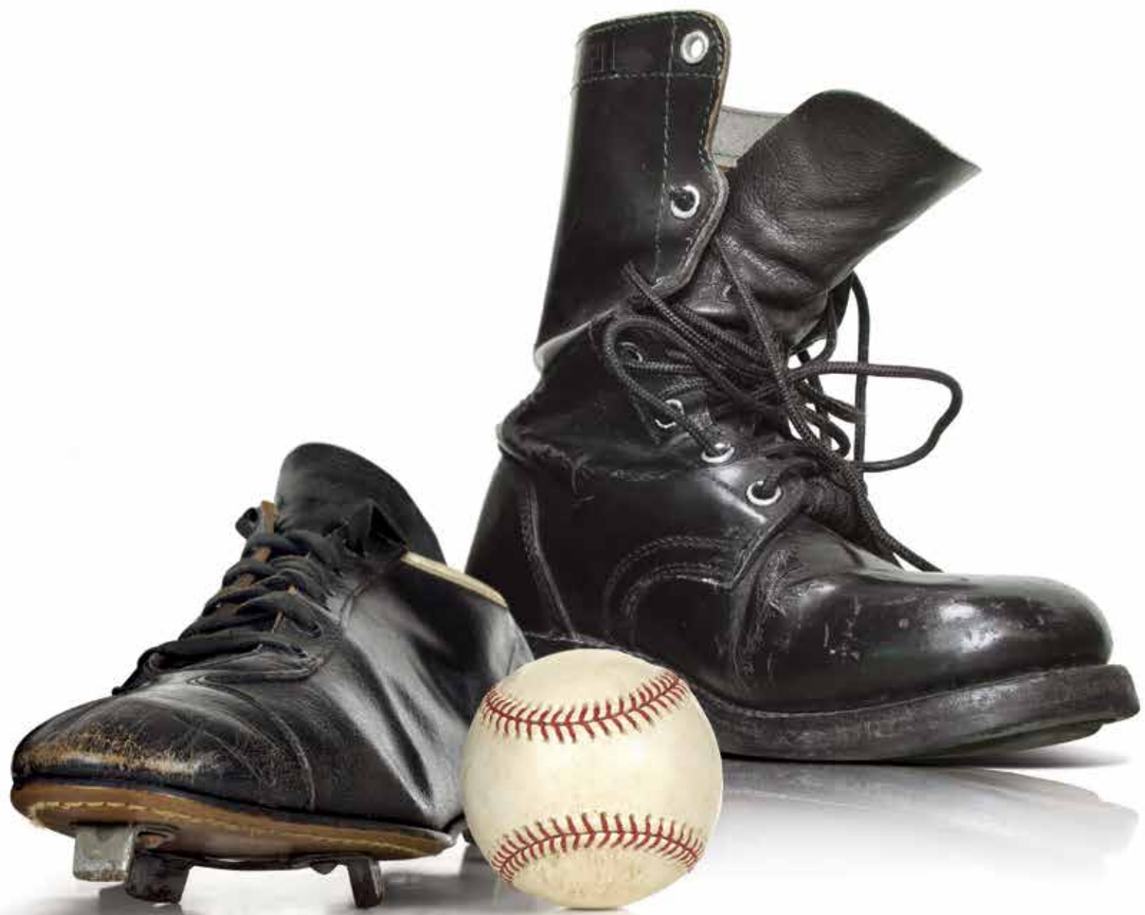
She notes that Schiff-Pasekoff has also hired Pitt grads to complete their Clinical Fellowship year under her guidance. "She is a true mentor," Messick adds.

"I just love working with students," admits Schiff-Pasekoff. "They keep me young and abreast of changes in the field."

Her enthusiasm has not gone unnoticed.

"Deanna always went the extra mile for her patients, as well as her students," says Molin. "And I saw the benefits of that work." ■

# From Athletic Field to Field of Combat



"I absolutely loved working in the Division Two level of collegiate athletics," affirms Erin Pletcher (BS '05).

As an athletic trainer at Philadelphia University for six years, Pletcher grew as a clinician, working with 18 varsity teams and their coaching staffs.

"It gave me the opportunity to learn the mechanics related to each sport," she explains. "It also allowed me to see a large range of injuries, each of which required its own rehabilitation specific to that athlete's sport and position."

Fast forward from the athletic field to the field of combat.

Now back at Pitt pursuing her PhD in rehabilitation science, Pletcher is taking what she learned as an athletic trainer and is helping the United States Marine Corps (USMC) determine the best way to implement the integration of females into the combat arms to ensure success and mitigate injuries.

"For me it's a whole new population of athletes," notes Pletcher.

Through a grant funded by the Department of Defense, Pletcher is collaborating with Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition Assistant Professor Katelyn Allison and a team of researchers from the Warrior Human Performance Research Center at Pitt's Neuromuscular Research Laboratory (NMRL).

Working with enlisted volunteers at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, they are investigating the specific musculoskeletal, physiological, and nutritional demands of female and male Marines who are required to perform certain Military Operational Specialty (MOS) tactical activities.

For example, will the artilleryman—or woman—be able to load 100-pound rounds of ammunition, time and time again, as needed in combat? Will he or she be able to march 25 miles in eight hours, carrying more than 100 pounds of gear?

"We want to figure out what characteristics make a Marine successful and remain uninjured," says Allison.

"I think both the collegiate athlete and the female Marines share a lot of similarities," observes Pletcher.

But she also recognizes the differences. "With the Marines, the physiological demands are drastically different. They must wear tactical gear and complete their missions in a variety of environments and under dangerous conditions, either at sea or in rugged terrain."

"Also," Allison adds, "in sports, there are male teams and there are female teams. They never compete. In the Marines, both males and females are on the same team, performing the same tactical activities to achieve a common goal."

That's why the NMRL team is using field and laboratory test protocol based on components of physical readiness related to the USMC Physical Fitness Test and Combat Fitness Test, and those previously identified by the University of Pittsburgh as critical to optimize physical readiness and minimize musculoskeletal injuries.

Pletcher has made several visits to Camp Lejeune to meet the Marines and assist with data collection on these tactical athletes. At home in the NMRL lab, she is analyzing data and ensuring quality.

According to Pletcher, "Men and women have different strengths and weaknesses. The important thing is that we recognize these and are able to use that information to train for injury prevention and optimal performance."

"I spent the beginning of my career focused on the clinical training side of this issue," she explains. "It required me to get to know the student-athletes and work with them on a daily basis.

"By working with Dr. Allison and the rest of the NMRL faculty, I am delving more into the science side of gender differences. The work we do through the University provides concrete, objective data that can then be used on a larger scale."

Returning to education and coming full circle back to the University of Pittsburgh has always been part of Pletcher's plan.

*Pletcher has made several visits to Camp Lejeune to meet the Marines and assist with data collection on these tactical athletes. At home in the NMRL lab, she is analyzing data and ensuring quality.*

"I believe that education is the most effective way to evoke change," states Pletcher.

"In the past, I tried to educate my student-athletes about their injury, and why we're following a specific plan to return to full participation because I wanted to help them understand more about their bodies and how to care for them.

"In the future, I hope to teach within an athletic training education program. Having the experience conducting and critically evaluating scientific research and the gender-related outcomes during this project with the Marines, I will have more experiences and information to draw from." ■

# ELEVATING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

*What draws a student to SHRS? Highly ranked programs? Exceptional faculty? A prestigious university with connections to a world-class medical center?*

Clearly, all of these play a role. But there are other—sometimes intangible—factors that create a superior student experience. And opportunities that students simply cannot find anywhere else.

Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) Michael McCue says that our students benefit tremendously from the multidisciplinary approach of SHRS.

"Both the undergraduate program in Rehabilitation Science and the PhD program in Rehabilitation Science were intentionally designed to be multidisciplinary," notes McCue. "They give students a broad-based sense of the roles of different health-related disciplines."

"It's true," remarks Ellen Cohn, associate dean for Instructional Development. "Faculty, staff, and administration work in synchrony, and even across programs, to offer SHRS students a rich educational experience. SHRS colleagues are notably inter-professional in orientation and provide strong models of collaboration."

"Students repeatedly tell me that they appreciate hearing from classmates with different perspectives," notes McCue. "This helps prepare them for how they might be interacting with professionals from other disciplines when they are out in the real world."

## THE BACHELOR OF PHILOSOPHY– A TRUE POINT OF DISTINCTION

Few colleges or universities in the world offer exceptional students the chance to participate in the rigorous and distinguished Bachelor of Philosophy (B.Phil.) program.

Offered through the University of Pittsburgh Honors College, the B.Phil. degree requires students to maintain a minimum of a 3.5 GPA and pursue an independent research project under faculty supervision in addition to their other academic course work.

Mary Mitkish, a senior in the Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) program, plans to pursue a Doctor of Audiology (AuD) degree. She has spent the past two years working under the mentorship of CSD Associate Professor Michael Walsh Dickey.

Mitkish is researching eye tracking and non-written language as a method of observation of language processing. Her project has not only given her firsthand experience with the detailed process of scientific research but it has also provided her with support and confidence.

"Building a close working relationship with a faculty member has been one of the absolute best parts of the whole experience," reflects Mitkish. "I always have someone to turn to with questions and problems, as well as someone to share my successes with who will be equally as excited as I am."

## TAKING RESEARCH INTO THE WORLD

Through her research, fourth-year RST doctoral student Maria Luisa Toro (MS '11) is helping to change the way wheelchair providers in developing countries are trained.

While an SHRS student, Toro participated in workshops that launched the World Health Organization (WHO) Wheelchair Service Training Package, collaborated with a network of pediatric rehabilitation clinics for better wheelchair provision in Mexico, and participated in developing a research study for UCP Wheels for Humanity in Indonesia.

"This research sought to investigate the impact of wheelchair service provision compliant with WHO guidelines on the people who received the wheelchairs," explains Toro.

"Access to a wheelchair and wheelchair services are recognized as human rights by the United Nations," she notes. "Yet people with disabilities are among the poorest of the poor. Once I complete my PhD, I plan to work at a university back home in Colombia, which I hope will give me the opportunity to continue to collaborate with my colleagues at Pitt."

"Beyond the research lab, SHRS students are frequently engaged in other scholarly projects that give them an edge when applying for employment or advanced degrees," says Professor Joan Rogers, who serves as chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy (OT) and associate dean for Graduate Studies.

"OT students, for example, recently presented their work at state and national occupational therapy conferences," states Rogers. "With the guidance of their faculty advisors, they reported on the use of guided and directive cues in pediatric therapy instructions, and how to teach the use of an iPad using applied behavioral analysis."

*"Our program at SHRS has always been ahead of the curve, requiring coursework with a focus on community outreach, nutrition, and food education."*

## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Assistant Professor and Clinical Education Coordinator Patricia Anania-Firouzan says a strong network of clinical partners provides students with exceptional experiences.

"We currently have approximately 200 sites in about 35 different settings, just in the Department of Health Information Management," she reports. "Students on clinical rotations gain insight into a very diverse field of opportunities as well as an appreciation for the spectrum of health care services that cross over virtually all aspects of our lives."

Judith L. Dodd, sports medicine and nutrition assistant professor, adds that students in the nutrition and dietetics program often step out of the classroom and into the community. "This is so important, especially as research has reinforced the multifaceted roles nutrition, lifestyle choices and food have on both health promotion and disease prevention," states Dodd.

"Our program at SHRS has always been ahead of the curve, requiring coursework with a focus on community outreach, nutrition, and food education."

## MAKING THEIR MARK

Regardless of their degree programs, SHRS students find ways to personalize their learning experiences and make their mark. And faculty facilitates the process.

As Associate Professor and Department of Physical Therapy Vice Chair M. Kathleen Kelly explains, "From day one in our DPT program, our faculty stresses the importance of service to the profession. We feel strongly that when we serve as role models and 'practice what we teach,' we advance the field of physical therapy.

"For example, we encourage our students to assume leadership roles in the student chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association. Through their involvement, they learn how to advocate for patients, network with others in the field, and grow into true professionals."

In addition to professional organizations, students benefit from campus organizations and activities.

Kirsten Andrews (BS '12) is pursuing her Master of Science in health and rehabilitation science with an emphasis on rehabilitation counseling. She serves as president of the Rehabilitation Counseling Student Organization (RCSO).

"One of RCSO's primary functions is to allow the students in their second year to be a resource for students going through their first year," explains Andrews. "That dynamic between the first- and second-year students is what really convinced me to try for a leadership position within the organization. Another reason to get involved is the networking opportunities. It is so important to meet people in one's field who have had similar experiences and who have started to have successful careers."

PhD student Kelly Beck (MS '14) agrees. She participates in the Students for Disability Advocacy, where she says there are opportunities for networking, advocacy, and learning outside of the traditional classroom environment.

Beck adds that there's something else that has made her experience special.

"As a person with a disability, I have been very pleased with the treatment of students with disabilities in SHRS both from professors and fellow students.

"I have been able to communicate with my professors regarding accommodations and they have treated me with fairness and respect. Other SHRS students are very accepting of students with disabilities, and always strive to ensure equal treatment and accessibility."

"SHRS faculty and staff are genuinely dedicated to the success of our students and to the well-being of the clients they will serve," concludes Cohn. "Our faculty and staff believe in the potential of our students. We embrace all forms of diversity—including persons with disabilities.

"There is therefore, great mutual respect." ■

# WANT TO ENGAGE STUDENTS?

## THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT.

Dr. Elaine Mormer, assistant professor in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD), is engaging students where they live the most. On their smartphones.

Poll Everywhere is an easy-to-use software application that allows educators to connect with their students in real time from any smartphone or computer.

The instructor poses a question through the app; students respond via text or the Internet. As responses pour in, polling results are immediately seen as a bar chart on a screen, if desired.

Mormer says she likes to open her undergraduate Introduction to Audiology class with a poll that relates to a homework assignment.

"It's one of my favorite ways to do reading checks with my students," she confides. "I can see immediately how many students have done the reading, and if they understood."

"Poll Everywhere definitely motivated me to keep up with the reading," notes student Molly Balk, who took Mormer's course in the fall. "It was especially helpful in learning to apply our knowledge."

Classmate Emily Levin agrees. "It's a fantastic way to engage a classroom full of students at 8 a.m.! The poll really got us focused on the subject matter that we were going to cover that morning."

Mormer also finds Poll Everywhere a useful instructional device. In one class, Mormer had the students use their own computers to perform an online simulated hearing screening for a hypothetical pediatric patient. She then polled them to see the results. Based on their screening, did the child need a complete hearing test or not?

The majority found that the "patient" had failed the screening, which was the correct answer. But some students determined the "patient" had passed.

> *"Students are always engaging with their phones or their laptops. It only makes sense to use these devices to enhance their learning experiences."*

"We had a very good discussion about the discrepancies in the students' findings," Mormer observes. "Having immediate and relevant feedback is a very valuable feature of this app."

Elizabeth Haley, a graduate student in the Audiology program, likes the fact that Poll Everywhere takes student opinions into account. "Students appreciate when their points of view are considered in lectures," she explains.

She now incorporates the app into her own coursework. "SHRS programs involve lots of presentations," Haley reports. "It's nice to challenge myself with new ways to present. I also think audiology students—and probably most rehabilitation students—love to see new technology in play, especially technology that makes communication easier and more effective."

After a Poll Everywhere demonstration, other CSD faculty members got on board. Associate Professors Catherine Palmer and Cheryl Messick frequently use the technology at presentations and workshops.

At an upcoming conference of the American Academy of Audiology, Palmer will put Poll Everywhere to work, highlighting the new Pediatric Amplification Guidelines.

Palmer will present a case history, then poll the audience about what assessment or treatment should follow. She will then select the treatment that the majority of the audience chose, and a hyperlink will take them down a treatment path based on that decision.

"The polling feature not only makes the presentation more interactive, but also allows us to follow through with different clinical decisions to illustrate best practices, as well as the consequences of various clinical decisions," says Palmer.

Messick received positive feedback from speech-language pathology clinical instructors when she used Poll Everywhere at a continuing education workshop on clinical instruction, held at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Says Messick, "Poll Everywhere allowed a vehicle for active participation and for the workshop participants to share their ideas quickly on key concepts just discussed. It also provided a method for getting immediate feedback and modifying the content on the spot as needed."

As part of Mormer's Poll Everywhere demonstration to the CSD faculty, she polled her colleagues as to how they might use the technology in the future. "About one-third reported they would use the app as an interactive classroom activity, while others said they would use it to collect data or in professional presentations—or even to vote in faculty meetings.

"For me, using Poll Everywhere is a no-brainer," adds Mormer.

"Students are always engaging with their phones or their laptops," she continues. "It only makes sense to use these devices to enhance their learning experiences." ■

# STUDENTS AS CONSULTANTS: The Capstone Experience

A group of systems analysts, project directors, and physicians gather around a conference table listening intently as a team member offers input on how data can be used to improve telemedicine visits.

The speaker just happens to be Kendall Cutrona, a senior in the Health Information Management (HIM) program.

While this scenario is not typical for most undergraduate students, it's all in a day's work for Cutrona, who is completing her 90-hour capstone project in the UPMC Telemedicine Program.

"The capstone course is a pragmatic, independent project that is designed to solve a particular problem," explains HIM Department Chair and Associate Professor Mervat Abdelhak. "For a period of time, students are engaged in the day-to-day operations of a health information provider or business.

"Some students help conduct research, while others, like Kendall, act as a consultant for a new technology or product."

"Kendall has been a wonderful addition to our UPMC Telemedicine team," reports Cutrona's supervisor, Natasa Sokolovich, executive director, Telemedicine, UPMC.

"Through her experience with data analytics, Kendall developed a template that tracks multiple Specialty Telemedicine visits and links them to various clinical information. This data allows us to capture clinical metrics related to each virtual visit and analyze the patient compliance rates, and financial impact."

Cutrona is using that data to create a training module for medical providers. It includes segments that teach users about the equipment that is used in telemedicine, various video conferencing platforms, information about the legal aspects of telemedicine, and even telemedicine etiquette.

She sees great value in her project.

"The goal of telemedicine is to allow patients to stay in their own communities while they receive the best possible care," says Cutrona.

"It is very rewarding to help physicians in outlying areas and in small, rural hospitals connect with all the expertise of UPMC."

All undergraduates in the HIM program are required to complete the capstone project, which ensures every student has attained all the required professional competencies. In addition to their field work, students make a poster presentation of their project, take a mock exam developed by the HIM faculty, and sit for an entry-level nationally validated exam administered by the Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM).

"Our seniors function at the graduate level," notes Abdelhak. "We're very proud of the level of knowledge and professionalism they bring to the workplace.

"But there's always learning that takes place in any setting," she continues. "The capstone experience often moves students out of their comfort zone. They start to think out of the box, and that's a very good thing."

Cutrona found that her experience at UPMC Telemedicine taught her more about accountability and responsibility.

"I've seen how my work depends on the work of others, and how other people need work from me in order to complete their tasks," observes Cutrona. "This is very different from the artificial setting of a classroom, where you have due dates and work on projects in groups.

"The reports I run and data I examine at UPMC Telemedicine have value to the organization," she adds. "It's fulfilling to work on projects that are real, and to know that my capstone project will actually be used by providers."

*"Our seniors function at the graduate level," notes Abdelhak. "We're very proud of the level of knowledge and professionalism they bring to the workplace."*

Cutrona is convinced that her work at UPMC Telemedicine gave her confidence to face the job market.

"Having internships and clinical exposure gave me great hands-on experience," reflects Cutrona. "I had tangible things to talk about in job interviews."

Although she interviewed with other companies, Cutrona happily reports that she already received—and accepted—an offer of full-time employment at UPMC in the Information Services Division Rotation (ISDR) Program after graduation.

"We are fortunate to have excellent academic programs at the University of Pittsburgh with exemplary students who are enthusiastic to learn about new models of care delivery," observes Sokolovich.

"The UPMC Telemedicine program allows students to learn about telehealth and the impact that it has on expanding patient access to high-quality clinical care in a more efficient manner. The hands-on opportunity prepares students, such as Kendall, to launch their careers." ■

# LEADING AN INTERNATIONAL *CHARGE*

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences' Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) has always been driven to develop technology that enables people with disabilities to improve their daily lives.

But a recent $2.3 million grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) empowers RST to lead an international charge to provide wheelchair users from all over the world with the best technology and best possible service.

RST's first priority: The creation of a global network known as the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals (ISWP). The mission of the society is both admirable and daunting.

ISWP will strive to ensure a level of wheelchair standardization, certification, and oversight; to teach and professionalize wheelchair services; and to build affiliations to put better equipment in the right hands.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Pearlman and Distinguished Professor Rory Cooper will serve as director and co-director, respectively, while RST faculty, staff, and students participate through research, training, outreach, and advocacy.

"While there are 70 million wheelchair users in the world, 50 million of them are underserved," states Cooper. "The focus of ISWP is to ensure that good quality wheelchairs are available to all the people who need them."

Pearlman adds, "ISWP will be a central hub, coordinating activities, disseminating information, improving training in underserved areas of the world, and establishing a network of affiliates who can help carry out our mission."

Assistant Professor Mary Goldberg leads the advocacy and outreach initiatives of ISWP. "The affiliate network is extremely important," she explains. "We want to build capacity among the network's clinical staff to provide better services no matter where in the world they are."

The ISWP grant funds three graduate students to develop performance measures, assessment tools, and training modules.

Pearlman points out that although there are standards for wheelchair durability and strength, there are currently no good metrics for how wheelchairs perform in different environments, such as on rough terrain or urban streetscapes.

"One of our tasks will be to collect data on how wheelchairs are used in different landscapes and determine benchmarks that will translate to different places around the world," Pearlman explains.

As part of his PhD dissertation, graduate student Anand Mhatre will evaluate the safety and reliability of manual wheelchairs submitted by manufacturers from low-income countries and compare them with the wheelchair ISO standards.

"I feel ISWP is the 'need of the hour' for wheelchair services in developing nations," observes Mhatre. "On a recent visit to my home country of India, I could see that a lot of development work is required to upgrade wheelchair provision services. For that, I believe ISWP will certainly lead the charge."

Pearlman adds that there is no real way to know if clinicians in underserved areas are prescribing the right wheelchair for patients. To that end, ISWP is developing assessment tools measuring the knowledge of clinicians as well as the trainers who will ultimately advise and instruct their fellow clinicians on wheelchair service provision.

> "While there are **70 million** wheelchair users in the world, **50 million** of them are underserved."

Although ISWP is in its infancy, PhD student Alexandra Miles believes the assessment tools she is helping to develop will result in a uniform standard that translates to many different cultural contexts and languages.

"I have always been interested in international collaboration with rehabilitation professionals, and in investigating the health and disability disparities between the U.S. and other countries," remarks Miles. "This work will be very satisfying to me, both professionally and personally."

Prior to the formation of ISWP, Yohali Burrola (MS '14) worked with RST's Continuing Education group helping to develop a comprehensive online curricula for clinicians interested in assistive technology devices. Her focus has been on adapting the online material for Latin American countries and her native Mexico.

With the creation of ISWP, she was tapped to be part of the "Train the Trainers" team, training people from all over the world in the appropriate use, selection, and maintenance of wheelchairs.

According to Burrola, "Being part of the development of an international organization is a unique experience. It's also a challenge and a constant learning experience.

This project has encouraged Burrola to pursue her PhD. Her philosophy reflects that of ISWP itself.

"It's important to be more aware of the situation of others—to be more sensitive to their needs, more respectful, more tolerant, and more inclusive," she declares. "We are all human beings and should all have the same rights, the best service, and the opportunity to participate in our community." ■

# PASSION FUELS

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

*Top photo: Amanda Gilarski, David Ortiz, Kelly Harkins, Leah Wolfe, and Briana Suppes at the Pululahua volcano crater in Ecuador.*
*Bottom photo: Heidelberg Castle, Germany.*

Santiago Munoz claims there's a certain type of person who thrives in the field of prosthetics and orthotics.

"They must be passionate about their profession and compassionate toward the patients they treat," declares the instructor in the Master of Science Program in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO).

That's why when students approached Munoz and asked how they might travel to another country and get a different view of the profession—and perhaps help patients who would not otherwise have access to care—he was more than happy to facilitate the experience.

Collaborating with partners and professional colleagues in his native Ecuador, Munoz orchestrated an extraordinary trip for six students that spanned two full weeks in October 2014.

The itinerary included the opportunity to attend the 6th Forum Uniendo Fronteras–ISPO, an international conference of prosthetics and orthotics professionals from 22 different countries.

"The most valuable part of this experience was meeting and learning from professionals from other countries who are actively changing our field," exclaims MSPO student Sara Lustusky.

Munoz agrees that the exposure and networking with prosthetics and orthotics professionals from other cultures opened his students' eyes to new ways of thinking. But the highlight of the trip was an intense clinical experience.

Using parts and materials donated by Protelite SA, WillowWood Co., Becker Orthopedic, and Kiss Suspension, students treated a variety of patients with excellent results.

They evaluated and treated an amputee athlete with a vacuum-assisted suspension device, and fabricated ankle-foot orthoses for three children with cerebral palsy.

*SHRS P&O students evaluate a young boy with Cerebral Palsy with a local physical therapist in Equador.*

*P&O students Briana Suppes, Kelly Harkins, Leah Wolfe, Sara Lustusky, David Ortiz, and Amanda Gilarski with Angel Pulla, amputee elite athlete in Equador.*

They also treated an 18-month-old girl who was born without feet. After fitting her with "stubbies," she was able to take her first steps.

One of their solutions, a knee-ankle-foot orthosis for a post-polio patient with severe deformities in both knees, earned them an invitation to present their case at the International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics World Congress in Paris, France, in June 2015.

"It was amazing to see how the devices we created changed our patients' lives," reflects MSPO student Amanda Gilarski (BS '13). "These individuals did not have the means to receive such devices without us, and the results were heartwarming."

"Being able to help those patients re-ignited the fire I had about this profession," adds fellow student Kelly Harkins.

Six other MSPO students gained an international perspective last August when they made a trip to Germany with Assistant Professor Goeran Fiedler.

This group visited five different prosthetics- and orthotics-related facilities in five days. At Rehability, a large provider of individualized mobility solutions in Heidelberg, they had the opportunity to test-drive equipment, including manual and powered wheelchairs.

"It was great to have a day dedicated to assistive technology," notes MSPO student Nicholas Sellas. "We gained a better appreciation for the devices and what might be appropriate for our patients."

While in Heidelberg, the students also visited the University Gait Laboratory and the Prosthetics/Orthotics Workshop before heading to Landstuhl and the largest U.S. military hospital outside of the continental United States.

"Landstuhl Regional Medical Center is a highly efficient, splendidly equipped facility," reports Fiedler. "It was a much appreciated privilege to get a firsthand impression of the hospital that many recently wounded veterans passed through on their way home from the combat sites in Iraq and Afghanistan."

One of the high points of the trip was a tour of Otto Bock, the world market leader in the orthopedic industry. Students went behind the scenes to tour the company's expansive manufacturing shops and logistics center, located in Duderstadt.

They also visited the Private University of Applied Sciences in Gottingen, where they observed the differences in prosthetics and orthotics education in Germany and the U.S.

According to student Michael Yiallourides, "The experiences we had in Germany were truly one of a kind. Practitioners rarely get to learn from professionals in other countries the way we did."

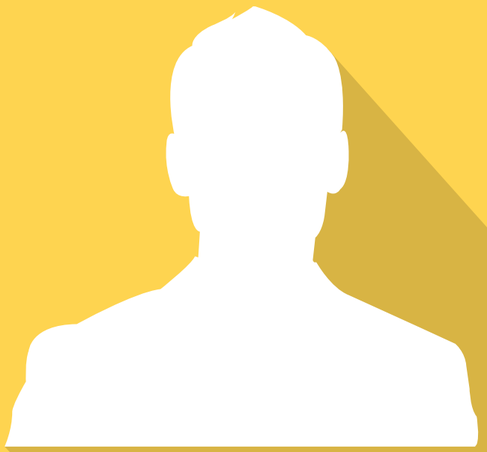
"The trip allowed me to meet a wide variety of individuals, which will lead to a larger network of resources when working in the field," states student Tucker Kirby.

Both Munoz and Fiedler hope these experiences will lead to even more international exposure for students.

"It's amazing to see how the students' own initiatives and passions are shaping our program," exclaims Munoz. "We are very proud." ■

*Reactivity Heidelberg.*

# Assessing Patients.



# Assessing Students.

It's not unusual for future health care professionals to use "smart" manikins to gain hands-on experience without putting real patients at risk.

But in the Department of Physical Therapy (PT), Assistant Professors Andrea Hergenroeder and Victoria Hornyak have elevated the use of computer-based simulations to help create better practitioners down the road.

Thanks to a 2014 Innovation in Education Award from the Office of the Provost at the University of Pittsburgh, Hergenroeder and Hornyak are using Assessment Virtual Patients to examine their DPT students' clinical decision-making skills.

"Until now, there hasn't been an adequate method to assess a student's understanding of—or proficiency in—clinical decision making," remarks Hergenroeder.

"This is very much in keeping with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education's mandate that PT programs develop ways to assess these important skills," she continues.

Funding from the award allowed the professors to create computer-based cases that included high-quality videos and rich medical information.

The simulations, which are run using the virtual patient platform (vpSim) developed at the Laboratory for Educational Technology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, were incorporated into their Management of the Medically Complex Patients course, a required class for second-year students before they begin a yearlong clinical experience.

In addition, they established a scoring rubric to evaluate students based on the clinical decisions they make with the virtual patient.

"The simulations challenge students to think critically about individual cases," explains Hornyak. "It becomes a 'choose your own adventure' experience.

"Based on how a student thinks the patient is responding to a certain treatment, for example, he or she may choose to continue the treatment, to modify it, or stop it altogether," says Hornyak. "With our scoring rubric, one decision might give a student a certain number of points. Another decision might give them more or less."

Hergenroeder adds, "It's a way of looking beyond rote knowledge and building confidence in the student's clinical decision-making abilities."

*"The simulations challenge students to think critically about individual cases," explains Hornyak. "It becomes a 'choose your own adventure' experience."*

Dr. James B. McGee, director of the School of Medicine's Laboratory for Educational Technology, and Maria Hahn, education systems manager, assisted Hergenroeder and Hornyak as they developed vpSim cases to meet the needs of the PT program.

"Clinical decision making is a critical skill for students of the health professions to acquire during their training," points out McGee. "It is exciting to see the technology used in the training of other health professionals, and its application to the assessment of clinical decision-making skills for physical therapists is especially promising."

While virtual patients are used in the University of Pittsburgh's Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dental Medicine, Hornyak believes that no other university in Pennsylvania is using this technology for PT students.

"We're very interested in sharing our knowledge and results at PT conferences and seminars in the future," says Hornyak.

Although this is the first semester that virtual patients are being used in class, the professors report positive student feedback came through their course evaluations.

"vpSim felt more beneficial than standard multiple choice exams and allowed more clinical reasoning specific to a visualized case," notes one student.

Another course evaluation indicates, "I liked that it gave a realistic simulation about what an acute setting is like because I have not yet had experience in that situation. It was nice that we were quizzed before the video proceeded. I felt that my clinical decision making was tested effectively. Also, when I guessed incorrectly, it was helpful that they explained why this answer was wrong."

An additional benefit to the technology is that it allows the professors to identify students who may need additional help in a particular area.

Hergenroeder and Hornyak envision using virtual patients well into the future. They plan to investigate the cost efficiency and student satisfaction, and develop ways to add new content to the case studies without reinventing the existing simulations from year to year.

"We're two faculty members who transitioned from clinical backgrounds to the world of teaching," admits Hergenroeder. "To find funding that enhances teaching and the education of our students is very exciting for us." ■

# Different Paths. One Passion.

*"What makes Joelle and Jaclyn stand out, despite their different journeys, is that they both consistently maximize their opportunities for learning beyond the arduous and intense curriculum already in place."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best: "Life's a journey, not a destination."

In the case of Jaclyn Mazza and Joelle Urquhart (BS '13), two students in the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program, their journeys define them and prepare them for leadership roles in their chosen profession.

Mazza began her academic career as a film and TV production major at New York University. After she received her degree, she worked in various off-Broadway theater jobs. While she loved the arts, she didn't feel the passion that she had hoped to find.

One day she visited the New York Aquarium, where she pondered her future and observed the remarkable relationship between the trainers and marine mammals.

"That's when I fell in love with walruses," Mazza admits. She began volunteering at the aquarium and eventually accepted a position as a full-time marine mammal trainer. During her six years there, Mazza developed a special bond with a geriatric female named Nuka, who was blind.

Mazza helped to create an educational program around her that was geared to school children with visual impairments.

"The children quickly saw how Nuka compensated for her disability, made adaptations to her life, and actually thrived in her environment," notes Mazza.

"It was a turning point for me."

A move to Pittsburgh for a job at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium and another volunteer opportunity—this time at UPMC Mercy's Brain Therapy Unit—led her to the field of occupational therapy.

"The concepts of meaningful activity, healthy habits and routines, and well-being through balance were things that Jaclyn discovered first, and *then* realized they were tenets of occupational therapy," remarks Assistant Professor Pamela Toto.

"I'm all about setting goals," explains Mazza. "I love to break down goals into manageable steps so they can be accomplished. This is what an animal trainer does.

"So it was very exciting for me to realize that I could use similar strategies to impact the lives of people."

For Urquhart, the journey toward a career in occupational therapy followed a natural progression.

"I've always believed in living life to its fullest," observes Urquhart. "When I found out this is the philosophy of occupational therapy, it totally made sense to me. This is what I was meant to do."

Urquhart was impressed with how an occupational therapist interacted with her grandmother, and how occupational therapy positively impacted her nephew, who experienced developmental delays.

Along the way, she learned that there was more than one way for occupational therapy to contribute to the lives of people. During her senior year as a rehabilitation science undergraduate, Urquhart approached Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore, associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, about conducting an optional Independent Study in research.

Under Skidmore's supervision, Urquhart examined the types of cues that therapists use with stroke patients with cognitive impairment. Urquhart contributed to the development of a scheme that can be used to study how types of cues can be used to improve the lives of individuals receiving occupational therapy services.

She presented her research at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute's 2013 Research Day. She also presented a poster at the 2014 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association annual conference in King of Prussia, and at the 2015 American Occupational Therapy Association annual conference in Nashville.

In addition, her research was published in October 2014 in *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*.

Urquhart's interest in research did not surprise her faculty advisors.

"I think learning about the ways that occupational therapists can contribute to our mission through research actually surprised Joelle," exclaims Toto.

Skidmore adds, "Joelle is exactly the kind of practitioner that we need to lead our profession in the upcoming years. Her enthusiasm for her own personal and professional growth, as well as her commitment to the advancement of science in our profession, is exciting."

"What I've admired about Joelle is that she has embraced and participated in research, and integrates this with her interests in her clinical practice," says Toto.

She goes on, "What makes Joelle and Jaclyn stand out, despite their different journeys, is that they both consistently maximize their opportunities for learning beyond the arduous and intense curriculum already in place.

"Each opportunity is met with a loud and clear 'yes!'" ■


# The Real World

*"A self-starter."*

That's how Ayesha Johnson, product analyst for UPMC Technology Development Center (TDC), describes Brian Richards.

A candidate for his master's degree in Health Information Systems (HIS), Richards fulfilled his 180-hour externship requirement at TDC under the supervision of Johnson.

As an intern at this fast-paced innovation center, Richard was surrounded by exciting new technologies that are being developed, tested, and integrated into all UPMC facilities. He takes it upon himself to learn new things that will enrich his knowledge and create opportunities that will advance his future career.

Richards was part of a team at the TDC that is working toward creating state-of-the-art imaging software. Richards' project consists of creating a database that will track all of the hours that are spent with clinicians.

"The process is very interesting," observes Richards. "We're collecting and analyzing data that will help us create software—basically a type of form—that senior management will use to make strategic decisions. But we're also incorporating the human side of things.

"Part of this project is to shadow UPMC clinicians to get clinical feedback that will be used during the requirements and design phases of the software development life cycle," he explains.

"By watching how different clinicians work, and engaging them through their feedback, we find out exactly what they need and what's important to them, so we can incorporate it into the next iteration of the software," notes Richards.

Johnson explains that clinical engagement projects require a wide range of talents. "Software engineers, developers, product and systems analysts, and project and program managers at the TDC work with a broad range of clinicians, such as radiologists, cardiologists, nurses, and primary care physicians, on innovative software developments.

"The activity may include providing a demo of a brand-new product, giving clinical feedback on future prototypes of new products, or participating in usability testing," notes Johnson. "All of this information needs to be tracked and documented."

The idea of a career in health information came to Richards after he was already established in a different business.

After working as a recruiter at another university for five years, Richards noticed a growth in a new industry.

"Because I was recruiting students for a master's-level program in nursing infomatics, I began researching more about the field," recalls Richard. "Obviously, I wasn't a nurse, but it sounded fascinating to me. The deeper I dug into the field, the more I learned about health information systems in general, and the important role it would play in the future of health care.

"I decided to make a career change and enroll in the Pitt program," he exclaims.

Johnson says that Richards has what it takes to succeed in the field. "Students must have the ability to quickly adapt to whatever changes are on the horizon and to stay focused on projects and deadlines, and have a willingness to learn new technologies, processes, and procedures as they relate to health care and health care laws. Brian embodies all of those qualities."

Patricia Anania-Firouzan, assistant professor and clinical education coordinator, Department of Health Information Management, agrees.

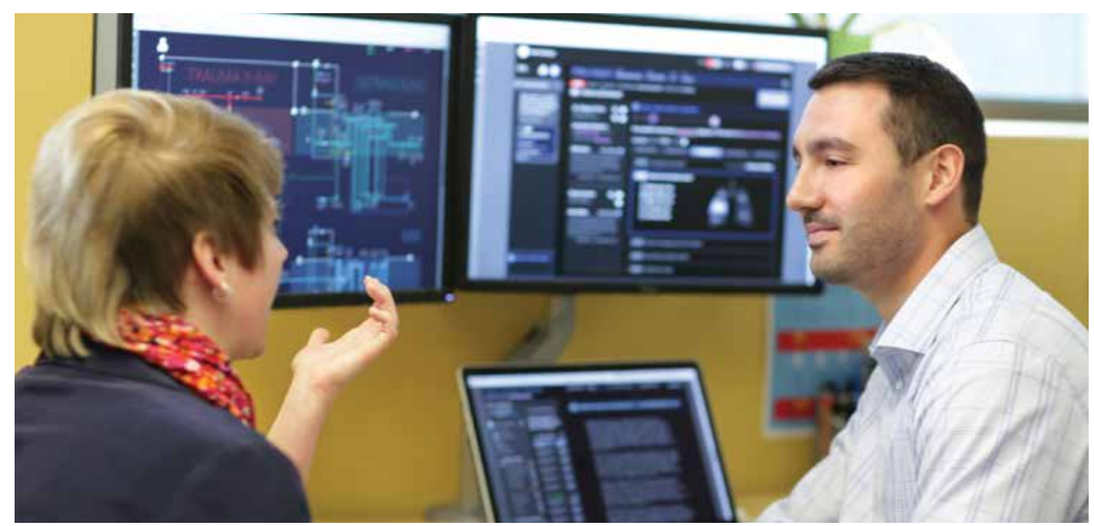
"When Brian approached me for site suggestions for his HIS internship, I immediately thought that he would be an excellent candidate for the TDC," explains Anania-Firouzan. "Brian is a very talented student. In addition to his strong commitment to learning, he has the right attitude that enables him to move forward and be resourceful in accomplishing his goals."

One of Richards' goals is to build his knowledge base—and his professional network.

"Working next to people who have such experience in this field has been very educational for me," admits Richards. "They break things down in ways that are very meaningful and important. I hope to take what I've learned here and apply it when I move into my first job."

"The people who work at the TDC have a wealth of knowledge as well as their own impressive network," observes Johnson. "So just being part of the TDC family will provide many opportunities for Brian to build his career.

"Having Brian as in intern has been a great asset to the team," she continues. "He is very motivated and I can see that he has the qualities to be a team player as well as work individually, which is needed in this field. Brian will make a great contribution to his future employer, and I wish him great success!" ■



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**School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences**

# 45th Anniversary Dinner, Alumni Awards Ceremony, and Dean's Farewell

**SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2015**
5–8:30 p.m.

**CONNOLLY BALLROOM, ALUMNI HALL**
4227 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA

Join us as the University of Pittsburgh's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences celebrates its 45th year, recognizes its 2015 Distinguished Alumni award recipients' accomplishments, and honors Dean Cliff Brubaker for 24 years of outstanding leadership.

**WINE RECEPTION**
5–5:45 p.m.

**DINNER & AWARDS CEREMONY**
5:45–8:30 p.m.

$65 per person • Business attire suggested

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to sjakiel@pitt.edu, or 412-383-6565.

SHRS 45 Years

## 2015 SHRS DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

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*Rehabilitation Science & Technology*

**David G. Greathouse, PhD, PT, ECS, FAPTA (BS '69)**
*Physical Therapy*

**Amy Hancock, (BS '89)**
*Occupational Therapy*

**Laurine M. Johnson, MS, RHIA, FAHIMA (BS '81, MS '88)**
*Health Information Management*

**Patricia A. Prelock, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL (PhD '83)**
*Communication Science and Disorders*

**Heather Prunty, MD (BS '02)**
*Emergency Medicine*

**Curtis Anthoni Sanks, PT, ATC, CSCS (AT '88, PT '89)**
*Athletic Training*

**Janice Schneider, MS, RO (BS '91)**
*Nutrition and Dietetics*

**Alyson D. Stover, JD, OTR/L (BS '03, MOT '05)**
*Rehabilitation Science Undergraduate*

## PHILANTHROPIST AWARD RECIPIENT

Joseph M. David, DPT, OCS, CSCS (BS '88)

## THE DEAN'S CHOICE AWARD RECIPIENT

Therese Willkomm, PhD, (PhD '97)