

U N I V E R S I T Y O F P I T T S B U R G H

FACETS

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

FALL/WINTER 2015

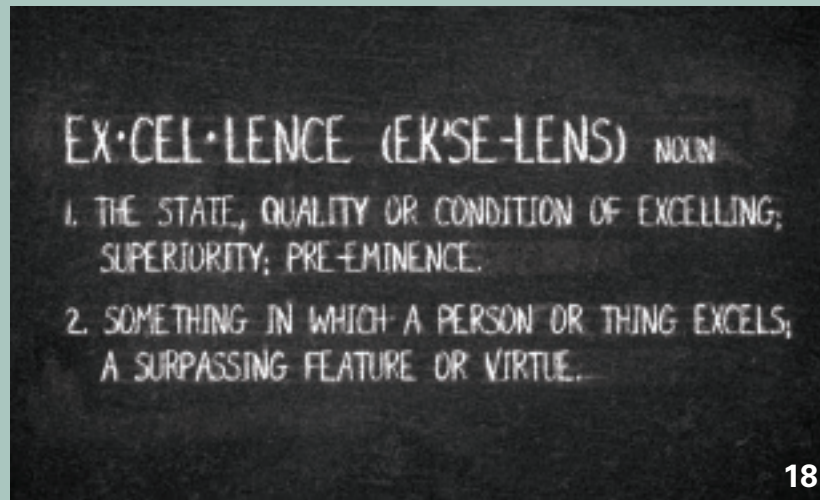
*We are
Excellence*

— OUR PROGRAMS AND FACULTY, —
OUR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

★
DEFINE US.

CONTENTS

FALL/
WINTER
2015



18



22



21



36

1 **From the Dean**
Dr. Anthony Delitto

2 **Giving**
Patty Kummick

3 **Access**
Dr. Kate Seelman

4 **Alumni News**

5 **Faculty News**

8 **Student News**

10 **Calendar of Events**

11 **Department News**

12 **Alumni Profile**
Distinguished Alumni
Awards Ceremony

14 **Clinical Instructor
Profile**
Briana Kelly

16 **Sports Medicine
and Nutrition**
Upping the Game for
Injury Prevention

18 **FACETS Feature**
How Do We Define
& Sustain Excellence?

21 **Tribute**
Dr. Cliff Brubaker

22 **Communication Science
and Disorders**
Ramping Up the
Clinical Experience

24 **Health Information
Management**
Wanted: Passionate Individuals

26 **Rehabilitation Science
and Technology**
HERL: A Powerful
Research Engine

28 **Physical Therapy**
Capstone Experience
Demonstrates Student Focus
on Patient Outcomes

30 **Occupational Therapy**
Driven to Excel

32 **Emergency Medicine**
Grooming Leaders in
Emergency Medicine

34 **Physician Assistant
Studies Program**
On the Pathway to Excellence

36 **The Real World**
Jonathon Jenkins

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University of Pittsburgh



FROM THE DEAN



Greetings,

One of my initial communication tasks as interim dean of SHRS was to write the “From the Dean” column for this issue of FACETS. Fortunately, the “excellence” theme for this issue provided me with ample material from which to craft this message.

In this column, I offer my brief commentary on the many achievements at SHRS that undoubtedly fall into the category of excellence. I realize that, as alumni and friends, your initial target will be those stories highlighting departments most closely aligned with your own professions. I strongly encourage you to read the articles representative of other departments and programs as well, in order to get an overall flavor of excellence in our school.

As a teaser, here are some examples of excellence without naming the department or program. You can assess for yourself the relevance of these topical areas to your own profession or area of interest:

- Incorporating Capstone projects into the curriculum that allow students on clinical internships to collect clinical data related to process and outcomes on patients, aggregate this data, and develop quality improvement programs designed to advance clinical decision-making and optimize outcomes;
- Tracking alumni as they develop products, conduct research, and advocate for change all the way to the policy level. In these situations, there is no better reflection on SHRS than through the performance of its graduates;
- Demonstrating a culture of mentorship by showcasing a rising star in her profession who has recently taken on a leadership role within SHRS. Any program in the country would have done somersaults to land this individual and she chose to remain at SHRS and Pitt for the next phase of her career;
- Taking care of our own. What good is professing to have expertise in an area yet not implementing this proficiency within our own institution? One of our programs has incontrovertible evidence that they are able to implement measurable injury prevention strategies ... strategies that will now be used to benefit a significant student population at the University of Pittsburgh.

These are but a few examples of excellence at SHRS. Fittingly, these achievements are representative of all three legs of the academic stool: namely research, teaching, and service. Balancing this three-legged stool most certainly represents a challenge for any health science entity and requires excellence in all three areas. I am confident you will agree that this issue’s articles promote just a few examples of overall accomplishment at SHRS.

Sincerely,

Anthony Delitto

Anthony Delitto
Professor and Interim Dean

giving



In May, SHRS celebrated its 45th year (a mere baby in Pitt's 228-year history!). We honored alumni chosen by our departments and programs as "distinguished" based on their professional accomplishments, community involvement, and SHRS loyalty. Read more about our distinguished alumni on page 12 of this issue.

It is always a privilege to recognize and celebrate our alumni and their achievements. After all, our alumni are a reflection on the school and our successes. In fact, our alumni serve as models for our students as Dean Cliff Brubaker would tell the graduating class in his SHRS Recognition Day comments, "Each graduating class of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences has enhanced the reputation of our school and elevated the esteem of our degrees to a status that enables us to make a legitimate, and even compelling, case that our school and its programs are indeed among the best anywhere."

Dr. Brubaker would then ask our newest graduates to "accept this responsibility and to uphold and further embellish our reputation and serve as ambassadors for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and for the University of Pittsburgh." Without a doubt, our alumni are the school's greatest asset. It was an honor to recognize not just the 11 who received Distinguished Alumni awards this year, but all of our alumni who go out into the world and make a difference providing services that lead to health, rehabilitation, advocacy, and greater access for people with disabilities.

Indeed, our more than 11,000 alumni have played a major role in the excellence of SHRS. And for the many hundreds of you who support us with donations of all sizes, you are feeding our quest for even greater heights. Through your gifts, you help our scholarships grow so that more students can receive financial assistance and deserved recognition. You value our research and training by supporting our faculty and young scholars who are searching for tomorrow's solutions to health and rehabilitation challenges. And you validate the university and its mission by expanding its all-important endowment.

I invite you to continue supporting excellence by serving as an alumni donor. Whether it's your first gift or your 45th, it makes a difference to our present and future students. I am available to discuss ways you can support SHRS and I am confident we have a giving option that's perfect for you.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to Dean Brubaker, who ended his 24-year term as SHRS dean on June 30, 2015. Cliff will take a much-deserved break for a year and return to SHRS in his role as professor. SHRS has grown and flourished under his leadership and has truly reached a high level of EXCELLENCE! And all the best to Interim Dean Anthony Delitto. He has very large shoes to fill and a drive and determination to keep SHRS on this positive trajectory of success.

Sincerely,

Patty Kummick
Director of Development

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We've all heard the proverb, "Hard work is its own reward." In fact, many of us live by this axiom in both our personal and professional lives. But when others acknowledge our efforts, we can't help but sit up a little taller and bask in the moment. Because College Factual recently rated SHRS and the University of Pittsburgh as the number one school for health studies, and U.S. News & World Report consistently ranks our programs among the best in the nation, we wanted to learn more about how they measure academic excellence.



ACCESS

DR. KATE SEELMAN

Since 1983, the Best College Rankings from *U.S. News & World Report* has guided educational choices for millions of students. College Factual, which shares its data with publishing companies such as *USA Today College*, provides a different – but equally valid – set of tools to assist students and their families in the decision-making process.

According to Robert Morse, chief data strategist for *U.S. News & World Report*, the high rankings of SHRS graduate programs were based on peer surveys of deans, administrators, and faculty at accredited degree programs or schools.

"Participants were asked to consider all factors that contribute to or give evidence of the excellence of the school's programs," explains Morse. "For example, they rated curriculum, record of scholarship, and quality of faculty and graduates."

The results of the surveys speak for themselves. In the most recent rankings for health disciplines which were published in 2012, the Pitt Audiology program ranked #8 in the country out of 78 schools surveyed; Occupational Therapy ranked #6 out of 156; Physical Therapy ranked #3 out of 201; Rehabilitation Counseling ranked #18 out of 88; and Speech-Language Pathology ranked #8 out of 250.

College Factual, however, used outcomes-based data when it named SHRS and the University of Pittsburgh the best school in the country for health studies.

"We leverage over 40 different sources of data for our site and rankings, including PayScale and the National Center for Education Statistics, a federal entity that collects and analyzes data related to education," notes Joshua McWilliam, College Factual's vice president, product.

"We looked at a variety of factors that ranged from early and mid-career salaries of graduates of a particular program to the strength and breadth of related majors in the school, and of course, overall quality of a school in terms of things like SAT scores, faculty compensation, and graduation rates," he continues.

In spite of using different criteria, both arrived at the same conclusion: the caliber of education at SHRS is excellent.

They also agree that rankings are not the best or only way to choose a college.

"Rankings are a start – not an answer," says Morse. "Students can use our rankings to create an initial list of schools to consider and to compare overall academic quality. *U.S. News* provides robust editorial content with its rankings to encourage students to research and consider different elements when comparing programs."

"Students must ask what is the best college for me, not what is the best college for a particular course of study," suggests McWilliam. "College Factual offers a customized process that matches the student and his interests with a school."

As students search for the right school and the best major, McWilliam reminds them, "Life is not about the amount of money you'll earn. It's about using your natural gifts and being happy with the choices you make."

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have built careers teaching, researching, and serving others through our work at SHRS know these are indeed words of wisdom. Ratings reward us by providing evidence to support realization of our professional and personal measures of excellence. We will continue to excel.



Alumni News

Communication Science and Disorders

Dr. Christine Matthews (CScD '10) earned her board certification in swallowing disorders from the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders. She is also the recipient of the 2015 Rick L. Bollinger Clinician of the Year Award, which pays tribute to the first president of the Association of Veterans Affairs Speech Language Pathologists and recognizes a clinician who provides outstanding clinical services to veterans with communication and swallowing impairments. Matthews was invited to present “Tracheostomy Tubes: Swallow Function and Pathway to Decannulation” at VHA’s Evidence-Based Treatment for Dysphagia Conference in Orlando in May 2015 and is chairing a committee tasked with developing clinical practice recommendations for managing patients with tracheostomies on and off the ventilator.



CSD alumni **Emily Furar** and **Jaclyn Kall** (MA, '14), speech pathologists, and clinical Instructor **Nancy Kneff**, lead SLP and team coordinator, The Watson Institute of Pittsburgh, presented a poster session at the 2015 ASHA Schools Conference in July titled “Expanding Complex Learners’ Communication: Using Core Vocabulary in Therapy Rooms, Classrooms, and Beyond.”

Katrina Killian (BA, '15) was highlighted in the April 2015 ASHA

leader blogjam column, where Killian wrote about incorporating speech-language pathology and audiology in study abroad experiences. She was also selected to serve a one-year term on the National NSSLHA Executive Council.

Annie Brandt (MA, '08) received a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching. She will travel to Finland to complete her research, studying how to improve interdisciplinary team training for improved special education practices in primary school settings.

Kendrea Focht (CScD, '10) attended the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s (ASHA) Research Mentoring (ARM) Network: Lessons for Success in April 2015. This program provides funding to attend intensive training for emerging scientists in the areas of grant preparation and funding opportunities, development and management of programmatic lines of research, and advancement in professional competencies. She also served on the editorial committee of ASHA’s Special Interest Division 13 Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia). She earned her board certification in swallowing and swallowing disorders (BCS-S) and completed a fellowship in Clinical and Translational Research Ethics (CTRE) certificate program.

Health Information Management

Laurine Johnson (HIM '81, '88) received the 2015 SHRS Distinguished Alumni Award and was recognized at the SHRS 45th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony for her contributions to the field of HIM and her dedication to SHRS.

Heather (Cunningham) Kaliden, RHIA (HIM '92) is employed as a regional sales manager for IOD Incorporated.

IOD is a broad-based HIM service provider combining people, process, and innovation to improve quality, access, and efficiency by optimizing HIM performance at every stage of workflow.

Occupational Therapy

Amy Hancock (MOT '89) received the 2015 SHRS Distinguished Alumni Award from the Department of Occupational Therapy. She was recognized at the SHRS 45th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony in May 2015.

Alyson D'Ambrosio Stover (MOT '05) received the 2015 SHRS Distinguished Alumni Award from the SHRS Undergraduate Program in Rehabilitation Science. She received her honor as part of the SHRS 45th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony in May 2015.

Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Dr. Shilpa Krishnan (MS PT '10, PhD '14) received an Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Program post-doctoral fellowship funded by NIDRR at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas.

Sports Medicine and Nutrition

Larry Cooper (BS '83) was the recipient of Training & Conditioning’s 2015 Most Valuable Athletic Trainer Award sponsored by School Health. He was featured in the May/June 2015 issue of *T&C*.

Andrea Olson (CDN '03) serves as a diabetes education dietitian at Peninsula Regional Medical Center, Salisbury, Md. She became a certified diabetes educator in 2012.

Faculty News

Dr. G. Kelley Fitzgerald, professor, was named associate dean of Graduate Studies in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, effective July 1, 2015.

Communication Science and Disorders

Dr. Elaine Mormer, assistant professor, chaired the conference program committee for the 2015 Council on Academic Programs in Communication Science and Disorders (CAPCSD) in Newport Beach, Calif. **Dr. Cheryl Messick**, associate professor, provided leadership at the conference in her role as the CAPCSD president-elect, and **Dr. Barbara Vento**, assistant professor, was a presenter in three sessions.

Dr. James Coyle, associate professor, presented a two-day workshop on dysphagia and medically complex adults at the Nevada Speech Language and Hearing Association convention in April; one-day seminars on clinical decision-making at the Promedia Medical Center, Toledo, Ohio, and at the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Washington, D.C., in May; and was the speaker for a one-day conference at the Utah State University Speech-Language Pathology Summer Seminar Series in June 2015.

Dr. Coyle also received the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association 2015 Clinical Achievement Award for outstanding contributions in advancing clinical knowledge or practice in speech/language pathology and audiology.

Dr. Katya Hill, associate professor, was elected to serve on the coordinating committee for ASHA’s special interest group on augmentative and alternative communication. She is also guest editor for ASHA’s “Perspectives on Speech-Generating Device (SGD) Funding.” Hill has advocated for revisions to policy changes made by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that places funding hardships on individuals requiring SGDs.



Dr. Katya Hill, associate professor, is co-hosting **Dr. Ming Chen**, a visiting scholar from Chiayi University, Taiwan, in her AAC performance and testing teaching lab on AAC. Their research relates to measuring performance and outcomes of children with autism and other disabilities who use AAC and contributing language samples to a database repository being constructed by Hill.

Dr. Elaine Mormer, assistant professor, delivered an invited workshop on evidence-based clinical instruction at the University of Haifa, Israel, in July 2015. The inter-professional group of faculty and community clinicians learned to adapt evidence-based clinical teaching tools created by the Pitt CSD department to clinical instruction in nursing, occupational and physical therapy, and communication science and disorders programs in Haifa.

Dr. Cheryl Messick, associate professor, assumed the role of president of the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders. CAPCSD is “dedicated to promoting academic excellence, visionary leadership, and collaboration among communication sciences and disorders academic programs.”

Dr. Sheila Pratt, professor, and **Dr. Erin Lundblom**, assistant professor, presented at the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s annual convention in Harrisburg, Pa., in April 2015. Pratt presented sessions titled “The Assessment and Treatment of Auditory Complaints in Blast-Exposed Veterans” and “Auditory-Visual Perception of Speech Across the Lifespan.” Lundblom presented “Collaborative Classroom-Based Service Delivery: Can I Make This Work?” and “Targeting Objectives Within a High Interest Activity: Embedding Intervention.”

Dr. Ellen Cohn, professor, was elected president-elect of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Dr. Erin Lundblom, assistant professor, was elected vice president of publications.

Dr. J. Scott Yaruss, associate professor, was named to the research advisory board for the National Stuttering Association.

Dr. Catherine Palmer, associate professor, received one of four University of Pittsburgh Provost Awards for Excellence in Mentoring in April 2015.

Dr. Palmer and Dr. Jenifer Fruit (AuD, 2011) were awarded a grant from the Hearst Foundation to support the HearCARE Initiative, which provides hearing support services in assisted living facilities. This year-long quality improvement project compares three types of hearing support that might be implemented in community living facilities.

Dr. Paula Leslie, professor, presented “From ‘NPO, Needs Feeding Tube’ to Palliative Dysphagia Management: How to Collaborate with Speech-Language Pathologists” at the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine and the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association Annual Assembly in Philadelphia, Pa., in February 2015.



Faculty News *(continued)*

She was invited to contribute to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association's (ASHA) online conference in Advanced Topics and Case Studies in Adult Dysphagia in March 2015 on the topic of "Patient (and Caregiver) Engagement in Complex Dysphagia." Her session was selected for a feature article in The ASHA Leader: "Are Others Questioning Your Dysphagia Recommendations?"

Dr. Leslie was invited to deliver a clinical seminar, "Dirty Secrets of a Speech-Language Pathologist: The Importance of Mouth Care!" to all Community LIFE Pittsburgh settings in April, and presented a keynote session, "Dysphagia Intervention: A Framework for Clinical Decision Making" and closing session, "How to Get to the Root of Things" for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Employee Education System, and The Office of Rehabilitation and Prosthetics Education Conference on Evidence-Based Treatment for Dysphagia in Orlando, Fla., in May 2015.

Dr. Leslie delivered two sessions at the ASHA Health Care and Business Institute in Phoenix, Ariz., in July 2015 on palliative and hospice care decision-making and ethics.

Health Information Management

Dr. Mervat Abdelhak, chair and associate professor, was invited to present "Patient Engagement Use Case + Patient/Provider Readiness = New Roles" at the 2015 European Medical Informatics (EMI) Conference in Madrid, Spain, May 2015. Abdelhak also presented "Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM): New Competencies and Accreditation Standards for Academic Programs"

at the Assembly on Education, Austin, Texas, July 2015; "Population Health: A Global Perspective" at the EMI 2015 Conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, August 2015, and "An International Initiative for the Capacity Development for Health Information Management" at the AHIMA annual meeting in New Orleans, La., September 2015.

Dr. Bambang Parmanto, professor, and **Dr. Leming Zhou**, assistant professor, presented "A New Security Assured Health Care Information Track" at the Assembly on Education, Austin, Texas, July 2015.

Dr. Andi Saptono, assistant professor, presented "Updates on the Functional Mobility Assessment Outcomes Registry" at the 2015 International Seating Symposium, Nashville, Tenn.

Dr. Valerie Watzlaf, associate professor, was the keynote speaker at the Georgia Health Information Management Association and presented "Reality 2016 and its Effect on our Future as Health Information Management Professionals" at Jekyll Island, Ga., in September 2015. As part of the CAREInnoLab research, she co-presented "How to be a Leader in Information Governance (IG)" and "Adaptive Leadership and IG Research Methods" at the AHIMA annual meeting in New Orleans, La., September 2015. Watzlaf also co-presented "HIM Leaders and the Practice of Leadership Through the Lens of Bowen Theory" at the Bowen Theory Around the World Conference, the first international conference on Bowen family systems theory, in August 2015.

Dr. Watzlaf also presented with **Zahraa Alakrawi**, doctoral student, on "Utilizing Open Government Data Sets in HIM Teaching: An Application in Statistics and Data Analytics" at the Assembly on Education, Austin, Texas, July 2015.

Dr. Leming Zhou, assistant professor, presented "The Genomics Education Partnership: Assessing and Improving a Research-based Genomics Project for Undergraduates" at the Fourth Bi-Annual Undergraduate Bioinformatics Education Conference, Latrobe, Pa., May 2015.

Occupational Therapy

Dr. Joanne Baird, assistant professor, gave an oral presentation for the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association, District II at Chatham University, Pittsburgh, Pa., regarding "Rules, Regulations, and Legislative Updates."

Dr. Nancy Baker, associate professor, recently completed a 10-month sabbatical with the Centers for Disease Control, Division of Population Health: Arthritis, Epilepsy, and Well-Being Branch. She was also named a visiting scholar for the Center for Rehabilitation Research Using Large Datasets, University of Texas Medical Branch.

Dr. Baker and colleagues presented a poster and two papers at the Work, Stress, and Health 2015 Conference Sustainable Work, Sustainable Health, Sustainable Organizations in Atlanta, Ga.

Dr. Roxanna Bendixen, assistant professor, along with a team of researchers, received a first place award at the Pitt Public Health Dean's Research Day for their poster "Strategies for Engaging the Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Community in Research."

Dr. Denise Chisholm, associate professor and vice chair, and **Dr. Margo Holm**, professor emerita, presented a workshop on "Performance Assessment of Self-care Skills (PASS)" at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr. Amit Sethi, assistant professor, was an invited guest speaker at the 52nd All India Occupational Therapists' Association in New Delhi, India. His presentation was titled "Guiding Principles to Improve Upper Extremity Function After Stroke."

Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore, associate professor and chair, was admitted to the American Occupational Therapy Association Roster of Fellows at the 95th Annual American Occupational Therapy Conference in Nashville, Tenn.



Dr. Skidmore was invited to give the plenary session at the American Occupational Therapy Association Stroke Specialty Conference in New Orleans, La. The session was titled "Addressing Cognitive Impairments After Stroke: Occupational Therapy's Unique Role."

Dr. Lauren Terhorst was recently promoted to associate professor. She also gave an oral presentation at the Responsible Conduct of Research Seminar, Clinical and Translational Science Institute, University of Pittsburgh, titled "Fishing in the Data Without a License: How Data Dredging Can Lead to Misguided Conclusions."

Dr. Pamela Toto, assistant professor, was appointed to the American Occupational Therapy Association's Distinct Value Task Force for Productive Aging.

Dr. Toto gave a client-focused oral presentation at the UPMC Benedum Geriatric Center titled "Tips for Managing Forgetfulness in Daily Living." She also presented a workshop on "Dementia: Impact on Everyday Activities and Videos of Patient Experiences" at the 5th Annual Behavioral Health and Aging Conference in Pittsburgh, and provided an oral presentation to the Geriatric Medicine

Fellows Program titled "Functional Assessment of Older Adults."

Dr. Denise Chisholm, associate professor; **Dr. Margo Holm**, professor emerita; **Dr. Joan Rogers**, professor; and **Dr. Pamela Toto**, assistant professor, presented a poster and an oral presentation at the 39th Annual Conference and Exhibition, British Association of Occupational Therapists and College of Occupational Therapists in Brighton, Sussex, England, on "Evaluating Capacity to Live Independently and Safely in the Community."

Dr. Nancy Baker, associate professor, and **Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, chair and associate professor, were selected to be inaugural members of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation Leaders and Legacy Society.

Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore, associate professor and chair, was invited to give the plenary at the National Traumatic Brain Injury Model System Leadership Forum in Pittsburgh, titled "Rehabilitation Research: How Can We Make our Mark?" She also presented her research on promoting goal-directed behavior through strategy training at the Occupational Therapy Research Summit in Los Angeles, Calif., and presented a workshop on "Cognitive Impairments After Acute Stroke: Application of Scientific Principles" at the Northwestern Ontario Stroke Network Rehabilitation Conference, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Joanne Baird and **Dr. Mary Lou Leibold**, assistant professors, presented a two-day fieldwork educator certificate program at the University of Pittsburgh.

Physical Therapy

SHRS Interim Dean and Professor Anthony Delitto was awarded the Robert C. Bartlett Trustee Recognition Service Award for 2015 from the

Foundation for Physical Therapy. Delitto accepted the award, named for the first Foundation president, at the American Physical Therapy Association's NEXT Conference in June in National Harbor, Md. The award was established to recognize and honor individuals for their service to the Foundation while serving as a member of the board of trustees. Delitto has served as a member of the Foundation's Scientific Review Committee, the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Doctoral Research Awards Committee. He was influential in the establishment of the Foundation's Scientific Advisory Committee and also served as the principal investigator of the Foundation-funded Clinical Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Andrea Hergenroeder, assistant professor, has been awarded grants for two new research projects.

She is co-investigator for "Reducing Sedentary Behavior to Decrease Low Back Pain (STAND BACK)," which is funded through the Clinical and Translational Science Institute Pain Research Challenge. This study will test the effects of a sedentary behavior intervention on low back pain in working adults.

Dr. Hergenroeder is principal investigator on a second study, "Comparison of Physical Activity Monitors for Measuring Walking in Hospitalized Patients," which is funded through the Central Research Development Fund at the University of Pittsburgh. The study will examine the accuracy of various physical activity monitors in measuring ambulation in adults during hospitalization.



Faculty News *(continued)*

Dr. Jennifer S. Brach, associate professor, presented the Ruth E. Mickle Lecture May 7, 2015, at Asbury Heights Health Center, Pittsburgh. Brach presented her research on the development of “On the Move,” a novel group exercise program designed to challenge older adults. She discussed her current research study aimed at determining the program’s effectiveness. The program centers on exercise being

beneficial to physical and mental health and may prevent walking difficulty while promoting independence

Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Dr. Katherine Seelman, professor and associate dean of Disability Programs, was invited to serve as a member of the Institute of Medicine’s Committee

on Accessible and Affordable Hearing Health Care for Adults. The committee will examine hearing health care in terms of the importance of hearing to individual and societal health, productivity, and engagement.

Student News

Communication Science and Disorders

The University of Pittsburgh’s chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association was awarded gold level recognition by completing a number of activities, including donating to NSSLHA Loves, contributing to the regional newsletter, submitting a grant application, participating in advocacy events, engaging in social media promotion, and hosting a CSD Career Awareness Day. **Emily Goldberg**, a graduating senior and incoming masters student in speech-language pathology, was awarded member honors based on her scholastic achievement and service to NSSLHA, providing her complimentary registration for the ASHA convention with recognition at the NSSLHA honors ceremony.

Bridget Bianconi, Alexandra Ecoff, Samantha Mikels, Molly Smeals, and Erica Watson, undergraduate students, along with **Dr. Erin Lundblom**, faculty mentor, presented a research project titled “Listening Levels of Personal Listening Devices in Urban College Students” as a poster at the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s annual convention in Harrisburg, Pa., in April 2015.

The poster was accepted for presentation at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Annual Convention in Denver, Colo., in November 2015.

Reem Mulla (AuD, ’11), PhD student, won a Best Student poster award for her entry titled “Impact of a Hearing Aid Gain Adaptation Feature on Hearing Aid Success” at the March 2015 annual convention of the American Academy of Audiology.

Sangeun Shin, PhD student, was awarded a 2015 Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) scholarship for her dissertation research on word frequency effect on lexical selection: Evidence from picture-word interference (PWI) paradigm.

AuD student **Aaron Roman** (BA, ’13) was elected to the National Board of the Student Academy of Audiology for the 2015-2016 year. Aaron will serve on the board as the chair of the Undergraduate Committee.

Undergraduate student **Megan Ballantyne** and MA-SLP student **Mary Sears** (BPhil, ’14) had separate posters accepted for the Southwest

Pennsylvania Speech-Language Hearing Association student poster event in April 2015.

MA-SLP student **Colleen Powers** was awarded the Sertoma Annual Communications Scholarship.

AuD student **Kelsi Bubb** was awarded a travel scholarship to present her AuD research project poster, “Communication, Hearing, and Audiometry Tests (CHAT) in Older Hospitalized Inpatients: A Quality Improvement Project,” at the 2015 National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research (NCRAR) conference, Portland, Ore.

CScD student **Kalli Donaway** will serve as student representative co-chair on the executive board of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

CScD student **Miranda Babiak** (BA, ’08) was awarded student honors of the Association from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association in April 2015. She is the co-author of a manuscript that was recently published in June 2015 in the *Journal of Neurosurgery* titled “Transient Aphasias After Left Hemisphere Resective Surgery.”

Health Information Management

Samantha Faulds, HIS graduate student, presented her poster, “Improving Data Collection and Reporting Through Electronic Chart Abstraction,” at the AHIMA Annual Convention in New Orleans, La., in September 2015. She also co-authored an article titled “Majority of HIV/HCV Patients Need to Switch Antiretroviral Therapy to Accommodate Direct Acting Antivirals.”

Brennan Hixson, RHIA, graduate student and HIM ’12, was the recipient of a scholarship from the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association. This award is presented to students who demonstrate academic achievement and commitment to the field of health information management in Pennsylvania.

Justin Klimchak, RHIA, HIM ’15, was the recipient of a scholarship from the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association (PHIMA). This award is presented to students who demonstrate academic achievement and commitment to the field of health information management in Pennsylvania. Klimchak also represents HIM on the PHIMA student committee.

Wayan Pulantara, doctoral student, along with **Dr. Bambang Parmanto**, professor, presented “The Feasibility of Mobile Health (mHealth) Applications in Behavioral Sleep Interventions for Military Populations,” SLEEP 2015, in Seattle, Wash., June 2015.

Occupational Therapy

MOT students **Marissa Beaston, Elizabeth Bondarenko, Christina Brown, Ashley Catanzaro, Elizabeth Duggan, Lindsay Feth, Jordyne Goodman, Alexa Herbertson, Emily Johnson, Chelsea Kohlhasse, Jessica Lytle, Jaclyn Mazza,**

Jennifer Maqui Ortiz, Emily Peterson, Kenda Post, Kasey Provine, Ashley Steed, Tracy Villegas, and Hallie Zubella were inducted into the Beta Tau Chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon, the national honor society for occupational therapy students.

Temitope Akanbi, MOT student, was awarded the K. Leroy Irvis fellowship for the 2015-2016 academic year.

Elizabeth Bondarenko, MOT student, was awarded a 2015-2016 Albert Schweitzer fellowship. Her project is to develop an occupation-based wellness program for women residing in a domestic violence shelter.

MOT student **Elizabeth Duggan** was elected to serve as the student intern to the AOTA Mental Health Special Interest Section for 2015-2016.

Jaclyn Mazza, MOT student, was the recipient of a Bruce Baker Education Travel award.

MOT students **Devra Alper, Ashley Catanzaro, Elizabeth Duggan, Lindsay Feth, Kaitlin Krysevig, Abby Moul, Cara Poli, and Tracy Villegas**, along with **Dr. Joanne Baird**, assistant professor, provided an oral presentation to Carnegie Museum of Natural History staff and administration on “Improving Patron Interaction in the Second Floor Exhibit Hall Spaces.”

MS students **Muhammad Al-Heizan, Grishma Gala, and Sherin Heric**, and MOT students **Marissa Beaston, Elizabeth Duggan, Lindsay Lippert, and Abigail Tuttle**, along with **Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, represented the Department of Occupational Therapy in the Health Sciences Career Exploration Institute, an after-school program providing exposure to careers in the health sciences.

Physical Therapy

DPT students **Chelsea Shervinskies** and **Brandon Rodgers** won student APTA memberships thanks to the generosity of PT alumnus **Michael Gans** (DPT ’06). Students were selected through a drawing for DPT students who participated or volunteered in community and professional development activities throughout the 2014-2015 academic year.

Students from Pitt’s Department of Physical Therapy bested 144 other schools to win first place in the 2014-15 Miami-Marquette Challenge hosted by the Foundation for Physical Therapy. The students were recognized at the Foundation’s gala during the American Physical Therapy Association’s NEXT Conference in June 2015 in National Harbor, Md. Thanks to the students’ efforts over the years, Pitt is the first school inducted into the Foundation’s Capstone Society, which recognizes a school’s cumulative contribution of more than \$500,000. Participating DPT students included **Natalie Latshaw, Julie DeMarke, Michael Watson, Megan Zartman, David Pastrana, Ryan Vietmeier, Margaret Acton, and Bethany Trotter** under the coordination of **Dr. Susan Whitney**, professor.



Accepting the first-place award from Michael Mueller, Foundation vice president, were: (front row, l-r) Natalie Latshaw, Julie DeMarke, Margaret Acton, and Bethany Trotter; and (back row, l-r) Ryan Vietmeier, Megan Zartman, Foundation Vice President Mueller, Michael Watson, and David Pastrana.



Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 17, 2015

SHRS Fall Open House Forbes Tower, Atwood Street, Pittsburgh, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Meet with SHRS faculty, staff, and students. Learn about our many programs and the variety of career opportunities they offer. Register at www.shrs.pitt.edu/OpenHouse.

Friday–Saturday, October 23–24, 2015

Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association 2015 Annual Conference Scranton, Pa.

NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 5, 2015

2015 Matthews-Rubin Lecture SHRS, Forbes Tower, Pittsburgh, 4 – 6:15 p.m. Dr. Patricia Prelock (Ph.D. '83) will present her research on autism spectrum disorders. Dr. Prelock is dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of Vermont. She was the 2013 president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and was named CSD Distinguished Alumna at the SHRS 45th Anniversary and Awards Ceremony in May 2015. ASHA CEUs will be available. Contact Dr. Sue Shaiman at shaiman@pitt.edu for more information; registration required.

Thursday, November 12, 2015

CSD 2015 ASHA Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends Open House Denver Hard Rock Café, 7 – 9 p.m., held in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Denver, Colo.

Friday – Saturday, November 13 – 14, 2015

American Occupational Therapy Association/National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (AOTA/NBCOT) National Student Conclave Valley Forge, Pa.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday – Saturday, February 17 – 20, 2016

American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting Anaheim, Calif. Plan to join fellow alumni, faculty, and students at an SHRS Department of Physical Therapy Alumni Reception. Date, time, and location details to come.

Thursday – Sunday, April 7 – 10, 2016

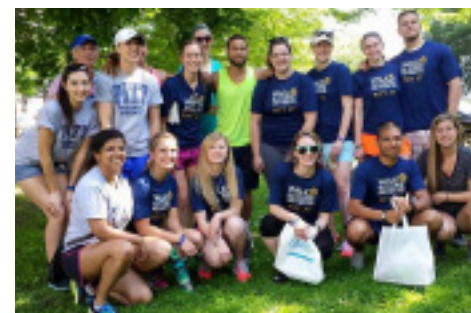
American Occupational Therapy Association 2015 Annual Conference and Expo Chicago, Ill. Plan to join fellow alumni, faculty, and students at an SHRS Department of Occupational Therapy Alumni Reception. Date, time, and location details to come.

Student News *(continued)*



Receiving the Capstone Society Award for Pitt from Foundation Vice President Michael Mueller, center, were Pitt-Marquette representatives Michael Watson and Megan Zartman.

DPT students from the Class of 2017 raised \$2,068 for the Walk to Cure Arthritis 2015, held May 30, 2015, on Pittsburgh's North Shore. About 40 members of the team supported the event, the fourth consecutive year DPT students participated in the fund-raising walk.



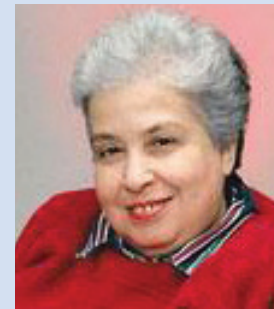
DPT students gather at the Walk to Cure Arthritis 2015.

Sports Medicine and Nutrition

Laura Maydak, graduate student in the Coordinated Master in Nutrition and Dietetics program, won the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics "Outstanding Dietetic Student Award" for 2015. The award recognizes the academic achievement, leadership, and professional potential of students enrolled in ACEND-accredited and approved dietetics education programs.

Department News

IN MEMORIAM



Faculty and staff at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences express deepest sympathy to the family of Lucy Spruill upon her passing in June 2015. Lucy served as adjunct faculty, teaching classes in our departments of Health Information Management and Rehabilitation Science and Technology. According to Dr. Mervat Abdelhak, HIM chair and associate professor, "Lucy taught and mentored our students for many years ... a great loss to SHRS and the community."

Communication Science and Disorders

The 6th biannual teaching conference, "Teaching Amplification: Ten Years Later," was hosted by the Department of Communication Science and Disorders this past June, attracting national and international attendees. Faculty included (top, left to right) **Elaine Morner**, University of Pittsburgh; **David Hawkins**, Mayo Health System Emeritus; **Catherine Palmer**, University of Pittsburgh and UPMC; **Ruth Bentler**, University of Iowa; **Susan Scollie**, Western Ontario University; **Lori Zitelli**, University of Pittsburgh and UPMC; and (bottom, left to right) **Jenifer Fruit**, UPMC; **Linda Thibodeau**, University of Texas at Dallas, and **Todd Ricketts**, Vanderbilt University.



The Department of Communication Science and Disorders is increasing its social media presence. Keep in touch as a member of the alumni group on Facebook – Pitt CSD Alumni Network – and "like" the Facebook page, PITT Department of Communication Science and Disorders.

Occupational Therapy



The University of Pittsburgh, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and Department of Occupational Therapy extend thanks and appreciation to **Dr. Joan Rogers** for her many years of dedicated service. Rogers retired as OT professor and chair and SHRS associate dean for Graduate Studies on June 30, 2015. We welcome **Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor, as the new chair for Occupational Therapy, effective July 1, 2015. The department will continue its shared vision to be nationally and internationally recognized as a leader in occupational therapy education, a pioneer in occupational therapy research, and a partner in regional practice and development.

Rehabilitation Science and Technology

The Human Engineering Research Laboratories have made the big time with a Time.com video highlighting their work. Time's video producers visited Pittsburgh in July 2015 to create a video (<http://time.com/pittsburgh/>) on the city's ongoing renaissance. HERL was one of the labs visited by the crew. The producers were so impressed with

HERL's work, they made a separate video about the labs <http://time.com/3975280/robotics-disabled>.

Sports Medicine and Nutrition

University of Pittsburgh **Chancellor Patrick Gallagher** met with faculty and research participants during a recent visit to the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado and the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory's Injury Prevention and Human Performance (IPHP) satellite lab on the base.



Dr. Gallagher, third from left, was joined by **Dean Cliff Brubaker**, **Dr. Kim Beals**, assistant professor and co-investigator in the NMRL's Department of Defense IPHP research initiatives, and **Dr. Timothy Sell**, associate professor and principal investigator on the Naval Special Warfare and Air Force Special Operations Command Injury Prevention and Performance Optimization research initiatives and co-investigator on all the Department of Defense research projects.

SMN instructors on the Coronado base presented testing demonstrations and described data collection and on-going research efforts during the Chancellor's visit.



Left to right are John Haubenstricker, instructor, Kate Perlsweig, instructor, Chancellor Gallagher, and Darcie Yount, instructor.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI RECOGNIZED AT AWARDS CEREMONY



SHRS alumni were recognized for their accomplishments at the SHRS 45th Anniversary Celebration and Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony in May 2015.

Front row from left: Janice Schneider, Alyson D'Ambrosio Stover, Laurine Johnson, Therese Willkomm (Dean's Choice Award), and Heather Prunty.

Back row from left: David Algood, Curtis (Tony) Anthoni Sanks, Joseph David (Philanthropy Award) and David Greathouse. Missing are Amy Hancock, and Patricia Prelock.

Throughout its 45-year history, SHRS has graduated thousands of talented men and women who are now making outstanding contributions to their professions and communities. On Saturday, May 16, 2015, eleven of them were honored at our Distinguished Alumni Awards ceremony.

David Algood, MS (MS '03), Rehabilitation Science and Technology

As global portfolio manager for Permobil, a leading health care company providing innovative advanced rehabilitation solutions for people with disabilities, David Algood directly influences the product generation plan and product road map for Permobil Group. He drives the development of new product offerings, and manages major launches of all new products for the North American and Australia region.

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

Professor, dean, and author of more than 50 manuscripts and ten book chapters/monologues, David G. Greathouse is currently the director of clinical electrophysiology services at Texas Physical Therapy Specialists, New Braunfels, Texas. From 1970-1996, Greathouse served in the U.S. Army, where he attained the rank of colonel and advanced to the role of chief, Army Medical Specialist Corps.

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

A career in sales and management for a national contract therapy company led Amy Hancock to launch Pittsburgh area-based Advantage companies, where geriatric patients can receive a wide range of rehabilitation and home health services as they progress through the recovery process. She has garnered many awards, including Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year® in 2009 and Smart Business Pittsburgh's Pacesetters Award in 2011.

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

With over 23 years of experience in the health information management profession, Laurine Johnson currently directs HIM Consulting at Panacea Healthcare Solutions. She manages the HIM practice and provides onsite ICD-10 education. Further, Johnson has been recognized as a fellow by AHIMA, and serves as the president of PHIMA. To show her appreciation of her Pitt education, she has established an endowed fund at SHRS for deserving HIM students.

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

Patricia Prelock is dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, professor of communication sciences & disorders, and professor of pediatrics in the College of Medicine at the University of Vermont. Prelock coordinates parent training programs designed for caregivers of children with autism spectrum disorders, and has been awarded more than \$11 million in university, state, and federal funding.

Heather A. Prunty, MD (BS '02), Emergency Medicine

A graduate of SHRS Emergency Medicine program and Albany Medical College, Heather Prunty works her clinical shifts at UPMC Mercy Emergency Department, a Level I Trauma Center, where she has regular interaction with EMS and is active with resident, medical student, and paramedic student education. In addition to lecturing students, she provides game day emergency medicine coverage for the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team.

Curtis (Tony) Anthoni Sanks, PT, ATC, CSCS (BS '89), Athletic Training

Tony Sanks is a physical therapist, athletic trainer, and certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS). As the regional vice president of Network Services for the Centers for Rehab Services, he oversees 27 outpatient clinics. Throughout his career, Sanks has recovered and rehabbed athletes as an athletic trainer for middle school sports teams to professional sports teams. He continues to conduct both clinical and administrative continuing education courses.

Janice K. Schneider, MS, RD (BS '91), Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition

During the past 15 years, Janice Schneider has transformed the WIC Works Resource System (WWRS) at the USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center into the nation's preeminent online resource for nutritionists and front line

staff serving low-income women, infants, and children. Internet users across the world will likely click on a WIC Works Resource at least 5.4 million times this year alone.

Alyson D'Ambrosio Stover, JD, OTR/L (BS '03, MOT '05), Undergraduate Program in Rehabilitation Science

A strong advocate for children's health services, Alyson Stover founded Capable Kids, a pediatric clinic offering occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, and advocacy services in Hermitage, Pa. She has worked with clients to establish appropriate individual education programs within their school districts, to appeal insurance denials for services, and to obtain Medicaid and Social Security benefits.

Dean's Choice Award**Therese M. Willkomm, PhD (PhD '97)**

Known nationally and internationally as the "MacGyver" of assistive technology, Therese Willkomm has designed and fabricated thousands of solutions for individuals with disabilities including her patented AT Pad Stand, a multi-use assistive technology mounting device. Currently director of ATinNH, the New Hampshire statewide assistive technology program with the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), she has written 22 assistive technology related publications, and has appeared on RFD-TV, CNN, and most recently, on NPR Science Friday.

Philanthropy Award**Joseph M. David, DPT, OCS, CSCS (BS '88, MS '88)**

Former academic scholar and basketball star, Joseph David has never forgotten his roots at the University of Pittsburgh. The owner of David Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine has established two endowed funds to support SHRS students. The David Physical Therapy & Sports Medicine Center, Inc./Joseph M. David Endowed Scholarship provides tuition support for students pursuing the doctor of physical therapy degree with emphasis on clinical competence. His David Family Endowed Scholarship in the Department of Athletics benefits student athletes pursuing graduate degrees at the University, preferably in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.





Paying it Forward in THREE DISTINCT ROLES



Occupational therapists who know Briana Kelly (MOT '04) know she is someone special.

Former students call her “awesome,” “exceptional,” and “inspiring.” Those working under her supervision say she is “approachable and passionate.” And faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences agree she is the quintessential occupational therapy professional.

“The curriculum design of the Master of Occupational Therapy program identifies three primary roles of the occupational therapist,” reports Mary Lou Leibold, assistant professor and academic fieldwork educator. “They are practitioner, manager, and contributor. Briana Kelly excels at all three.”

For more than 14 years Kelly has been employed by UPMC as a practitioner, first as a rehabilitation aide, then an occupational therapist, and currently as the assistant director of occupational therapy, Centers for Rehab Services at UPMC Passavant. In her practitioner role, she has been closely involved with occupational therapy students, as a fieldwork educator and adjunct instructor at Pitt.

“She is a wonderful educator in that she didn’t just tell me what to do, she helped me talk through the problem and come up with the answer myself. This is an invaluable skill.”

Jessica Leslie (MOT '15), doctor of clinical science in occupational therapy fellow, had the opportunity to study under Kelly in both the classroom and clinic environments.

“Briana structures her class to include real-world clinical examples,” reflects Leslie. “This helps to prepare students for the transition from classroom to clinic. She makes the classwork relevant to clinical practice and instills confidence in her students as they become practitioners.”

Leibold observes that Kelly has a strong sense of how to meet the student where his or her area of need is and provide the “just right” challenge. “She is organized and clear about her expectations,” states Leibold. “Students perform up to the level of her high expectations because she creates a positive environment where feedback is offered and received.”

During her fieldwork with Kelly on the spinal cord injury unit at the Rehabilitation Institute, Rachel Simon (MOT '12), gained confidence in dealing with medically complex patients and skills in working as a member of a cohesive team.

Today, as an occupational therapist and fieldwork educator at Western Pennsylvania Hospital, Simon uses many of the skills that Kelly taught her.

“Now that I’m educating my own students, I try to create as many opportunities for them to manage our patients as possible,” says Simon. “The idea is to have them work positively in a team setting, develop clinical reasoning skills that have the best interest of the patient in mind, and continue improving their knowledge base.”

Kelly develops strong relationships with her students and takes pride in watching them grow. “I get to know them well and appreciate their strengths. Sometimes I even hire them,” laughs Kelly.

Pitt graduate Maggie Dambaugh (BA '08, MOT '12) is an occupational therapist working under her supervision at UPMC Passavant. She praises Kelly as a manager for her calm, collected manner and her assistance with students.

“I recently went to Briana for help with a student who needed to improve upon her skills,” recalls Dambaugh. “She is a wonderful educator in that she didn’t just tell me what to do, she helped me talk through the problem and come up with the answer myself. This is an invaluable skill.”

In addition to her work as practitioner, manager, and educator, Kelly also is a contributor, using her talents to advance the profession of occupational therapy and health care services.

She is currently part of the UPMC research team that is evaluating the biological activity of stem cell injections in chronic cervical spinal cord injury. She also uses her skills for people in need. During a post-earthquake medical mission trip to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Kelly provided occupational therapy services to clients at a trauma facility and educated the Haitian staff on occupational therapy principles, techniques, and interventions.

It wouldn’t be surprising if after their interactions with Kelly, the Haitians felt like Leslie, who is now a teaching fellow.

“I often find myself trying to channel my ‘inner Briana,’” Leslie admits, “hoping to inspire my students and leave them feeling confident and excited to become occupational therapists.” ■



Upping the Game for Injury Prevention



For more than ten years, the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN), through grants from the Department of Defense, has been working with elite branches of the U.S. military collecting and tracking data that relates to strengthening, conditioning, and ultimately, injury prevention during high-risk maneuvers on land and at sea.

Now SMN researchers are using the same model to achieve results closer to home.

The University of Pittsburgh Injury Prevention Initiative (IPI) is designed to help University of Pittsburgh athletes and their athletic trainers and coaches understand more about what injuries are likely to occur and how to prevent them.

“Athletic injuries can be devastating, both physically and psychologically,” observes SMN associate professor and project coordinator Timothy Sell. “Many athletes derive their identities from their sport. Injuries not only keep them off the playing field, but may prevent them from enjoying life now and in the years to come.”

“The Injury Prevention Initiative will augment the high standard of care established by the University for its student athletes,” affirms Sell.

Michelle Varnell is a doctoral student in the Rehabilitation Science program in SMN who helped to develop the protocols for each sport. She collaborates with her colleague, doctoral student Mallory Sell (MS ’13), to coordinate the projects and conduct data collection and analysis.

Varnell cites many benefits to the student athletes. “We establish strength, flexibility, and balance profiles for each sport,” she explains. “We also identify risk factors for injury that will give clinicians the ability to identify suboptimal characteristics in each athlete early on, and implement sport-specific preventive measures that will decrease the number of injuries.”

“By testing each athlete prior to their competitive season, we’re able to establish a baseline,” points out Mallory Sell. “We can then track that student for the duration of his or her athletic career.”

“The information each student gains allows them the opportunity to play an active role in injury prevention, rehabilitation, and performance enhancement,” she adds.

Since the project began in 2011, more than 250 athletes from four different sports – baseball, softball, and men’s and women’s soccer – have participated in IPI. Their testing is performed at the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory (NMRL), the same lab that houses the Warrior Human Performance Research Center for military testing.

A portable version of the lab, which Dr. Sell calls the “injury prevention toolbox,” is used on athletic fields to test student athletes in their sporting environment and at their convenience.

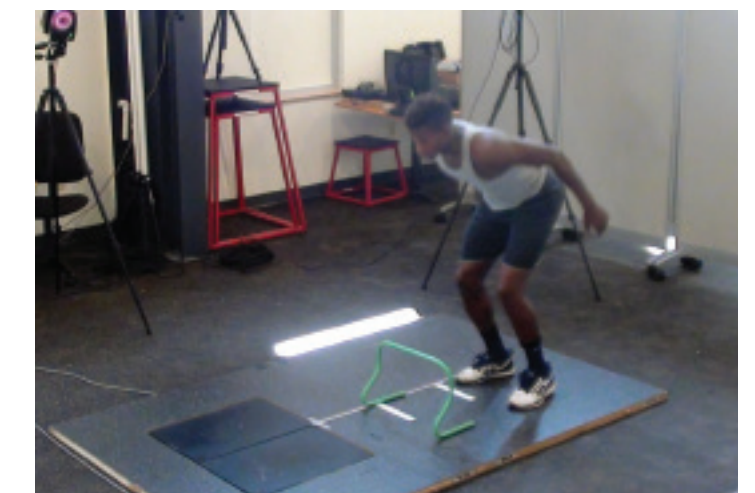
Athletic Trainer Jennifer Csonka (BS ’00) is directly responsible for the health and well-being of the women’s soccer team, but also supports the IPI graduate assistants in their work with the baseball, softball, and men’s soccer teams.

“We’re working collaboratively to prevent injuries that keep the student athlete out of their sport,” reports Csonka. “When injuries do occur, we evaluate the student athlete to diagnose the problem and then design an appropriate treatment and rehabilitation program for recovery.”

The Pitt IPI has collected four years of data on athletes in the baseball and softball programs, and three years of data on soccer players. This pleases Dr. Sell. “If we can show the student athletes that they are stronger when they leave here, then our project has been a success,” he states.

Feedback from the athletes has been positive. “They are very interested in their own data and how their information can be used to improve performance,” reports Varnell.

“The student athletes have also told us that the testing is fun and engaging because it gives them a chance to compete against one another as they compare their results to the team and other position players,” Mallory Sell adds. “This aligns perfectly with each of the athletes’ strong drive to compete.”



The Pitt women’s volleyball team and the 120-member football team recently joined the initiative. Sport-specific criteria were established and baseline testing of the student athletes began in July.

According to Head Football Coach Pat Narduzzi, the Pitt Injury Prevention Initiative is a great opportunity to enhance the overall health and success of his athletes.

“Undergoing the same testing that the Navy SEALs complete gives us a snapshot of where we match up with some other great athletes,” Narduzzi explains. “The information we are gaining is invaluable to the improvement of each individual over the course of his or her career.” ■



HOW DO WE DEFINE & sustain EXCELLENCE?

At certain points in time, it's wise to take stock. To reflect on where we have been and what we have accomplished. To re-examine goals. And take a realistic look at the future. For the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, that time is now.

With high rankings from *U.S. News & World Report* and *College Factual* as an impetus, FACETS asked Interim Dean Tony Delitto the pressing question:

HOW DO WE DEFINE – AND SUSTAIN – EXCELLENCE?

ex•cel•lence (ek'se-lens) n. 1. The state, quality or condition of excelling; superiority; pre-eminence. 2. Something in which a person or thing excels; a surpassing feature or virtue.

FACETS: Dr. Delitto, a lot has changed at SHRS since you joined the faculty 24 years ago. What has changed the most?

Delitto: I think the greatest change I have seen since I arrived in 1991 is a cultural shift with regard to scholarship.

Research was not much of a priority prior to Dean Brubaker taking the helm. Almost immediately after his arrival, the research effort increased dramatically.

Slowly the attitude toward research has changed, particularly after achieving success. At first, the success was specific to one or two programs, but over the years the success has spread to the point where now there is clearly a critical mass of very highly regarded research going on at SHRS.

Success breeds success, along with an overall pride.

FACETS: Why was this shift significant?

Delitto: We have become true “players” in the health sciences at Pitt. We now come to the table with incontrovertible evidence of research excellence... research productivity in the form of peer-reviewed funding, much of it from federal sources.

We can stand firmly on the infamous “three-legged stool” of academia: teaching, service/practice, and research. Although our research profile did not really exist 20 years ago, it is solid now, and our trajectory continues to rise.

FACETS: What drives SHRS to excellence?

Delitto: Leadership coupled with dedicated resources directed toward the goal of excellence in education, research, and service.

At SHRS we are fortunate to have a strong cadre of leaders in the positions of dean, associate deans, department chairs, and program directors. They set the tone for excellence and motivate faculty to strive for excellence.

Through strong leadership, accomplishment becomes recognized and quickly becomes contagious. When I arrived in the early '90s, there were pockets of excellence. I believe SHRS is at a point where excellence abounds.

FACETS: How important are the rankings to SHRS or to individual programs?

Delitto: Rankings are extremely important. They carry a lot of weight, particularly with applicants to our programs.

Presently most of our rankings are reputation-based, which amounts to cumulative Likert scale-like rankings from peers. Within more quantitative rankings, our programs still fare very well.

I believe that any SHRS program would fare well in rankings regardless of methods used.

FACETS: How is SHRS able to attract faculty who are at the top of their field?

Delitto: There are two major attributes that are very attractive for professors at any level: areas of world-renowned excellence and a reputation for a very high degree of collaboration.

These attributes exist in the entire Pitt community including SHRS. But, in addition, if you look at all of the programs across SHRS, we have done an excellent job of selecting and supporting emerging investigators, and this keeps us at the top of our game.

FACETS: Comment on the caliber of SHRS students.

Delitto: Students are drawn to our programs because of the track record of excellence. We have an excellent standing within the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC – two powerhouses in academia and health care delivery. These resources provide excellent experiences for our students.





EX·CEL·LENCE (EK'SE-LENS) NOUN

1. THE STATE, QUALITY OR CONDITION OF EXCELLING; SUPERIORITY; PRE-EMINENCE.
2. SOMETHING IN WHICH A PERSON OR THING EXCELS; A SURPASSING FEATURE OR VIRTUE.

FACETS: What is your top priority as interim dean? What do you hope to accomplish in this role?

Delitto: In taking on this position, I should mention that I have been handed a very well-oiled machine that is running extremely well.

That said, there continue to be numerous opportunities for SHRS, some of which I am presently pursuing. I see my role as bringing what is best from SHRS to the table and offering our collaboration to willing partners. It is a formula that has worked very well in the past.

FACETS: How can SHRS sustain the momentum it has right now? Is it possible to grow and still maintain its excellent reputation in terms of programs, faculty, and research?

Delitto: Absolutely. We have already shown that we can grow and sustain and even improve our reputation. Many of our programs have gained in rankings while SHRS has sustained unprecedented growth.

FACETS: What do you see as the biggest challenge facing SHRS in the next five years and where do you see the school going in the next five, ten, or 20 years?

Delitto: The cost of education for all of our students continues to rise without concomitant increases in the salaries offered to our graduates. This leads to student debt loads that are extremely burdensome.

I watch and read very closely material about the “education bubble” and continually discuss this challenging issue with the leadership team at SHRS. We need to explore ideas that include innovative ways to deliver our programs that would improve efficiency while maintaining excellence.

Also, with the advent of health care reform, I believe the health care arena must look to other professions to work closely together to improve access to health care.

The professions at SHRS all have a place in such an initiative. We are already seeing inter-professional models of care within the health care environments. We will no doubt see more innovative health care initiatives that will offer opportunities for graduates of our professions to contribute to high-quality care.

The challenge for SHRS will be to measure the effect of our contributions in these programs through health services research initiatives. In addition, we will need to track closely more traditional areas of rehabilitation science research. For example, the area of regenerative rehabilitation has already changed the landscape of rehabilitation research.

The details of the future may be uncertain. However, we are confident that SHRS will thrive because of our foundation of innovation and excellence. ■

A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

From the beginning of civilization, man has been marking time in many ways: the dawn of a new day, the cyclical change of seasons, the rise and fall of empires.

During the past 24 years, we have been fortunate to see the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences emerge as a leader in the field of rehabilitation science due in great part to its visionary leader, Clifford E. Brubaker, PhD, professor and dean.

On June 30, 2015, Brubaker stepped down from his deanship position. After a 12-month leave, he will return to SHRS to continue his role of professor. His accomplishments will remain a part of the school's legacy.

In the time known as B.C. (Before Cliff), SHRS was known as the School of Health Related Professions. When he arrived in 1991, it was Pitt's newest and smallest school, with 300 students and less than \$200,000 in externally funded research.

Today, under Brubaker's leadership, more than 1,400 students are enrolled in 25 degree-granting programs – some of them among the best this country has to offer. His passion for advancing technology as it related to disability led to an explosion of research at SHRS. Under his watch, research funding increased to \$23.3 million.

According to Arthur S. Levine, MD, senior vice chancellor for the Health Sciences and dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, “The more than 100-fold growth in research productivity during Dr. Brubaker's tenure is almost beyond belief.”

“He has guided the constant growth of SHRS's academic and research programs, both in number and quality, with remarkable managerial skill and vision,” Levine continues.

Prestigious funders including the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Science Foundation have made substantial grant awards to the school, elevating, in part, the school's position of prominence among its peer institutions.

Throughout his long tenure, Brubaker dedicated himself to the attainment of excellence in every aspect of SHRS's development. He led by example, encouraging students and supporting faculty.

Brubaker's activities in the scientific community brought him and the University of Pittsburgh substantial recognition, nationally and internationally.



He was a founding member, served on the board, held every office, and received nearly every major award of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. He became a fellow of the inaugural class of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE) as well as of the Biomedical Engineering Society.

It is noteworthy that he was a member of the National Science Foundation-sponsored steering committee to establish an infrastructure for bioengineering in the U.S., which led to the establishment of the AIMBE. His international activities have included forging relationships with institutions throughout the world that have created many worldwide opportunities for the University of Pittsburgh and its students.

As we stand poised to witness Brubaker's transition to a new chapter in his professional career, the faculty, staff, students, and friends of SHRS wish him only the best. And we thank him for his steadfast determination that has set the highest standards of excellence in academics, clinical experiences, and research opportunities.

While Brubaker's leadership will be missed, we know that what follows in the years A.D. (After his Deanship) will be supported by the firm foundation built by his deep dedication to and passion for SHRS. ■



RAMPING UP THE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate programs across the country tout their clinical rotations. But students in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) have opportunities unlike most others. And that gives graduates a true advantage as they begin their professional careers.

“When I was researching graduate schools, I realized that Pitt’s clinical program was stronger than others in the sense that from day one, I would be out in the community working with patients of varying disorders and severity,” offers Laura Molin (MS, SLP ’15), clinical fellow at the Pittsburgh VA.

In most SLP and AuD programs, students gain real world experience at an in-house clinic that’s operated by the university. CSD changed its model in 1997 in order to offer students exposure to more settings, and ultimately more patients with a variety of disorders.

“We believe there’s value for students when they spend time in schools as well as hospitals, in private practices and early intervention clinics,” remarks Director of Clinical Education and Associate Professor Cheryl Messick. “We partner with literally hundreds of clinical sites. Every setting and every case load is different, and offers different opportunities to learn.”

Assistant Professor Elaine Mormer adds that CSD’s affiliation with clinics across the U.S. allows the AuD students to learn from patients with a wide range of issues.

“When students are placed in medical settings, for example, they are more likely to see patients with acute problems or recent onset diagnoses,” explains Mormer. “These patients are less likely to be coming to an in-house clinic.”

In the SLP and AuD programs, students use an innovative tracking system that documents the depth and breadth of their clinical training. An electronic portfolio allows students to build a record of experiences and accomplishments, and gives clinical instructors insight into each student’s capabilities.

“Employers are very impressed with our graduates’ range of experience,” reports Messick. “The in-house clinics teach students how to learn skills such as documentation in one particular way. But when they’re in a variety of settings, they see that there are varied methods.”

CSD students begin working with medically complex cases right away. Their clinical instructors scaffold the learning process, and offer help on site.

Diana Clayburgh, a third-year AuD graduate student appreciates how clinical instructors and professors have allowed her to function independently.

“Talking with my clinical instructors has always felt more like a dialogue rather than them telling me what to do,” notes Clayburgh. “I have always felt comfortable asking questions.”

“In the real world, it’s all about efficiency,” says Messick. “After exposure to five or six different clinical settings, our students are prepared to handle just about anything.”

Clayburgh says she’s been fortunate to experience many dimensions of audiology with patients across the lifespan.

“I have worked in a school with kids and teens, met with cochlear implant patients and dizzy patients, fit hearing aids, worked at the VA, and screened inpatients on a quality improvement team in one of the hospitals here,” she recounts.

“During that process, I learned what patient population I preferred to work with, and what focus of audiology suits me best. This program has made me confident in myself as a student clinician and what kind of audiologist I want to be.”

Molin agrees. “My various clinical placements helped me identify my interests within speech-language pathology and what type of setting I would like to continue my clinical education.”

Both graduates credit their professors with helping them to get the most from their clinical education. Molin calls the CSD professors “true experts in their fields. They are all either involved in research or clinical work – or both – and make teaching their students a priority.”

CSD faculty are renowned, both in the U.S. and internationally. They are frequently called upon to share their evidence-based clinical education model and innovative instructional methods with other institutions.

According to Mormer, “Our faculty is extremely active in research and in professional organizations. The knowledge that we acquire and the experiences we have filter down to our students in meaningful ways.” ■

Their dedication consistently reaps rewards. In its most recent rankings, U.S. News & World Report listed CSD’s AuD and SLP programs number eight in the nation.



“We prepare our students to be health care professionals who are agents of change in the workplace,” states Mervat Abdelhak, associate professor and chair, Department of Health Information Management (HIM).

“What better proof that we are accomplishing this goal than to have employers come back time and time again to hire HIM graduates?”

Michael Tintera (BA '03), recruitment lead at UPMC, explains, “Overall, we are looking for independent thinkers who can also collaborate with the larger teams. In my experience, HIM graduates are strong hires that come in and hit the ground running.”

UPMC has hired four HIM graduates as systems analysts in the Information Service Division Rotation (ISDR) program since its inception in 2013. Additionally, three current HIM students were placed into UPMC's Information Services Division Summer Associates Program this past summer.

Maria Gerardi, employment specialist – Campus Programs, UPMC, notes, “The graduates we hired into our ISDR program have been able to jump right into our fast-paced and dynamic work environment. They are not only poised and professional from a communications standpoint, but they also have the academic and real-world training needed to excel in their roles.”

“In my opinion, they excel because our program arms them with the ability to think clearly, adapt to change, and problem solve.”

Abdelhak reports that 124 HIM graduates are currently employed at UPMC. “In my opinion, they excel because our program arms them with the ability to think clearly, adapt to change, and problem solve.

“They are first and foremost health professionals who deploy technology and systems to manage and use data,” she continues. “They possess all critical skills that are necessary in today's ever-changing health care environment.”

Gerardi agrees. “Pitt HIM graduates have been working with the newest technologies out there, and many times they see things from a fresh perspective. That, in turn, helps us at UPMC to continue to advance as an organization.”

Universal Health Systems, Inc. (UHS) participates in Pitt's HIM career fairs and other related programs because they have led to successful hires in the past.

“New employees from this HIM program are hard-working, persistent, and adaptable,” remarks Jaime Weaver, UHS recruitment manager, Corporate Information Services. “They've all been exposed to real world, modern environments prior to graduation.”

“The diverse classes they take at Pitt give them the ability to begin a career with UHS already understanding how certain processes work,” observes Vincent Gavigan, associate recruiter at UHS. “They quickly become valued members of their teams, and are always asked to contribute ideas and input in meetings.”

“Over the years the HIM Department has been on target when it comes to identifying future trends in health care,” offers Abdelhak.

Natasha Hepburn, a 2010 Pitt HIM graduate, currently serves as manager of Cigna's Technology Early Career Development Program (TECDP), a three-year program that grooms high potential new employees for successful IT career paths within multiple lines of business in the company.

Cigna has hired nine HIM program graduates into TECDP over the past six years. Matthew Carroll (BS '13) is one of them.

Now an application development specialist in the TECDP, Carroll has contributed to high-profile enterprise projects, process improvement initiatives, and other innovative assignments within the IT organization.

“By rotating through various positions, I can learn and develop as a leader, while leveraging the skills and understanding I gained at Pitt,” says Carroll.

Hepburn elaborates, “The entire support system, including Dr. Abdelhak and all of the professors, have prepared graduates to ask questions and rely on their teams because they understand the value of utilizing resources and coming up with out-of-the-box ideas.”

Employers also value the extent and quality of HIM students' clinical experience.

UPMC's Gerardi comments, “Past relevant experience plays a crucial role in our ISDR hiring process. The Pitt HIM students stand out from many of their peers because they have so much more experience than most college graduates.”

Patrick D. Santavicca (MS '14), business technology analyst, Deloitte Consulting, agrees. “I had a great internship and that went a long way in preparing me to jump from the classroom to the meeting room.”

“It's industry specific experience that really helps,” adds Cigna's Carroll. “Understanding health care systems, financials, and the unique language of the business is a learning curve that most information technology employees face after entering the field.”

Santavicca goes one step further. “Receiving a great educational experience is one thing, translating that into success in the workplace is another – and that's what we're seeing our Pitt graduates doing. They're able to make that connection to take their education and turn it into a career.” ■



HERL:

A POWERFUL RESEARCH ENGINE

In the worldwide community of people developing and using assistive technology, nearly everyone knows about the Human Engineering and Research Laboratories (HERL). There is no other place quite like it, and in every corner of the world, people with disabilities benefit from its work.

A joint effort of the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of the School of Medicine of the University of Pittsburgh, the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and UPMC Center for Assistive Technology, HERL is part research and development facility, education provider, and all idea mill.

On its 20th anniversary, RST Professor and Distinguished Chair and Founder and Director of HERL, Rory Cooper, reflects on its role.

“HERL is really the research, development, and training engine that drives rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology research at Pitt,” Cooper states.

From humble beginnings in the basement of the Highland Drive VA Medical Center in Pittsburgh, HERL has grown to occupy 30,000 square feet of space on two floors in Bakery Square. Here a multidisciplinary team of rehabilitation engineers and scientists, bioengineers, physical and occupational therapists, physicians, and students come together to teach and learn, design products, and create solutions.

“Even before I came to Pitt, I was aware of the breakthrough research taking place at HERL,” offers University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick D. Gallagher. “When I toured the lab in the spring, I was even more impressed.”

Utilizing the most advanced technology, including virtual reality, robotics, and 3D computer modeling, printing, and machining, the scientists at HERL strive to improve the mobility and function of people with disabilities.

“The role played by HERL and RST is impactful,” the Chancellor continues. “It educates students with disabilities, military veterans and young people from around the world, who take back to their communities and elsewhere the ability to effect significant change in the rehabilitation area.

“And perhaps above all, they join forces to create new technologies that benefit others across the globe, providing new measures of independence and a quality of life for anyone living with a disability.”

The reach of HERL is indeed extensive.

Veterans sporting events, such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, are supported by HERL, as are scientific workshops like the State-of-the-Science Symposia at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where experts update health care professionals on the latest information needed to assist people with disabilities, especially returning wounded, injured, and ill veterans.

A list of HERL’s impressive achievements would fill these pages, but Cooper pinpoints three specific points of pride.

“Our alumni network is one of our greatest accomplishments,” says Cooper. “They’re working in a variety of rehabilitation areas and countries, and they’re bringing best practices and the highest standards of care everywhere they go.”

Men and women who have been trained at HERL work with the World Health Organization to better serve wheelchair users in underdeveloped countries. Alumni have created departments in other universities, such as Xi’an Jiatong University in China, and national research institutes such as the Quality of Life Technology Center in Korea.

Number two on Cooper’s list: The products, systems, materials, and resources developed at HERL during the past 20 years. Wheelchairs that are lighter in weight and easier to propel are just the beginning. HERL inventions include a robotic arm to help transfer patients from wheelchair to bed or bath, as well as a “cuing kitchen” that makes patients with traumatic brain injury more independent.

HERL also created assessment tools, international standards, and clinical practice guidelines that are used by rehabilitation professionals globally.

The lab spawns new technologies. And new businesses.

“When the Innovation Institute was piloting its new outreach initiatives on campus, one of the first groups we thought to partner with was HERL,” recalls Dr. Marc Malandro, founding director, the University of Pittsburgh Innovation Institute. “It is making a real impact on people’s lives.”

“From the numbers of technologies developed by HERL researchers to the entrepreneurial spirit of the group to the willingness of all involved to ensure their work is translated to the public, HERL is a great source of innovation on campus,” he continues.

“But our third – and perhaps our most satisfying – accomplishment is seeing how our work at HERL has raised the issues and challenges of disability to national prominence,” declares Cooper.

He points out that 30 years ago, no one would have believed that a facility like HERL was even possible, or that so many people would be working in the field of rehabilitation.

On the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), HERL’s vision of creating a world where all people with disabilities have unencumbered mobility and function so that they can fully participate in and contribute to society is not a reality yet. But some day it will be.

Thanks to the ongoing work of a prestigious lab in Pittsburgh.

To learn more, visit <http://www.herl.pitt.edu>. ■



Capstone Experience Demonstrates Student Focus on Patient Outcomes



Three days before their April graduation, 62 students from the DPT program at the University of Pittsburgh presented results of an extensive performance improvement project. The presentations were attended by their peers, professors, and distinguished guests who served as discussants.

During a yearlong internship, DPT students did more than treat patients. They also collected and analyzed data relating to each patient's clinical outcome and the treatment provided. Students wrote individual papers to assess their findings, and worked in groups to present data to the class and faculty.

Among other things, students discussed their adherence to clinical guidelines and made critical appraisals of clinical performance and the process for data collection.

Each group consistently reported that by keeping up with best practices and new studies, they were able to positively impact patient outcomes.

James J. Irrgang, professor of Physical Therapy at SHRS as well as professor and director of Clinical Research in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, oversees the projects.

He states, "This project is unique and focuses on use of data and principles of evidence-based practice to prepare students to provide high-value care the day they graduate."

"Although our primary goal has always been to improve patient outcomes,

this will become increasingly important in the future, when health care reimbursement will be based on the value of care provided rather than the number and type of treatment modalities."

"Determining the value of care requires knowing the benefits that were achieved relative to the costs of providing that care," Irrgang adds. "This project provides students with the tools needed to assess the value of the care that they provide."

Kelsey DeLave (DPT '15), neurologic physical therapy resident at Harris Health System in Houston, Texas, was grateful for the experience. "By making a habit of using validated measures as students, we have learned the benefits of regular re-assessment and will feel comfortable utilizing those measures for a broad range of patient populations."

"The depth and breadth of the yearlong clinical experience and the focus on outcomes really prepares our students to meet the demands of clinical practice," notes M. Kathleen Kelly, PhD, PT Department vice chair and associate professor.

"Tracking objective measures allows us to assess our effectiveness as clinicians," observes DeLave. "And having tangible results to show patients is definitely a motivator for them."

DPT students engage in clinical education seven of the nine semesters of the program. They participate in three semesters of part-time and 54 weeks of full-time clinical education, significantly more than students in most other programs.

According to Kelly, the strong partnership with UPMC, a world-class integrated health system, and its PT provider, Centers for Rehab Services, allows students more opportunities to work side-by-side with clinical experts.

"Pitt's position within the UPMC system is truly something that sets this

PT program apart from the others," explains Dr. Gammon Earhart, director of the program in Physical Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO.

Earhart served as one of the three external discussants, and was impressed with the students' high level of professionalism.

Other visiting discussants included Dr. Alan Jette, professor of Health Policy and Management at the Boston University School of Public Health and professor at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, and Dr. Terry Nordstrom, interim vice president of Enrollment and Student Services and associate professor of Physical Therapy at Samuel Merritt University, Oakland, Calif.

"One of the major trends in health care is for health care practitioners to use large data sets to determine outcomes of care," remarks Nordstrom. "This project provides a learning experience that prepares graduates for this trend."

The performance improvement project has been a requirement of DPT students since 2003.

"This type of project teaches students the importance of consistently utilizing outcome measures and analyzing data to inform best practice and drive continuous quality improvement," continues Earhart.

The experience gained in completing the performance improvement project is just one reason why the DPT program at SHRS consistently ranks among the best in the nation for its excellence in education, service, and research.

"We are very proud of our students' contribution to better patient care," boasts Kelly. ■

Top Left: Students Tessa Murray and Kelly Ricker

Top Right: Student Steve Removcik

Bottom: Seated in the front row are guests Dr. Terry Nordstrom, Dr. Gammon Earhart and Dr. Alan Jette surrounded by faculty from the Department of Physical Therapy.



DRIVEN TO EXCEL



There's a genuine excitement in her voice when Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore talks about the future.

As associate professor and recently appointed chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy (OT), Skidmore identifies several reasons why the University of Pittsburgh is sixth on the *U.S. News & World Report's* list of best OT program in the nation.

First, she cites the expertise of the OT faculty.

"Over the past few years we have expanded our faculty, boasting experts in pediatrics, geriatrics, musculoskeletal disability, and brain injury and stroke," reports Skidmore. "Our faculty serve as board members in a number of professional organizations at the national and state level, and engage the scientific community through invited service on national scientific panels.

They really are an exceptional group," she admits.

Dr. Kenneth J. Ottenbacher, professor and director, Division of Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch, agrees. As a member of the Board of Visitors for SHRS, he knows the department well.

"The faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy excel in all aspects of the academic triumvirate: teaching, research, and professional/clinical service," observes Ottenbacher.

Take Assistant Professor Juleen Rodakowski, for example. A National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences scholar, Rodakowski's research examines interventions that delay the onset of disability in older adults at risk for dementia, and the impact that these interventions have on biological markers of aging.

Assistant Professor Pamela Toto is a nationally recognized advocate for productive aging, and has a long-standing interest and many years of clinical experience as an occupational therapist promoting the well-being and independence of older adults.

"It's not just about living longer," notes Toto, who is board certified in gerontology by the American Occupational Therapy Association. "It's about living better."

Skidmore suggests that strong ties with critical disciplines across the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC open many doors for faculty and students. "It gives us the opportunity to be at the forefront of groundbreaking research," she states.

Assistant Professor Roxanna Bendixen specializes in the field of pediatric occupational therapy and research. Pediatric OTs support numerous aspects of the lives of infants, children, youth, and their families through providing services in the home, school, clinics, and community.

"The Department of Occupational Therapy, in collaboration with others in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, was among the leaders in developing advanced interdisciplinary graduate education programs in the U.S. for rehabilitation professionals."

Her current studies center around children and youth with neuromuscular disorders (NMD). Among other things, Bendixen investigates how occupational therapy can improve their functional abilities and quality of life, and how the use of mobile technology can help patients and their families monitor and manage NMD.

"I have had wonderful opportunities to build partnerships with other pediatric faculty on campus and clinicians in the community to assist our students

and broaden our department's research agenda," she explains.

"The Department of Occupational Therapy, in collaboration with others in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, was among the leaders in developing advanced interdisciplinary graduate education programs in the U.S. for rehabilitation professionals."

"In fact," he continues, "The Rehabilitation Sciences doctoral program pioneered by the University of Pittsburgh has become the gold standard across the U.S. for high-quality scientific training in rehabilitation and disability research."

This July, a new OT program at SHRS was initiated to elevate the practice of already licensed occupational therapists.

In the Doctor of Clinical Science in Occupational Therapy, fellows and faculty mentors work together closely to advance practices in a variety of clinical practice areas. In the master practitioner track, advanced courses and hands-on apprenticeships provide opportunities to incorporate best practices and new strategies. In the clinical educator track, coursework and mentored teaching experiences train the next generation of occupational therapy educators.

According to Skidmore, the Doctor of Clinical Science reflects an advanced level of training in occupational therapy education, but one that fits well within the department's academic mission.

"It allows us to push the envelope for advanced practice doctoral education," she adds.

Ottenbacher is not surprised. "Under the leadership of the new chair, Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore, this department is positioned to continue setting the standard for clinical and scholarly distinction in occupational therapy science and practice for the next decade." ■



GROOMING LEADERS



in Emergency Medicine

Students in the Emergency Medicine (EM) program at SHRS graduate with more than just expert knowledge and skills. They're selfless professionals who are motivated, responsible, and capable of thinking outside the box.

In a word, they are leaders.

Professor and EM Program Director Walt Stoy is not surprised by the success of EM graduates. "We have markers for success early on in our program," reveals Stoy.

"We attract a very high caliber of student in the first place," he explains. "Since they begin the program in their junior year, students already have an impressive college transcript. All are EMTs with EMT certification, and the program prepares them to take the NRP (Nationally Registered Paramedic) exam. They are dedicated to the field and willing to work hard to achieve their goals."

Tom Platt, assistant professor and vice program director, points out that over the past three years, 98 percent of the Pitt EM students who took the NRP exam passed. "When you consider that the average state pass rate is 67 percent, and the national pass rate is 75 percent, you can see that we're doing something right," he notes.

John Englert (EM '04), credits his EM training at SHRS with providing him with up-to-the-minute medical, research, instructional, and administrative skills.

"It also reinforced what my parents and educators taught me through life, and that is the need to be self-disciplined and morally and ethically correct," admits Englert.

Englert started his EM career as a high school sophomore, volunteering as an EMT with a community-based volunteer ambulance service. Thirty-nine years later, he is now the EMS program manager for the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services.

"I often think back to how the professors in Pitt's EM program reinforced the need to pay attention to detail and to look beyond the obvious, whether it be related to patient care or administrative matters," he explains.

A more recent EM graduate, Paramedic Matt Myers (EM '15), used his leadership skills to parlay an internship at Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg, Pa., into a full-time position, starting a program that will help community residents reduce the number of repeat visits to the hospital emergency room.

"The EM faculty helped me to build the necessary knowledge and skills I need to manage my responsibilities and stay productive," maintains Hagahmed.

"They also taught me how to adapt to the constantly changing environment of the Emergency Department, while still providing the best possible care for critically ill and unstable patients."

"Matt became interested in the idea of Mobile Integrated Health Care (MIH) during his internship," recalls Platt. "It's a fairly new trend in emergency medicine, but one that is valuable to communities because it increases access to care while reducing health care costs and improving patient outcomes."

"After I finished a feasibility study, I made a presentation to the hospital's executive operating team," Myers reports. "They not only approved the MIH program in less than 24 hours – they proposed hiring several people and offered me the job of starting and running the program!"

Stoy reports that 100 percent of the students who complete the EM program at SHRS are placed after graduation. "Approximately 25 percent work in the paramedic field. Others use their degree as a springboard to graduate programs or medical school, physician assistant programs, and other domains of health care," he states.

Dr. Mohamed Hagahmed (EM '09) worked as a paramedic for three years before matriculating into medical school. He believes the professors he encountered at SHRS helped to hone his critical thinking and decision-making skills.

Today, as a resident physician in the field of Emergency Medicine at UPMC, Hagahmed treats many challenging cases on a daily basis.

"The EM faculty helped me to build the necessary knowledge and skills I need to manage my responsibilities and stay productive," maintains Hagahmed. "They also taught me how to adapt to the constantly changing environment of the Emergency Department, while still providing the best possible care for critically ill and unstable patients."

According to Stoy, an expert and caring faculty fosters student success. "Every one of us is student-focused," he admits. "During the two years the students are with us, we get to know them well. If any one of them is struggling, we offer help. If someone has a special interest, we do our best to make sure he or she has the opportunity to explore that area of emergency medicine."

Stoy adds, "It gives us great pleasure to watch them grow as professionals and take on leadership roles in the field of emergency medicine." ■



On the pathway to EXCELLENCE

Although the Physician Assistant Studies (PA) program in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences is barely five years old, it's gaining momentum. And praise.

One of the reasons is the dedication and drive of Assistant Professor and Program Director Deborah Opacic.

"She has an impressive work ethic," observes Assistant Professor Mary C. Alias. "I have never known anyone who works as hard as Dr. Opacic does, and she does it with such a positive attitude. She supports us as faculty and she genuinely cares about the success of our students."

"Her door is always open," agrees Emily Murphy, assistant professor and clinical coordinator of the PA program. "I have never seen her turn anyone away. She is the epitome of what it means to be an educator."

as well as in Central America and Central Africa."

Dr. Raymond Pitetti, associate division chief, Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, has supervised at least one PA student every month for the past several years.

"The students from Pitt, by and large, are head and shoulders above those from other programs," finds Pitetti. "They tend to be more motivated, more highly skilled, more knowledgeable, and better able to handle themselves in the clinical arena."

"The students are always prepared and able to easily adjust to the busy environment in the Emergency Department," he asserts.

Preparing students to adjust to different environments is a priority for Opacic. As one of the first credentialed PAs at what is now UPMC Presbyterian, she

Washington, Pa., admits the PA program was tremendously challenging, but rewarding. "The professors set an expectation of excellence, not only as it pertains to academics, but also from a professional standpoint."

Only the highest caliber of students are admitted to the program. Paper applications are screened and potential students are invited to participate in a multi-person interview process prior to admission. This is unique among PA programs.

"We want our students to have a general understanding of the role of a PA, and the ability to express themselves clearly and thoughtfully," claims Opacic. "This will prepare them for their role in the profession."

Assistant Professor Jason Hare is convinced the PA program's greatest strength is its people.

"We are in a dynamic and competitive field," declares Opacic. "And we are determined to make our program equally competitive."

Opacic brushes off the compliments by focusing on her passion – the evolution of Pitt's PA program.

"We are literally designing our future," exclaims Opacic. "It's very exciting to create a program with all the resources we have at hand here!"

A state-of-the-art human anatomy lab, computer labs, and access to standardized patients, people who have been trained to portray patients in specific medical situations, enhance the student's learning experience. But there's more.

According to Opacic, "Our students are quite fortunate, due to the reputation of the University of Pittsburgh and our recent graduates, to secure valuable clinical experiences – not just here in Pittsburgh, but throughout the country,

practiced with a variety of medical specialists, serving in the Division of Hematology/Oncology in the late 1980s, as well as on the hospital's heart and lung transplant team in 1991.

Opacic's extensive experience makes her a knowledgeable and respected instructor.

"Dr. Opacic's passion for the field is obvious in the thoroughness of her lectures," remarks Assistant Professor David Beck. "She pulls from her clinical experience and her awareness of procedures that PAs perform on the job to provide hands-on training that is unmatched by any program that I have encountered."

Megan Rose (BS '10, PA '13), a PA-C at Western Pennsylvania Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Center in

"We have an amazing community of physicians, guest lecturers, graders, and preceptors who are dedicated to providing students with the tools they need to be great PA-Cs," states Hare. "In addition, the faculty is constantly looking for ways to innovate and improve the program."

Says Hare, "No aspect of our program is allowed to stagnate, and improvements both incremental and system-wide are implemented on a regular basis as a result."

"We are in a dynamic and competitive field," declares Opacic. "And we are determined to make our program equally competitive."

According to Pitetti, PA Studies at SHRS is well on its way. "It is an outstanding program, rapidly becoming one of the premier programs in our region." ■



The Real World

Emergency medicine courses through the veins of Jonathon Jenkins. The son of an emergency department physician who is also an ambulance service medical director, he grew up hearing about trauma and learning what a difference a caring professional can make.

At the age of 15, he was answering alarms as a volunteer firefighter. A year later he was preparing for EMT certification. No one was surprised when this selfless young man enrolled in the Emergency Medicine (EM) program in the University of Pittsburgh's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

"Jonathon was 16 years old when I first met him," recalls Nicole Cecchini, EM program instructor and clinical coordinator. "At the time I was working at Mutual Aid Ambulance Service in Greensburg, and Jonathon was excited to be there learning how to become an EMT."

"On many occasions he did ride-along time with me and I could see his enthusiasm for the profession," she goes on. "He often asked questions about the EM program and what it was all about."

Now a senior in that program and a certified paramedic, Jenkins continues to work part time for Mutual Aid.

During his years there, he has witnessed the full gamut of emergency situations, from assisting at motor vehicle accidents to delivering babies. He says his most intense moment came when he was called to the scene of the mass stabbings at Franklin Regional High School in 2014.

"My previous experience gave me a huge advantage going into the EM program," reflects Jenkins. "I just felt comfortable jumping into the back of an ambulance. But there's a reason for the lectures and labs, too. When you get out in the field, it all makes sense – it all clicks."

During the clinical rotations in his junior year, Jenkins had to step out of his comfort zone. "He was assigned to sites that were different than what he was used to," notes Cecchini. "It was a good learning experience for him, but at the same time I believe he placed a higher expectation on himself to do well because of his background."

Gregory Stull, ALS coordinator for Mutual Aid, has supervised Jenkins on the job for many years.

"Jonathon is first of all very smart," observes Stull. "He adapts quickly to situations and he has always demonstrated the drive to learn and know as much as he can about this field. Most importantly, he cares about doing a good job and doing what's right for his patients."

"Jonathon's outgoing personality fits well into the emergency medicine field," remarks Cecchini. "We see many of our patients at the worst time of their lives and you have to be able to comfort them and talk to them."

When he's on the job, Jenkins also enjoys nurturing other students and new hires. "I always tell them that it's okay to throw the football around for a few minutes when there's downtime, but when that 911 call comes, we need to get serious immediately. Every emergency medical provider needs to be able to adapt to constantly changing situations."

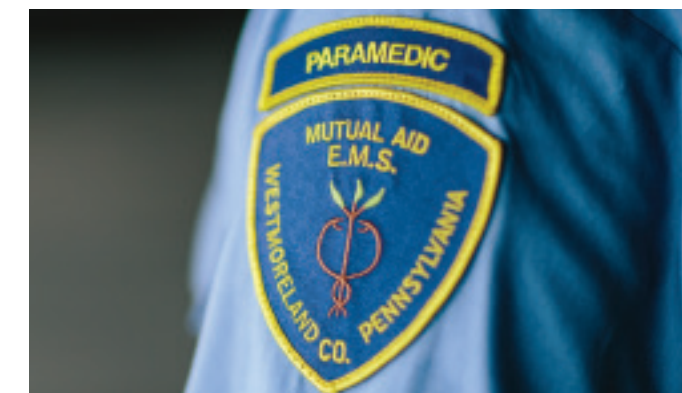
Stull adds, "Jonathon is a good mentor-in-the-making because even though he is chronologically young, he has a tremendous amount of public safety experience. He knows what it's like to be new, and have to learn in difficult situations. These factors give him a solid basis to help people who are coming into this field."

"The one thing I always tell people," says Jenkins, "is that there's a lot more good that happens than bad in my job."

Jenkins' positive attitude has earned him high praise from professors and his peers.

Assistant Professor Tom Platt points out that Jonathon was the 2015 recipient of the Walter L. Grubbs Memorial Humanitarian Award. "This award is presented to the student, as voted on by their classmates, who most embodies the virtues of empathy, altruism, and selfless commitment in all of their personal and professional endeavors."

According to Platt, "Jonathon is a deserving recipient, demonstrating all of these values." ■



Enjoying a break between calls are left to right: Greg Stall, Jonathon Jenkins and Jennifer Kinty

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