

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

SPRING/SUMMER 2016



→  
We Practice What We Teach  
←



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SPRING/SUMMER 2016



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University of Pittsburgh



SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND  
REHABILITATION SCIENCES



### *Greetings,*

SHRS has had a rich history of educating highly skilled practitioners representing a broad array of professional disciplines. While our school has a great deal of diversity with disciplines in the health and rehabilitation fields, one fundamental focus common to the faculty in all of our programs is excellence in education.

Excellence is defined as “the quality of being outstanding or extremely good.” I am sure that our readership and SHRS faculty would agree that, in the provision of health care services, this definition is somewhat lacking. We get much better insight about what comprises excellence when we probe deeper, particularly when asking patients and future employers to expand on the term. Patients tell us that an excellent practitioner “makes a difference” in their care. They are patient-centered, putting the patients’ needs first, and work to solve problems in a way that is consistent with patients’ goals and desires.

Future employers tell us that the excellent new graduates enter the workplace “ready to go.” They are not only highly skilled and well-educated, but they are team players, willing to go the extra mile to accomplish efficiencies in care delivery while maintaining sufficient attention to detail in keeping the patients’ needs in the forefront.

Creating graduates who are stellar practitioners and employees is a multifaceted task. In previous FACETS issues, we have demonstrated how SHRS scholars are performing cutting-edge research, and how we are able to integrate the findings of this research into our curricula. However, it takes more than innovative research ideas to create the superior graduate. We also need exacting role models in each of our professional disciplines: practitioners who emulate the characteristics of patient centeredness, caring and focus on outcomes while functioning in an increasingly complex health care arena.

In this issue, we feature such role models—faculty members who are extremely engaged in teaching and, by all measures, are excellent practitioners. As you read about these extraordinary individuals we’ve highlighted in these pages, keep in mind that the people featured are academicians and maintain very active research and educational agendas. Also, they are a representative group of only a fraction of practitioner role models with whom our students engage during their tenure here at SHRS. We also acknowledge all of the associates and affiliated faculty members who supervise our students during internship training.

As I study all of our programs here at SHRS, I find more examples of excellent practitioner role models and I become even more confident in our claim of producing excellent entry-level professional graduates.

Anthony Delitto  
Professor and Dean

# giving



The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences recognizes its good fortune in having alumni and friends who choose to support its departments, programs, students, faculty and research through gifts and pledges. We're grateful to each of you for validating what we do on a daily basis through your donations and engagement. In this column, I've chosen to highlight three major donors and tell you about the gifts they made recently. In each case, the beneficiaries are our present and future students.



**Dr. David H. Perrin**



**Dr. Caroline Robinson Brayley**



**Frank B. Fuhrer Jr.**

Dr. David H. Perrin (PhD '85) established the David H. Perrin Student Award Fund in 2010 to support graduate or undergraduate students in the programs of Athletic Training or Sports Medicine. This past August, Dave made a planned gift—a truly visionary bequest—that will grow his named endowed fund to a transformative level. SHRS is grateful to Dave for informing us about his bequest. He completed a Letter of Testamentary Intent with the University that outlined his planned gift and its purpose. We're honored to recognize Dave and his generous nature while he's among us.

The late Dr. Caroline Robinson Brayley, retired associate professor and founding chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, was searching for a way to enhance the OT student experience. The endowment she established, the Caroline Robinson Brayley Student Enrichment Fund in Occupational Therapy, may be used for tuition support and academic expenses, education-related travel, additional funding for clinical placements, community outreach efforts or honoraria for invited alumni experts or other speakers. Caroline gave much thought to her gift and its purpose and we appreciate the significance of her contribution. Unfortunately, she passed away just months after establishing her fund and less than a year after being named a charter member of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's Leaders and Legacy Society. Dr. Brayley will be remembered for giving of her time and talent as well as her philanthropy.

While not an SHRS alumnus or faculty member, Mr. Frank B. Fuhrer Jr., chairman, Frank B. Fuhrer Wholesale Company, created the Frank B. Fuhrer Jr. Scholarship in Physical Therapy as a "grateful patient" wishing to acknowledge excellent care and treatment he received from an SHRS faculty member. Frank expressed his desire to thank the faculty member in some way and elected to create a student scholarship at the request of the faculty member. Now Frank's legacy, which has long been established in Pitt's College of Business Administration, Katz Graduate School of Business and Pitt Athletics, extends to SHRS. We're humbled by his kindness.

And how fortunate am I to have had the occasion to interact with each of these three individuals who clearly serve as amazing role models in their demonstration of thoughtful charity, philanthropic foresight and generosity. To them and to all of our alumni and friends who support the school in so many ways, I extend heartfelt thanks.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patty Kummick".

Patty Kummick  
Director of Development

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# ACCESS

DR. KATE SEELMAN

*It has been an epic journey for Dr. Katherine D. Seelman. An illustrious career in public service, including a seven-year stint as director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research under President Bill Clinton, propelled her to accept a unique position at SHRS as professor and associate dean for Disability Programs. During her 15 years here, her vision, courage and enthusiasm have had a profound impact. Her awards and accomplishments are too numerous to list, but her compassion, coupled with her wit and indefatigable determination, will remain her hallmark. In 2007, Seelman was the recipient of the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Distinguished Service Award, and in 2015 she became part of the inaugural group inducted into the Disability National Mentoring Hall of Fame. As she approaches retirement in June 2016, she reflects on her tenure at SHRS.*



When I came to SHRS in 2001, it was already an excellent school with a national and international reputation. Dean Clifford Brubaker had made a commitment to expanding research science and rehabilitation science across all programs, and renowned researchers such as Dr. Rory Cooper and Dr. Michael Boninger were making great strides in their particular fields.

The school was meeting a critical need, educating disabled and non-disabled students to serve people with disabilities, but I was also extremely interested in making a stronger connection with the community.

Anyone who knows me understands my passion for bridging the gap between “the town and the gown.” This is why I chose to move from government work into the world of academia. My background in public policy and my own severe hearing disability gave me a unique opportunity to open up lines of communication between our students and faculty and the local, national and international community. My efforts were always welcomed by the dean and like-minded colleagues at SHRS.

People like Dr. Cooper, Dr. Catherine Palmer and Dr. Elaine Morner, just to name a few, are excellent examples of educators and researchers who generously share their cutting-edge thinking with people in business, government agencies and professional organizations, as well as with the disability community.

It's so important to have support in the community—not just services—for people with disabilities. The way to accomplish this is to bring people from various backgrounds and fields of expertise together, working toward a common goal.

As a member of the City-County Task Force on Disability, for example, I invited a group of disability experts from Europe to come to Pittsburgh to discuss implementation strategies for the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into force in 2008.

In addition, as one of only two people from the U.S. serving on the World Health Organization's nine-member international editorial committee to guide the development of the first World Report on Disability, I co-authored a chapter of the report on the importance of enabling technology environments. Enabling environments can be as simple as sidewalk curb cuts or the more complex communications example of TV captioning. I had the privilege of presenting our findings at the UN in 2011.

During my years at Pitt I was fortunate to work with many wonderful leaders, including former Pennsylvania Governor Dick Thornburgh and his wife, Ginny. Together we were able to weave the disability narrative into our campus culture through expert speakers in the Thornburgh Lecture Series.

Since 2012, I have also served as advisor to the University's Students for Disability Advocacy, which brought the first Disability Studies conference to Pitt. I am very proud of our students, who constitute a next generation of disability leadership, and am excited to see what the future holds for them. Technology may empower them even more.

At Pitt I have seen firsthand the growth and development of many assistive technologies, from power wheelchairs to extremely sophisticated hearing and communications devices. Right now, there is a lack of insurance reimbursement for assistive technologies, leaving many people with disabilities unable to take advantage of devices that would clearly improve their quality of life as well as their opportunities in the workplace and community. This must change.

Although I will be leaving the classroom, I will continue to pursue my interest in providing people with disabilities access to the technologies, services and support they not only need, but also deserve. My recent appointment by President Barack Obama to the National Council on Disability will provide me with yet another forum to accomplish this goal.

Down the road, I hope to be able to use my influence and knowledge to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Does this mean another foray into the world of public policy? Only time will tell!

# New Dean Named

Following an extensive and rigorous search, Dr. Anthony Delitto was recently named dean of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. He was appointed interim dean of the School in July 2015.

Many in the University community know Tony from his previous position as professor and chairman of the Department of Physical Therapy and SHRS associate dean of Research. He also serves as vice president for Education and Research for the UPMC Centers for Rehab Services (CRS). Under his leadership, the Department of Physical Therapy has consistently ranked among the best programs in the country, currently rated #1 by *U.S. News & World Report's* surveys of best graduate schools.

Dean Delitto joined SHRS in 1992 as assistant professor in the Department of Physical Therapy after serving as assistant professor in the Program in Physical Therapy, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Mo., where he began his career as a practicing physical therapist in the Irene Walter Johnson Institute of Rehabilitation. At Pitt, he effectively grew the Department of Physical Therapy into an intensive three-year post-baccalaureate first professional Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree program and a powerhouse of patient-centered, outcomes-based research.

Over the past 25 years, Dr. Delitto's research has focused on non-pharmacological management of painful musculoskeletal conditions, particularly low back pain. His doctoral work in Social Psychology was focused on studying individual preferences, coping styles and psychological effects of pain. He and his colleagues pioneered research into a treatment-based classification system that combines physical and psychological principles in low back pain management. His current research involves implementing classification and treatment effectiveness studies into quality improvement initiatives, and he was recently awarded a multi-site \$13 million Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) grant to conduct a large pragmatic trial in which the primary aim is to reduce the transition from acute to chronic low back pain. The 5-year trial began July 1, 2015, and involves five sites (Pitt/UPMC, Boston Medical Center/ Boston University, Intermountain Health System, Johns Hopkins Medical Institute and The Medical University of South Carolina). This study will enroll 12,000 patients into a 2-arm trial, one of the largest trials ever funded in low back pain. Dr. Delitto is also the site PI for a Phase II clinical trial studying the comparative effects of different amounts of aerobic exercise in patients with early Parkinson's disease.

In 2007, Dr. Delitto was appointed SHRS's associate dean of Research where he spearheaded the School's Health Services research. Working closely with the Comparative Effectiveness Research Center and the Health Policy Institute, SHRS has successfully generated well over \$20 million in five different comparative effectiveness research awards funded by PCORI and the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality. Dean Delitto collaborates extensively with numerous Schools of the Health Sciences and UPMC programs. Since its inception in 1996, he has served as the vice president for Education and Research for the CRS, UPMC's integrated rehabilitation service delivery system. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Pitt/UPMC Aging Institute and the Steering Committees of the Clinical Translational Science Institute and the Health Services Research Data Center of the Health Policy Institute, and he has ongoing initiatives with the UPMC Health Plan's Center for High Value Health and the Donald D. Wolff, Jr. Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation.

Dean Delitto received his bachelor of science degree in physical therapy from SUNY Buffalo, NY, his master of health science degree in physical therapy and his doctor of philosophy degree in social psychology from Washington University. He is an active member of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and its sections on research, orthopedics and education. He has authored or co-authored over 100 peer-reviewed research papers and has received numerous APTA honors in recognition of his research, clinical practice, contributions to professional literature and service, including the APTA's highest honor, the Catherine Worthingham Fellowship. He is a seven-time winner of the Steven J. Rose Excellence in Clinical Research Award and in 2007 delivered the Mary McMillan Lecture in recognition of distinguished contributions in the areas of education, patient care and research.

Since his appointment as interim dean, Dr. Delitto has articulated a vision for the immediate and long-term future of SHRS that promises, under his strong leadership, to propel the school in areas of academics, innovation and collaboration.

"We are extremely fortunate to count this stellar clinician-educator amongst our faculty," notes Arthur S. Levine, MD, senior vice chancellor for the Health Sciences and John and Gertrude Petersen dean, School of Medicine. "I am grateful to the SHRS dean search committee members for their time and effort." ■



## SHRS STANDINGS

in 2017 *U.S. News & World Report* Survey of Best Graduate Schools\*

1

PHYSICAL THERAPY

4

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

7

AUDIOLOGY

7

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

SHRS once again captured stellar placements in the 2017 *U.S. News & World Report* national rankings of graduate schools/programs. All SHRS programs surveyed for these latest standings realized elevated rankings.

A closer look at the rankings shows that SHRS placements in PT, OT, Audiology and SLP are the highest rankings for any program in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. And the #1 ranking for PT is the highest ranking for ANY surveyed school, department or program at the University of Pittsburgh.

*\*Physical Therapy – Pitt shares #1 with University of Delaware, University of Southern California and Washington University at St. Louis; Occupational Therapy – Pitt shares #4 with University of Illinois, Chicago; Audiology – Pitt shares #7 with Northwestern; Speech Language Pathology – Pitt shares #7 with MGH Institute of Health Professions, University of Arizona, University of Kansas and University of Texas, Austin.*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## Calendar of Events

### APRIL

Saturday, April 30, 2016

**2016 SHRS Recognition Day, Monroeville Convention Center, Monroeville, Pa.**

### MAY

Friday, May 20, 2016

**Future Scientist Summit, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.**

Saturday – Sunday, May 21 – 22, 2016

**2016 Occupational Therapy Research Summit, “Building Bridges in Intervention Research,” University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.**

Monday – Wednesday, May 23 – 25, 2016

**2016 PHIMA Annual Meeting, Lancaster, Pa.**

### JUNE

Thursday, June 23, 2016

**Athletic Training and Sports Medicine Alumni Reception, Pickles Pub, 520 Washington Blvd., Baltimore, Md., 6 – 8 p.m., held in conjunction with the NATA Conference. For details, contact Amy Aggelou at aaggelou@pitt.edu**

### OCTOBER

Saturday – Sunday, October 15 – 16, 2016

**Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference, Lancaster, Pa.**

Saturday – Tuesday, October 15 – 18, 2016

**Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Boston, Mass.**

Monday, October 17, 2016

**Health Information Management Alumni Reception, Baltimore, Md., 6 – 8 p.m., held in conjunction with the AHIMA Conference. For details, contact Patti Grofic at pgrofic@pitt.edu.**

### NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 17, 2016

**Communication Science and Disorders Alumni, Students, Faculty and Friends Open House, Field House Restaurant & Sports Bar, 1150 Filbert Street, Philadelphia, Pa., held in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. For details, contact Kate Gaunt at kate.gaunt@pitt.edu.**

## IN MEMORIAM

### Dr. Caroline Robinson Brayley

Dr. Caroline Robinson Brayley, faculty emerita and founding chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Pittsburgh, passed away on February 29, 2016. She was 81 years old.

Dr. Brayley earned her bachelor of science degree in occupational therapy from the University of New Hampshire, her master of education degree in student personnel and counseling from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and her doctor of philosophy degree in higher education administration from the University of Pittsburgh.

After a distinguished clinical career in Buffalo, Dr. Brayley served on the faculty of Erie Community College, North Shore Community College in Massachusetts, the State University of New York at Buffalo, and Cleveland State University before being recruited to the University of Pittsburgh in 1982 to serve as director of the newly established program in occupational therapy. Under Dr. Brayley's outstanding leadership, the program in occupational therapy was elevated to Department status later that same year. The first cohort of juniors and seniors were admitted to the Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy program in 1983, and the program received notice of accreditation in 1984 from what was then the accreditation committee of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

Dr. Brayley retired in 1997. Her leadership laid the foundation for today's success. In 2015, Dr. Brayley extended her legacy at the University of Pittsburgh by establishing the Caroline Robinson Brayley Occupational Therapy Student Enrichment Fund. This generous gift supports tuition for occupational therapy graduate students, travel to conferences and other academic experiences for students, and honoraria for invited speakers within the program. Most recently, on February 24, 2016, the Department of Occupational Therapy celebrated Dr. Brayley's legacy at a reception.

Caroline was an active member of the Pennsylvania Order of the Eastern Star, Norwood Herrington Chapter, and the Daughters of the Nile, Airys Chapter. She maintained a vast collection of Hummel figurines and was an expert crafter, quilter and Bunco player. She also enjoyed traveling and made many trips to Australia to visit family.

Dr. Brayley touched many lives through her dedication to her students, friends and to the profession. We mourn her passing.

### Dr. Mildred L. Wood

Dr. Mildred L. (Woody) Wood, SHRS associate professor emerita, passed away Sunday, February 28, 2016, at the age of 95. Recruited by friend and fellow-physical therapist Dean Anne Pascasio, Dr. Wood came to what was then the School of Health Related Professions in 1974 and held a primary appointment in the school's Division of Health Related Professions Interdisciplinary Programs where she taught anatomy. She also carried a secondary appointment in anatomy in the School of Medicine.

Dr. Wood received her undergraduate degree in health and physical education from East Stroudsburg University, and a certificate in physical therapy from the Ashford Army General Hospital through the War Department Emergency Certificate Course. She earned a master of arts in anatomy from Duke University and a doctor of philosophy degree in anatomy from the University of Kentucky. She served in the Army from 1945 to 1954 with a final rank of Captain. She transferred to active Army Reserve with assignments to various Army Reserve medical units. She held the permanent rank of Colonel, USAR. Dr. Wood counseled and assisted many SHRP students who expressed interest in entering military service.

Dr. Wood was known for being very precise and a stickler for detail. Her involvement in the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) witnessed her helping many districts and chapters develop by-laws and regulations, something that gave her great pleasure. She was a recipient of the APTA's Lucy Blair Service Award and enjoyed attending APTA conferences where she reconnected with PT friends and colleagues from across the country.

According to Dr. Pascasio, Woody, as a young girl, played the violin and developed a keen interest in classical music. In later years, she was an avid attendee of symphony performances and purposely chose to sit in upper level seats so she could watch the string musicians play.

Unbeknownst to some of her students, Dr. Wood had a quick sense of humor. At her school-wide retirement party in 1985, she arrived in a flapper dress bedecked with beads to the attendees' delight.

In 2005, Dr. Wood established the Mildred L. Wood SHRS Endowed Student Resource Fund which provides annual awards to deserving SHRS students. She will be missed by all who knew and loved her for her dedication, loyalty, perseverance, generosity and kind heart.



# 2015-2016 SHRS SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD RECIPIENTS

The following is a listing of SHRS scholarships and awards granted to students during the 2015-2016 academic year.

**Joyce and Andrew J. Kuzneski, Jr.  
Student Resource Award (school-wide)**  
Claire Kirby  
Stacy Mylin  
Sabrina Swoger

**Anne Pascasio  
Scholarship (school-wide)**  
Baron Kim  
Cameron LeViere  
Jaclyn Mazza

**Semantic Compaction Systems  
Education Travel Award (school-wide)**  
Elizabeth Bondarenko  
Kelly Boyle  
Kaitlyn Cirrincione  
Kelly Dickson  
Melissa Galvin  
Nicholas Hamilton  
Hyun Ka  
Parris Kernich  
Jessica Leslie  
Ashlee McKeon  
Chelsea Minsinger  
Jaclyn Morino  
Jeffrey Moorhead  
Gabrielle Plesniak  
Erica Rabbin  
Allyson Smith  
Sarah Smith  
Susan Staats  
Elle Steffey  
Melissa Swafford  
Seth Tichenor  
Danny Tolomeo  
Bethany Trotter  
Michael Turnwald  
Johanna Whitman  
Katlyn Yebernetsky

**SHRS Alumni Endowed  
Scholarship (school-wide)**  
Lisa Beilman  
Ellen Burgess  
Elizabeth Haley  
Danielle Hudak  
Corin Shirley

**UPMC Endowed  
Scholarship (school-wide)**  
Tara Flanagan  
Jay Mihalek  
Kathryn Reed  
Radhika Shah  
Sierra Simon  
John Anthony Sinacore

**Mildred Wood Student Resource  
Award (school-wide)**  
Michael Hoerner  
Steven Jeffreys  
Megan Muffly  
Sara Munera

**AVADA Book Award (CSD)**  
Diana Clayburgh  
Rebekah Ferguson  
Catherine Sacco

**Emeritus Award (CSD)**  
Lauren Dubyne  
Erin Watkins

**Audrey Holland Endowed Student  
Resource Award (CSD)**  
Adrianna Shembel

**Lisa Levy Memorial Award (CSD)**  
Laura Cochran  
Kirsten Stevenson

**Walt A. Stoy Award for  
Scholarly Activity (EM)**  
Brooke Pianka

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

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

**Meagan Sampogna Williams Student  
Resource Award (HIM)**  
Kimberly Peterson

**Cynthia Zak Endowed Student  
Resource Award (HIM)**  
Kimberly Peterson

**Joan Rogers Student Award (OT)**  
Jaclyn Mazza

**Dorothy Bradley Brown  
Endowed Scholarship (PT)**  
Samantha Abbott  
Nicole Dresden  
Kaitlin Dunn  
Shanna Gayer  
Michael Turnwald

**Mary Behling Browne  
Physical Therapy Scholarship (PT)**  
Rebecca Russell  
Bethany Trotter

**Pat Croce Scholarship (PT)**  
Kelson Coddington  
Shannon Lee

**Mary K. Daly-Crum Student Award (PT)**  
Jaclyn Morino

**David Physical Therapy and Sports  
Medicine Center / Joseph M. David  
Endowed Scholarship (PT)**  
Gabrielle Plesniak  
John Anthony Sinacore

**Anthony Delitto Endowed Fund  
in Physical Therapy (PT)**  
Olivia Hart  
Rebecca Mason

**Victoria Green Memorial Student  
Resource Award (PT)**  
Cory Bauer  
Ellen Teasley

**Patricia Leahy Memorial Scholarship (PT)**  
Katharine Siegel

**Pearl Cricco Mann Scholarship (PT)**  
Margaret Anzalone  
Anjali Kunnel

**Alice Chagnot Oulette  
Endowment Award (PT)**  
Alexander Kauffman  
Allison Morrison

**PT Class of 2009 Student Award (PT)**  
Amanda Church

**Paul and Judy Rockar Scholarship (PT)**  
Bethany Trotter

**D.T. Watson Alumni Scholarship (PT)**  
Danielle Demarco  
Brandon Rodgers

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

**Rory A. Cooper and Dion Johnson  
Student Paper Award (RST)**  
Kalai Tsang  
Jonathan Duvall

**Todd Hargroder Endowed Internship  
Award (RST)**  
S. Andrea Sundaram

**Virginia Kaufman Endowment Award (RST)**  
Brendon Nathaniel Adams  
Kaitlyn Cirrincione  
Alicia Ericson  
Halee Karashin  
Kate Kohne  
Cameron LeViere  
Adam Maurer  
Jay Mihalek  
Tyler Novotney

**Thomas J. O'Connor Scholarship (RST)**  
Kelly Beck

**Sean and Stephanie Shimada Award (RST)**  
Vincent Schiappa

**Jill Conley Memorial Scholarship (SMN)**  
Cheyenne DeRaymond

**Freddie H. Fu Athletic Training  
Scholarship (SMN)**  
Kinsey Dunst  
Thea Lucas  
Steve Nagib  
Megan Smith

**Freddie H. Fu Sports Medicine  
Graduate Research Award (SMN)**  
Beth Abbott  
Simon Gomez  
Amy Kalajainen

**Tim Kerin Memorial Athletic  
Training Scholarship (SMN)**  
Lorenzo Sellitto

**Nutrition and Dietetics Community  
Outreach Award (SMN)**  
Christine Manta





# Alumni News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Kendrea (Focht) Garand** (CScD '10) was one of three invited speakers to serve on a panel at the Carolina Chapter of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation's Annual Members Meeting in Winston-Salem, NC, in November. She also presented her dissertation work in a technical session at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association annual meeting in Denver, Colo., and participated in a panel presentation regarding interdisciplinary care across the patient care continuum for the dysphagic patient. Wrapping up 2015, she was the invited speaker to the Neurogenic Interest Group at the University of South Carolina regarding speech-language pathology management of persons with ALS and PLS.

**Rachel Harkawik** (CScD '12) was invited to return to St Petersburg, Russia, to deliver a week-long workshop titled "Now What? Continuing to Foster Development in School-aged Children with Special Needs" to the staff of the first specialized school in Russia for children with disabilities in September 2015. The focus of the workshop was to provide the staff with education about language development in non-verbal children and augmentative and alternative communication strategies to help enhance the children's ability to communicate.

**Abrar Mohammed Alduraibi** (CScD '14) and **Sameera Dehaithem** (CScD '12) presented at the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus campus conference on Bridging the Gaps between Research and Practice in

Dysphagia: International Perspectives in September 2015. They presented "Dysphagia Management of Type I Laryngeal Cleft" and "Use of Videofluoroscopy in Pediatric Behavioral Feeding Disorders."



**Dr. Noma Anderson** (PhD '79) received the Honors of the Association Award from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association during its convention in Denver, Colo. Anderson is the dean of the College of Health Professions at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. She served as ASHA president in 2007.



**Dr. Elizabeth Grillo** (PhD '06) received a \$410,260 grant from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health to design and test an online telepractice model using an app for the prevention of voice disorders. Over the next three years, she will help student teachers protect their voices through her Global Voice Prevention Model. Grillo is an associate professor, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, West Chester University, West Chester, Pa.

**Dr. Amanda Gillespie** (MS '05; PhD '13) recently received funding from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health for her proposal on "Conversational Training (Voice) Therapy."



**Dr. Patricia Prelock** (PhD '83) presented "Innovations in Theory of Mind Assessment for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder" at the 2015 Matthews-Rubin Lecture at SHRS on November 5, 2015. Prelock is dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and professor of Communication Science and Disorders, University of Vermont. She was the 2013 President of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

**Dr. Maria Dietrich** (PhD '09) assistant professor, Communication Science and Disorders, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., recently achieved R15 funding from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health.



**Dr. Diane Kendall** (PhD '99) was recently appointed chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington.

**Dr. Ying Yang** (PhD '12) had an article published in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology entitled "Voxel-based Lesion Symptom Mapping of Coarse Coding and Suppression Deficits in Right-Hemisphere-Damaged Patients."

*Joining DPT student Bonnie Virag (center) are physical therapy alumni Rebecca Smith, Joshua Oskin, Elizabeth Tonarelli, Derek Coughenour, Nicole Sinwell and Nickolas Vlasic at the VA's H.J. Heinz campus. Learn more about our Real World PT feature student, Virag and the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System on pg. 40.*





**Alexandra Zezinka** (BPhil '14) had an article published in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology entitled "Negative Word Production in Adults

with Right Hemisphere Brain Damage: Effects of Implicit Assessment and Contextual Bias."

### Health Information Management

**Daniel Wassilchak** (HIM '83) recently accepted a new position as chief operations officer for Radiology and Medical Imaging, University of Virginia Health System, Charlottesville, Va.

**Sharon Winters** (HIM '88; HIS '91) is the recipient of the Pennsylvania Association of Cancer Registrars (PACR) Distinguished Member Award. This award recognizes members who have made valuable contributions to the cancer registry profession and to the PACR organization.

Several HIM graduates are working for the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry, Pennsylvania Department of Health: **Joseph Burkhart** (HIM '06), data acquisition manager; **Stephen Slack** (HIM '08), database manager, and **Christina Lisella** (HIM '14), PCR field representative.

### Occupational Therapy

**Jessica Leslie** and **Anne Stankiewicz** (MOT '15) are fellows in the inaugural year of the Doctor of Clinical Science in Occupational Therapy Program at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Benjamin Gross** (MOT '10) was elected President of the Arizona Occupational Therapy Association.

### Physical Therapy

**Andrew (A.J.) Grzesiak** (DPT '08) was keynote speaker during the Professional Pledge Ceremony for the DPT Class of 2015. Grzesiak returned to his alma mater for the ceremony that marks the DPT students' entrance into a health care community that holds each individual to the highest degree of professional conduct. Opening remarks

were given by Interim Chair and Associate Professor **Debora L. Miller**, and closing remarks were presented by Miller and UPMC Centers for Rehab Services CEO **Paul Rockar Jr.** (MS '81).



▲ A.J. Grzesiak (center) served as a keynote speaker at the Department of Physical Therapy's Professional Pledge Ceremony along with closing speakers Paul Rockar (left) and Debora Miller (right).

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Yu-Sheng Yang** (PhD '05) was promoted to associate professor and chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Kaohsiung Medical University, Taiwan.





# Faculty News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Dr. Paula Leslie**, professor, delivered two sessions at the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus campus conference on Bridging the Gaps between Research and Practice in Dysphagia: International Perspectives in September 2015. She also presented at the Edinboro University Annual Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Conference, Edinboro, Pa., in October 2015.

**Dr. Leslie** co-presented “My Life, My Decisions ... I Think: Autonomy, Capacity and Impaired Mental Status” at the American Speech-Language Hearing Association Convention in Denver, Colo., in November 2015. She also contributed to ASHA’s Online Conference in Advanced Topics and Case Studies in Adult Dysphagia in December 2015 on the topic of “Patient (and Caregiver) Engagement in Complex Dysphagia.” She is the Scientific Chair of the UK Swallow Research Group and was invited to present at the biennial conference in London in January 2016.

**Dr. Ellen Cohn**, professor, served as the University of Pittsburgh’s Chapter Delegate to the Sigma Xi 2015 Annual Meeting, Kansas City, Mo., October 2015. She presented “Tele-rehabilitation Circa 2015” via VoIP at the Telemedicine and eHealth 2015 Conference in Warsaw, Poland, September 2015.

**Dr. Cohn** was an invited presenter on Telepractice at the 9th Annual Clinical AAC Conference, University of Virginia, Curry School of Education, Charlottesville, Va., October 2015. She is president-elect of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

**Dr. Jim Coyle**, associate professor, presented two talks on rehabilitation of swallowing disorders in patients with head and neck cancer to the Greater Baltimore Medical Center/Johns Hopkins Voice and Swallowing Center Annual Head and Neck Cancer Conference, October 2015.



**Dr. Connie Tompkins**, professor, received funding through 2021 from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders for her Research Symposium in Clinical Aphasiology. The inaugural research symposium occurred in 2003 and has been continuously funded since then. Dr. Tompkins also successfully competed for supplemental funds for three additional student fellows for the 2016 meeting.

He also co-presented “Rethinking the Evaluation, Management and Treatment of Patients with Dysphagia: Black and White or Varied Shades of Gray?,” at a two-day workshop at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

**Dr. Coyle** received the ASHA Foundation’s 2015 Clinical Achievement Award and was named a University of Pittsburgh Chancellor’s Teaching Award recipient. His co-authored “Characteristics of Dry Chin-tuck Swallowing Vibrations and Sounds” appeared in IEEE’s Transactions on Biomedical Engineering in September 2015.

**Dr. Coyle** also participated in a debate-format session, “Point Counterpoint: The Clinical Swallow Examination – Is It Necessary & Is It Useful?” and presented the seminar “What’s Wrong With My Patient? Esophageal Disorders and the Effects of Human Aging on Swallowing” at the ASHA Annual Conference, Denver, Colo., in November 2015.

**Dr. Erin Lundblom**, assistant professor, is serving as the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) representative for the 2016 ASHA convention. She is PSHA vice president for Publications.

**Dr. Susan Shaiman**, associate professor, was nominated for the U.S. Professors of the Year Award which recognizes faculty members for their achievement as undergraduate professors. She is serving on the Professional Development

Committee of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s newly-created Speech Science Special Interest Group and is serving on the Motor Speech Disorders Topic Committee, involved in planning for ASHA’s Annual Convention in Philadelphia in November.

**Dr. J. Scott Yaruss**, associate professor, was the invited speaker for a two-day workshop on stuttering therapy in Ankara, Turkey. He was also a keynote speaker for an International Conference on Stuttering, Rome, Italy. He also spoke at the ASHA convention on helping teachers understand stuttering and presented at the National Stuttering Association’s Family Fun Day for children who stutter in Frisco, Texas.

## Emergency Medicine

**Dr. Tom Platt**, assistant professor, was invited to serve as faculty for the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians / National Association of EMS Educators (NREMT/NAEMSE) Scenario Development Workshops. Topics that will be covered are scenario writing, calibration and evaluation in the workshop. Scenarios created in the workshop were made available for use following the event.



## Health Information Management

**Dr. Leming Zhou**, assistant professor, and Paul and Kristina Abernathy of FOCUS Pittsburgh presented “imHealthy: A Comprehensive Health Assessment and Intervention System for People in Medically Underserved Communities,” at the 2015 WHITE Conference in Washington, DC, October 2015.

**Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, and **Dr. Dilhari DeAlmeida**, assistant professor, contributed a chapter, “Population Health: Hazardous Air Pollutants and County Level Health Measures,” in the newly published book entitled “Data Analytics in Healthcare Research Tools and Strategies”, AHIMA (2016).

**Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, is chairing the AHIMA Council for Excellence in Education’s Information Governance Taskforce. This taskforce will create student projects and case studies to be used by educators to teach IG principles.

**Dr. Watzlaf**, and colleague Patty Sheridan, IOD, Inc., had their article, “Adaptive Leadership and Information Governance,” published in the February 2016 Journal of AHIMA.

## Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Joanne Baird**, assistant professor, was awarded the 2015 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) Academic Educator Award conferred at the POTA Conference in Scranton, Pa., October 2015.

Assistant professors **Joanne Baird**, **Mary Lou Liebold** and **Pamela Toto** presented a poster on “Classroom to Clinic: Opportunities for Occupation-Based Practice” at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference, Scranton, Pa., October 2015.

**Dr. Nancy Baker**, associate professor, and colleagues presented a paper on “Fall Prevention Interventions and Upper Extremity Arthritis: Epidemiology and Ergonomic Interventions” and a paper on “Analysis and Interpretation of Meta-Analyses” at the 2015 ACR/ARHP Annual Meeting, San Francisco, Calif., November 2015.

**Dr. Roxanna Bendixen**, assistant professor, was invited to present on the “Use of Multi-Sensory Physical Activity Devices for Outcome Measures in Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy” at the Pittsburgh Clinical Trial Regional Roundtable, Pittsburgh, Pa., September 2015. Bendixen and colleagues presented on “Strategies for Engaging the Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Community in Research” at the 20th International World Muscle Society Congress, Brighton, UK, September 2015. She and colleagues also presented “Research Participation in the Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Community: Parent Perceived Barriers and their Impact on Families” at the National Society of Genetic Counselors 34th Annual Education Conference in Pittsburgh, Pa., October 2015.

**Dr. Bendixen** was chosen to receive the Outstanding Alumni Award from the University of Florida’s Department of Occupational Therapy, October 2015. She and colleagues presented “Incentives and Barriers to Participation in Research for Parents of Children with Rare Disease” at the 21st Qualitative Health Research Conference in Toronto, Canada, October 2015.

**Dr. Bendixen** served on an NIH/NIAMS Special Emphasis Panel: Validation of Pediatric Patient Reported Outcomes in Chronic Diseases (PEPR) Consortium U19, in Bethesda, Md., and was chosen to attend the Training in Grantsmanship for Rehabilitation Research (TIGRR) held in Charleston, S.C., January 2016.

**Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, presented Boardroom to Classroom Sessions on “The Distinct Value of Occupational Therapy / The OTA’s Role in Evidence-Based Practice” for Keiser University, Tampa, Fla., September 2015, and “Articulating OT’s Distinct Value / Applying Evidence to Practice” for the University of Scranton, Scranton, Pa., November 2015.

**Dr. Chisholm** participated in the 9th Annual Career Panel Session – Department of Health and Physical Activity’s Exercise Science Organization, November 2015.

**Dr. Juleen Rodakowski**, assistant professor, was appointed to the faculty of the Geriatric Mental Health Mini Fellowship: A Practical Course in Multidisciplinary Assessment and Management, offered October 2015 in Pittsburgh. She and colleagues presented “Caring Disciplines in Aging: Role of Each Discipline” and “Depression: Impact of Depression on Patients.”

**Dr. Rodakowski, Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor and chair, and others presented a paper on “Feasibility of Meta-Cognitive Strategy Training for Older Adults At-Risk for Dementia” at the Gerontological Society of America, Orlando, Fla., November 2015.

**Dr. Amit Sethi**, assistant professor, presented “Connections between Brain and the Heart: Implication for Motor Recovery After Stroke” at the Rehab Grand Rounds, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, October 2015. He also participated in a poster presentation titled “Examining Joint Control in Multi-Joint Movements in Patients with Stroke” at the Biomedical Engineering Society Conference, Tampa, Fla., October 2015.



# Faculty News *(continued)*

**Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professor and chair, presented a workshop on “Using Cognitive Strategies to Improve Functional Performance After Stroke” and a panel session on “Interventions for Cognitive Impairments After Stroke: Promising Evidence” at the 6th Annual Canadian Stroke Congress, Toronto, ON, September 2015. She provided a scientific presentation on “Acute Rehabilitation for Individuals with Cognitive Impairments: Can We Do Better?” at the 2015 Rotman Research Institute Research Rounds, Toronto, ON, October 2015.

**Dr. Skidmore** presented a lecture, “Interventions for Executive Impairments,” to the Department of Occupational Therapy, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., October 2015, and lectured on “Rehabilitation for Individuals with Cognitive Impairments: Is it Possible to Achieve Better Outcomes?” at the Washington University School of Medicine Neurorehabilitation Research Rounds, St. Louis, Mo., January 2016. Skidmore also presented a webinar lecture on “Complex Intervention Research: Considerations for Improving Rigor” to the Comprehensive Opportunities for Rehabilitation Research Training (K12) Program, St. Louis, Mo., January 2016.

**Dr. Skidmore** was appointed to the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) Scientific Advisory Panel and was appointed to the Board of Directors, UPMC Senior Communities.

**Dr. Pamela Toto**, assistant professor, presented “Adaptive Tools for Independence in Aging” at the Geriatric Mental Health Mini-Fellowship: A Practical Course in Multidisciplinary Assessment and Management, Pittsburgh, Pa., October 2015. She and others presented on “Observation-Based Performance to Evaluate Technology: Performance Assessment of Self-Care Skills” at the Gerontological Society of America, Orlando, Fla., November 2015.

**Dr. Toto** was appointed to serve on the AOTA Distinct Value for Productive Aging Ad hoc committee, July 2015 – February 2016.

## Physical Therapy

SHRS Dean and Professor **Anthony Delitto** presented “Toward Effectively Managing Low Back Pain: Less Discovery and More Implementation” for the Murray Goldstein Commemorative Lecture in Public Health and General Preventive Medicine in January 2016 at the University of North Texas Osteopathic School in Fort Worth, Texas. The lecture is featured each year by the American Osteopathic College of Occupational and Preventive Medicine and features an individual who exemplifies service in the field of public health and preventive medicine.

**Dr. Susan L. Whitney**, professor, was presented with the 2015 VEDA Champion of Vestibular Medicine Award by the Vestibular Disorders Association for her significant impact on increasing awareness of disorders that affect the inner ear and brain. Through her research, Whitney, who has a secondary appointment in otolaryngology at the Department of Clinical Translational Science Institute, works to develop new tools to treat individuals through the use of virtual reality, a vibrotactile device and devices that can help record exercise compliance.

Associate Professor and Interim Chair **Debora L. Miller** was promoted to SHRS associate dean, Strategic Initiatives and Planning. Miller was an invited speaker at the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association’s Annual Conference at Seven Springs Mountain Resort in October 2015. She presented on conflict management strategies, one of the topics of the HPA Section’s LAMP Institute for Leadership in Physical Therapy program.

**Dr. James. J. Irrgang**, professor, was appointed scientific director of the Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry by the APTA Board of Directors. He also was elected as an associate member of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine.

**Dr. Deborah Josbeno**, assistant professor, was awarded the 2014-2015 School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences Dean’s Distinguished Teaching Award. She was selected based on her systematic application of media and technology, her infectious enthusiasm for teaching and motivating students, and her commitment to integrated classroom and clinical teaching.

**Dr. Victoria Homyak**, assistant professor, was awarded funding for “Bodies in Motion,” a project exploring the definition of human movement from the perspectives of budding film theorists, student filmmakers and photographers, and rehabilitation science students. The project, in collaboration with faculty in the film studies program at the University’s Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, is part of the 2015-2016 Year of the Humanities at Pitt to highlight the importance of humanistic thinking university-wide.

**Dr. Allyn Bove**, assistant professor, received a Promotion of Doctoral Studies II (PODS II) Award from the Foundation for Physical Therapy for 2015-16. PODS II Scholarships of up to \$15,000 are awarded to physical therapists who have been formally admitted to post-professional doctoral candidacy to support early-career physical therapist investigators.



The Department of Physical Therapy was well-represented at the Combined Sections Meeting of the American Physical Therapy Association in February 2016 in Anaheim, Calif. **Debora L. Miller**, associate professor and interim chair, was the lead faculty for the HPA Section of the APTA's LAMP Institute for Leadership in Physical Therapy during a two-day pre-conference program. She continues her tenure as the LAMP Committee chair and HPA Board member. **Dr. James J. Irrgang**, professor and vice chair of Clinical Outcomes Research, co-delivered the speech "Science Meets Practice: ACL" at the sports physical therapy section. **Dr. Susan L. Whitney**, professor, presented "Vestibular Rehabilitation for Peripheral Vestibular Hypofunction: Clinical Practice Guidelines and Beyond!" on the neurology track.

Other presentations included: "Does Eliminating Transportation Barriers Improve Access to Physical Therapy in an Underserved Population?" by **Dr. Allyn Bove**, assistant professor; "Effectiveness of a Student-Run Physical Therapy Clinic to Enhance the Student Clinical Experience: a Qualitative and Quantitative Report" by **Anthony Sinacore**, SPT; **Melissa Water**, SPT; **Christopher Bise**, assistant professor; and **Dr. Lynn Fitzgerald**, assistant professor and director of clinical education. Presenting the education session "Get in the Game with PCORI: A Successful Research Group's Experience" were **Dr. Jennifer Brach**, associate professor; **Dr. Anthony Delitto**, SHRS dean and professor; **Dr. Kelley Fitzgerald**, professor and SHRS associate dean of Graduate Studies; **Dr. Sara Piva**, associate professor; and **Dr. Michael Schneider**, associate professor. **Dr. Patrick Sparto**, associate professor, presented "Neuroimaging of Motor and Sensory Function in Health and Disease" at CSM, and several graduate students, mentored by **Drs. Sparto** and **Whitney**, presented posters or gave oral presentations including **Saud Alsubaie**, **Kefah Alshebber**, **Brooke Klatt**, **Abdulaziz Alkathiry**, **Sahar Abdulaziz** and **Carrie Hoppes**.

Faculty from the Department of Physical Therapy participated in podium presentations at the American College of Rheumatology and Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals (ARHP) Annual Meeting in November 2015 in San Francisco. Assistant Professor **Allyn Bove's** "What is the Most Cost-Effective Physical Therapy Strategy to Treat Knee Osteoarthritis?" was recognized as one of the top six abstracts submitted to ARHP for the conference, and was presented in the Exemplary Abstracts session. **Dr. Kelley Fitzgerald**, professor and SHRS associate dean of graduate studies, and **Christopher Bise**, assistant professor, are co-authors. **Dr. Fitzgerald** presented "Fall Prevention Interventions: The Physical Therapy Perspective."

**Dr. Gustavo J. Almeida**, research assistant professor, co-authored "Responsiveness of Physical Activity Measures Following Exercise Intervention in Individuals after Total Knee Arthroplasty" with **Dr. James J. Irrgang**, professor, and **Dr. Sara Piva**, associate professor. **Dr. Piva** also co-authored the abstract, "Are General and Central Adiposity Associated with MRI-Assessed Structural Changes in the Knees of Older Adults?" **Samannaaz S. Khoja**, research physical therapist, presented "Sleep Efficiency and Cardiovascular Risk Burden in Rheumatoid Arthritis."

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Katherine Seelman**, professor and associate dean for Disability Programs, was inducted in the inaugural class of the National Disability Mentoring Coalition's Susan M. Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was created to honor those who are making a significant difference in the lives of youth and adults with disabilities through mentoring and to raise awareness about the importance of mentoring for individuals with disabilities.

**Dr. Rory Cooper**, distinguished professor and FISA/PVA chair, was interviewed for a November 2015 article for ESPN about prosthetics and other recent advances in assistive technology and what they mean for the sports world. The article appeared at [espn.com](http://espn.com). He was also featured in a short clip on the HLN channel on February 1, 2016, highlighting the Human Engineering Research Laboratories' work with assistive sports technology. The clip was featured on the CNN website, [cnn.com](http://cnn.com).

### Sports Medicine and Nutrition



**Dr. Samara Joy Nielsen** has joined the faculty of the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition as an assistant professor. A nutritional

epidemiologist with over 15 years of experience, Nielsen has worked in industry, government and academia. She has taught public health nutrition at Kansas State University and Food for Wellness at Shepherd University. She will be teaching courses in the Nutrition and Dietetics program.



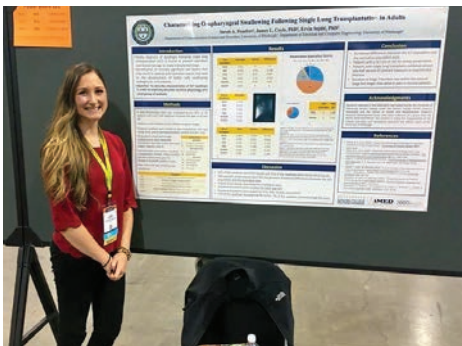
# Student News

## Communication Science and Disorders

Undergraduate student **Megan Ballantyne** had a poster accepted for the UK Swallow Research Group Conference in January 2016 with **Dr. Paula Leslie**, professor.

CScD student **Miranda Babiak** co-authored a manuscript titled "Phonological Processing in Primary Progressive Aphasia," which was published in November 2015 in the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*.

CScD students **Marnie Kershner**, **Miranda Babiak** and **Susy Keller** presented as electronic talking heads at the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus campus conference "Bridging the Gaps between Research and Practice in Dysphagia: International Perspectives" in September 2015. They were invited to present their career journeys in dysphagia practice and the importance of lifelong learning as clinical professionals.



▲ **Sarah Pomfret**, B.Phil student, presented a poster titled "Characteristics of Oropharyngeal Swallowing Following Single Lung Transplantation in Adults" at the annual conference of the 2015 American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Denver, Colo., in November 2015.

**Szu Han Kay Chen**, doctoral student, received 2nd place in the Student Scientific Paper Awards at the recent Clinical AAC Research Conference at the University of Virginia. Her paper was "Learning English as a Second Language: A Chinese Boy with Cerebral Palsy Using a Speech Generating Device." Other SHRS students presenting papers at the conference included **Tom Kovacs**, **Sang Eun Shin** and **Erhsuan Reina Wang**.

The University of Pittsburgh National Student Speech Hearing Language Association Chapter was awarded Gold member status in recognition of their hard work this past year.

## Health Information Management

**Lauren Benish**, HIM undergraduate student, represents HIM as a student liaison for the PHIMA Board.

**Kelly Boyle**, HIM undergraduate student, was recently inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa, a national leadership honor society that recognizes students for academic achievement and leadership. He also received a University Honors College Scholarship.

**Samantha Faulds**, HIS graduate student, co-authored an article titled "Treating Hepatitis C in A Ryan White-Funded HIV Clinic: Has the Treatment Uptake Improved in the Interferon-Free Directly Active Antiviral Era?" in *AIDS Patient Care and STDs*, 30(2); 2016.

**Anthony Gnaljian**, HIM undergraduate student, was recently inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa, a national leadership honor society that recognizes students for academic achievement as well as leadership. He also was a recipient of a University Honors College Scholarship.

**Taylor Horne**, HIM undergraduate student, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the Emerging Leaders Program.

**Zanub Malik**, HIM undergraduate student, was invited to join the Golden Key International Honour Society. Malik was also nominated to attend the 10th Annual Panther Leadership Summit, affirming her contribution as a student leader.

## Occupational Therapy

**Angela Caldwell**, doctoral candidate, received an SHRS Research Development Fund grant for her proposal titled "Examining Relationships between Family Mealtime Routines and Feeding Outcomes in Young Children with Sensory Food Aversions."

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

MOT students **Jennifer Arrington**, **Marissa Beaston**, **Jennifer Bennis**, **Jamie Cylinder**, **Elizabeth Duggan**, **Sarah Furar**, **Jordyne Goodman**, **Nicole Habovick**, **Emily Johnson**, **Melissa Leonard**, **Lindsay Lippert**, **Megan Tuttle**, **Susan Whitworth** and **Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, participated in AOTA Capitol Hill Day, September 2015.

**Elizabeth Bondarenko**, MOT student, was chosen as the 2016 recipient of the OT Award of Professional Excellence. Bondarenko, **Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, and **Dr. Pamela Toto**, assistant professor, presented a poster on "Occupation-Focused Wellness Groups for Marginalized Populations" at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference, Scranton, Pa., October 2015. The trio also presented "Fostering Health Through Occupation: Wellness Groups for Marginalized Populations" at the AOTA/NBCOT National Student Conclave, King of Prussia, Pa., November 2015.

MOT students **Samantha Chamberlin**, **Anne Chen**, **Stephanie Rouch** and **Casie Strausbaugh** were selected for the 2015-2016 Jewish Healthcare Foundation Jonas Salk Fellowship.



**Charlotte Cornog, Leah McCarthy, Erica Mollenkopf, Alexandra Ruth** and **Kelly Dickson**, MOT students, were awarded the Jewish Healthcare Foundation 2016 Fellowship on Death and Dying.

**Jamie Crisman**, MOT student, was awarded the Segle Americorps Education Award.

MOT students **Alyssa DeZulovich, Taylor Hoffay, Erica Mollenkopf** and **Drs. Denise Chisholm** and **Pamela Toto**, associate and assistant professors respectively, participated in the preview phase of the Rebuilding Together Project which works to modify home environments making them safer and more accessible for aging owners and those with disabilities.

**Kelly Dickson**, MOT student, was chosen as the 2016 recipient of the OT Award of Scholarly Excellence. Dickson and **Dr. Pamela Toto**, assistant professor, presented a poster, “The Prevalence and Outcomes of Frailty in SNFs,” at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference, Scranton, Pa., October 2015.

**Jaclyn Mazza**, MOT student, was awarded the 2016 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Scholarship and received the Alpha Kappa Alpha Education Advancement Foundation Scholarship.

**Leah McCarthy, Sam Bowen, Hannah Morris, Alex Ruth** and **Kasey Gelhaus**, MOT students, represented Pitt Occupational Therapy at Pitt Make a Difference Day, October 2015.

**Jordan Shoup**, MOT student, organized an inter-professional event with the University of Pittsburgh Student Occupational Therapy Association (UPSOTA) organization and the PT and CScD student organizations to raise funds for a toy donation to the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers.

MOT student **Melissa Swafford** and **Drs. Juleen Rodakowski**, assistant professor; **Lauren Terhorst** and **Elizabeth Skidmore**, associate professors, and Shannon Juengst presented a poster on “Self-Awareness and Recovery in Stroke Rehabilitation” at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference, Scranton, Pa., October 2015.

MOT students held an OT educational games booth at the Hazelwood YMCA Halloween event for youth, October 2015, and hosted a canned goods collection for the local food bank, November 2015. MOT students attended the 2015 AOTA/NBCOT National Student Conclave held in King of Prussia, Pa., November 2015.

The University of Pittsburgh Student Occupational Therapy Association (UPSOTA) organization hosted a “Mitten Tree” collecting new hats, scarves, mittens and gloves for distribution at a local homeless shelter, December 2015.

### Physical Therapy

Second and third-year DPT students taught more than 400 children at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in Pittsburgh about the importance of health, wellness and fitness during Global Physical Therapy

Day of Service in October 2015. The DPT students also taught the children how to use exercise and breathing techniques for stress management. The children received “Go Play!” bracelets to remind them to be active as well as certificates of completion and healthy snacks.

DPT students raised money for the Arthritis Foundation by participating in the Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis December 13, 2015, in Pittsburgh in honor of SHRS **Dean Anthony Delitto**, a medical honoree for the annual holiday fundraiser. The students were part of “Tony’s Trotters” and walked and ran to raise awareness and funds to cure arthritis.

**Anthony Sinacore** and **Gabrielle Plesniak**, third-year DPT students, lectured to the senior students in the SHRS Rehabilitation Science Undergraduate program during the course introduction to Evidence-based Rehabilitation coordinated by **Dr. Sara Piva**, associate professor. They discussed their experience in evidence-based practice as student physical therapists.

**Krista Kutina**, doctoral student, received the 2015 Milbank Injured Soldiers Research Grant award. The award was presented at the 2016 meeting of the Association of Academic Physiatrists in Sacramento, Calif., in February 2016.



**Keeley Chaffee, Carlos Darby, Nicci Dresden, Sarah Estok, Olivia Hart, Maggie McCool, Shanna Naider, Justin Ott, Becky Russell, John Schneider, Shayna Spano, Bethany Trotter** and **Ashley Whitehead**, second-year

DPT students, successfully organized a mini “wellness day” in December 2015 at Etna Senior Center. Chaffee led the effort with the Geriatrics Special Interest Group that expanded to other interested students. Under the supervision of **Dr. Victoria Hornyak**, assistant professor, students performed blood pressure screenings, gait speed and modified DGI assessments, and verbal fluency tests to establish baseline verbal ability in the context of future screenings for dementia.



# Department News

## Health Information Management

Health Information Management Department faculty, students and alumni were in full force at the 87th annual AHIMA conference in New Orleans in September 2015. A Pitt HIM alumni reception was held providing an opportunity for alumni, students and faculty to mingle and network.



▲ HIM faculty and students gathered for a group photo during the HIM Alumni Reception in New Orleans.

## Physical Therapy

The Department of Physical Therapy's 21st Annual Endowed Scully Lecture, "Beyond 2020: What's Next?," featured UPMC Centers for Rehab Services CEO Paul Rockar Jr. (MS '81) in October 2015, at the University Club Ballroom.

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Recently patented Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) projects were featured at the National Museum of American History's Innovation Festival in Washington, D.C., in September 2015. The event was a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and showcased patented technologies and intellectual property systems. HERL and 12 other organizations were selected to participate as exemplary examples of innovation.

A sixth-grade team of students from Cambria Heights Middle School, Patton, Pa., won a STEM-related competition in the final leg of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories' Research Experience for Teachers (RET) program. Their teacher, Nathaniel Wharton, participated in the learning project during a summer internship program at HERL.

RET supports collaboration between college faculty/researchers and K-12 teachers by bringing knowledge from the program to the classroom. Through RET, teachers received extensive training on design engineering, prototyping and 3-D printing while being coached on creating unit plans of high interest activities that rely on critical thinking.

The final phase of the RET program had students identify a problem and arrive at a solution using the design engineering process. The first-place middle school team consisted of **Ashton Clark, Henry Warner, Braden Thomas** and **Maximus Dillon**. Each student received a "Littlebits" electronic building kit to foster and aid in developing their innovative side.

▼ (L to R) Cambria Heights Middle School students Ashton Clark, Henry Warner, Braden Thomas and Maximus Dillon.





# SHRS Study Abroad Partners Visit Pittsburgh

For ten years, undergraduate students from SHRS have experienced study abroad in a unique way. Students with aspirations of becoming speech language pathologists, audiologists, physical and occupational therapists, physician assistants, clinical dietitians and athletic trainers apply to participate in the SHRS Study Abroad in Ireland program each winter for travel in May. A total of 205 students have completed the program to date and an additional 30 will be making the trek this year.

Students gain an interprofessional and multi-disciplinary understanding of health care and a knowledge of the scope of practice while being exposed to different models of health care and education found in the U.S., Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

In a turn of the tables, SHRS welcomed education and rehabilitation professionals from Belfast, Northern Ireland, to Pittsburgh this past October. The five-day visit, organized by Dr. Janice Vance, assistant professor, Communication Science and Disorders, and director of the Undergraduate Education in Communication Science and Disorders program, provided a platform for health and education professionals involved in the study abroad program to exchange ideas, models of practice and challenges.



▲ *Guests from Northern Ireland and SHRS's Assistant Professor Janice Vance (middle row, second from left) visit Dr. Roxann Gross (middle row, first from left), director, Research, at the Children's Institute.*

The Northern Ireland schools and services represented by the visiting principals, clinicians and teachers included Fleming Fulton School for children with physical disabilities, Jordanstown School for children who are deaf or visually impaired, Oakwood ASD Advisory Service, Harberton Special School for children with moderate cognitive difficulties, and Thornfield House School for children with specific language impairment.

As well as meeting with faculty in SHRS, the contingent visited The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh, The Allegheny Intermediate Unit, South Park Elementary Unit, DePaul School for Speech and Hearing, Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and Western PA School for Blind Children.

The visit was supported by SHRS, The Study Abroad Office and the European Studies Center, UCIS. ■

▼ *SHRS Study Abroad students on Portstewart Strand in Northern Ireland as they relax and have fun in the "sun!"*







**SHELLY CHABON:  
CHAMPION OF PITT VALUES**



**Y**ou can take the girl out of Pittsburgh, but you can't take Pittsburgh out of the girl. Not if you ask Rochelle (Shelly) Chabon (PhD, Communication Science '80), vice provost for Academic Personnel and Leadership Development at Portland State University (PSU) in Portland, Oregon.

Although she was born and raised in New York, she says when people ask where she is from, she often responds, "Pittsburgh."

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"HER PUBLISHED WORK AND LEADERSHIP PORTFOLIO ARE STELLAR. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, ALL WHO KNOW HER WOULD AGREE THAT **SHE IS AN EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN BEING.**"

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"I feel both a personal and professional connection to Pittsburgh," confesses Chabon. "Two of my children were born in Pittsburgh. And I met several of my closest friends, including Noma Anderson and Diane Eger, while completing my doctoral program at Pitt."

Another friend, Professor Ellen Cohn, describes Chabon as "charming, diplomatic, creative, clever, brilliant and hard-working—attributes that have only magnified as she has advanced in her career."

Since leaving Pitt, Chabon has worn many hats: speech-language pathologist, executive director of a non-profit organization for children with disabilities, author, leader of a professional organization with more than 180,000 members, chair of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) departments at several universities, associate dean of humanities and social sciences, and vice provost.

She credits her training at the University of Pittsburgh and the unwavering support of her family with enabling her to tackle many of the challenges of these jobs.

"My commitment to equity and justice and my willingness to try new things grew stronger while I was a student at Pitt," Chabon declares. "I will always be grateful to my professors and colleagues for instilling in me the courage to question – and the confidence to make mistakes."

Chabon cites another lesson learned from her days at Pitt. "Stay focused on students!"

When she became CSD chair at Portland State University, Chabon was dismayed because many highly qualified applicants to the Masters of Speech and Hearing Sciences program had to be turned away due to lack of capacity. She wanted to help those students who had so much potential. Her solution: work with the college to revise the curriculum and extend the program to 12 months of the year.

"We were able to accommodate 66 percent more students," announces Chabon. "It was a wonderful victory because we advanced the program while meeting the needs of the students."

Pitt's CSD Department Chair Malcolm McNeil explains why Chabon has been able to achieve such high levels of excellence and recognition throughout her professional career. "Beyond stating the obvious that she is multi-talented, one characteristic stands in bold relief to the others. Shelly simply cares about the outcomes of her efforts more than most other people. It's part of her DNA."

"Shelly is selfless," Cohn adds. "She always puts others first: family and friends, clients, students, colleagues and even their loved ones. You can always count on her to 'do the right thing' for others."

"Doing the right thing for others" is a hallmark of Chabon's professional life. An active member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), she shares its vision of ensuring that effective communication is accessible and achievable for all.

Chabon served on numerous ASHA councils and boards before becoming the organization's president in 2012. She encourages her colleagues and students to get involved whenever possible.

"Volunteering is at the heart of our profession," observes Chabon. "It provides the opportunity to serve people with hearing and speech disorders, to share a common mission with professional colleagues, and to grow both personally and professionally."

In her current position at PSU, Chabon finds herself working with faculty to develop leadership skills and build trust and respect for the university administration. In contract negotiations with the faculty unions, she frequently calls upon her skills as a clinician and a scientist.

"I need to observe and listen just as I would do in the lab or the clinic," states Chabon. "Listening to understand, not simply to respond, is one of the most important skills I can bring to our sessions. A sense of humor also comes in handy," she adds. "My goal is to end negotiations with a successful contract and with better relationships than we had when we started, creating an environment that will make the faculty delighted to work at Portland State."

Based on her professional record, Chabon will no doubt achieve her goal.

"Shelly is assiduous and ethical in everything she does," declares Cohn. "Her published work and leadership portfolio are stellar. But most importantly, all who know her would agree that she is an exceptional human being."

McNeil sums it all up. "The University of Pittsburgh is proud to have this caring academic giant as one of its most prestigious alums." ■



# LESSONS FROM A CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYBOOK.



**W**hen you're an athletic trainer, every day, every sport and every injury brings a new set of challenges. And new opportunities to form professional relationships that can change lives.

As a UPMC Sports Medicine athletic trainer sub-contracted to the West Mifflin School District for the past 23 years, Ron Ross has shared his expertise, enthusiasm and humor with countless athletes and approximately 40 Pitt students during their clinical rotations in the Athletic Training Education Program (ATEP).

"I keep in touch with just about all of them in some way," laughs Ross. "We get to know each other pretty well during their time at West Mifflin, and I like to follow them in their careers to see how they've evolved as professionals."

"There's something special about Ron," remarks senior AT student Steve Nagib. "He genuinely wants what's best for his students, peers and coworkers, and is willing to work with you for as long and as hard as possible until you accomplish your goals."

Bailee Allgyer (BS '09, MS '11), a clinical orthotist at De La Torre Orthotics and Prosthetics, recalls her clinical rotation with Ross as an AT student.

"Ron taught us that while it's important to be committed to learning and practicing your skill set, you must also be willing to invest in those around you," explains Allgyer. "That is a skill you cannot learn in a classroom."

"Ron was the first person to show me how to be fun and friendly with my patients while simultaneously earning their respect," reflects Robin Scheimer (BS '12, MS '13), athletic trainer at Kenyon College. "He demands your best, but does so in a way that you want to show him no less," she continues.

According to Bill Ankrom, ATEP instructor and clinical education coordinator, "Ron is an asset to our educational program and our institution. His passion for the profession is contagious for our students, and helps to quickly build their confidence."

"I take a sink or swim approach," admits Ross. "I give the students a lot of independence, but they know I'll throw them a life preserver if they need it."

"Ron is a laid-back instructor but he keeps a watchful eye on everything," observes Terrance Walker (BS '15), graduate student in Athletic Training at East Stroudsburg University. "If there was something you needed to improve upon, he would take you aside and talk to you privately."

"Ron's style of clinical instruction is definitely hands on," adds Daveon Lee (BS '09, MS '14), an intern athletic trainer for the Pittsburgh Steelers. "I gained the most confidence in my athletic training skills from my clinical rotation with Ron at West Mifflin."



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**"HE DEMANDS YOUR BEST, BUT DOES SO IN A WAY THAT YOU WANT TO SHOW HIM NO LESS."**

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Anne Pollard (BS '12), assistant athletic trainer at Oregon State University, remembers Ross as a passionate, caring and knowledgeable mentor.

"Ron puts so much trust in his students," Pollard explains. "I believe that trust from your clinical advisor can be very empowering. It allows you to grow in the ways that you need to."

Through an affiliation with the University of Pittsburgh and Dublin City University (DCU) in Dublin, Ireland, he has also been supervising four Irish athletic training students every fall since 2009.

"We take a lot of pride in being the only high school clinical site for the DCU students," boasts Ross.

"I was overwhelmed by the warm welcome I received at West Mifflin," states DCU student Niamh O'Hanrahan.

Kevin Boyd from the Dublin North Physiotherapy Clinic agrees. "Ron instantly made all the students feel at ease. He was very respectful and took time to get to know each of us."

For Tiarnán Ó Doinn, who is pursuing his medical degree at the University of Limerick, Ron personified the profession of athletic training. "He had a never-ending eagerness to develop and learn, while also being a patient disseminator of knowledge, all with a level of enthusiasm which I have not come across anywhere else."

Meadhbh Flynn, now an athletic therapist with Buccaneers Rugby Football Club in Athlone, Ireland, also salutes Ross. "Ron was more like a friend than an authoritative figure. He took us under his wing and taught us not just about athletic training but also about American culture, humour and life."



▲ (Left) Students from Dublin City University and Pitt pose with trainers before a home football game at West Mifflin High School. From left to right, Danielle Byrne, Kristylyn Turkowski, Summer Dupont, Steve Nagib, Sinead O'Keeffe, Ron Ross, Niamh O'Hanrahan, Ellen Burgess, Alissa Bendorf and Siobhan O'Farrell.

(Right) Ross (far left) instructs Pitt students on how to treat a knee injury. Next to Ross are West Mifflin swimmer, Carly Fuga, with AT students Leah Lilley and Lindsay Semevolos.

Kristylyn Turkowski (BS '12) says she is fortunate to call Ross both her mentor and her professional colleague. After graduation, she accepted a position as an athletic trainer with the West Mifflin School District and now calls herself Ross's "sidekick."

"I don't think there is anyone who has influenced me as a professional more than Ron," claims Turkowski. "As a co-worker, he immediately treated me as an equal. He has helped me to become more confident and independent as an athletic trainer. He also taught me that although work can be hard, at the end of a long day there just might be pizza - and ice cream!" ■

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**"RON PUTS SO MUCH TRUST IN HIS STUDENTS, I BELIEVE THAT TRUST FROM YOUR CLINICAL ADVISOR CAN BE VERY EMPOWERING. IT ALLOWS YOU TO GROW IN THE WAYS THAT YOU NEED TO."**

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# THE BEST KEPT SECRETS OF SHRS

“Our students aspire to become great practitioners,” proclaims Anthony Delitto, professor and dean, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS). “What better way to empower them than to surround them with outstanding teachers who are also top-level practitioners?”

According to Delitto, few peer institutions across the country have faculty with the level of clinical expertise as the faculty at SHRS. “These people are truly our best kept secrets,” he continues.

“We absolutely practice what we teach.”

Case in point: Professor Susan Whitney. In the 35 years that she has been on the faculty in the Department of Physical Therapy (PT), Whitney has never stopped treating patients. A renowned expert in vestibular disorders, Whitney sees patients on a regular basis at the UPMC Center for Balance Disorders in the Eye & Ear Institute in Oakland.

“I just love treating patients because I learn so much from them,” offers Whitney. “When I bring cases into the classroom, I share that knowledge with my students. Together we examine what worked and what didn’t—the successes and the failures. It makes the class so interesting.”

Whitney says her extensive experience allows her to teach students content that is meaningful and clinically relevant, which prepares them to be better informed practitioners.

Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) Associate Professor Catherine Palmer, who has a joint appointment in the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, also serves as director of Audiology at UPMC and supervises students seeing patients each week. This connection provides students in the Doctor of Audiology (AuD) program with the opportunity for clinical experiences directed by 40 different audiologists in 17 locations across the area.

“Our students are trained across the scope of practice,” Palmer reports. “Their didactic courses not only offer the latest evidence-based thinking, but also practical instruction on important topics such as practice management, billing, laws and regulations. When our students graduate, they are ready to practice.”

Palmer brings the clinic into her classroom in a unique way. She has initiated what she calls a “class patient,” a real patient who visits her Amplification class instead of the clinic. Students perform assessments, administer tests and measures, sort through their clinical decision making and write a treatment protocol based on what they’ve observed.

“I call it the longest hearing aid fitting in the history of man,” quips Palmer.

Palmer reaches out to industry partners to provide a complimentary hearing device for the “class patient,” which is a lesson in itself. “Students learn how to interact with manufacturers,” she explains. “That’s something they’ll have to do in real life.”

If clinical experience informs teaching practice, it also informs research, which subsequently informs the next clinical experience. And the synergy continues.

Distinguished Service Professor and CSD Chair Malcolm McNeil praises the culture of this synergy at SHRS. “I think it’s related to the quality of our programs,” comments McNeil. “Our classes are infused by knowledge that comes from both our research and our clinics.”

His own research currently focuses on the cognitive underpinnings of language in patients with aphasia. Through a grant from the Veterans Administration Rehabilitation Research & Development, McNeil studies memory and attention mechanisms that affect listening and reading language comprehension in veterans who have suffered a stroke or another brain injury.

In 2006, McNeil introduced the first Doctor of Clinical Science (CScD) in Medical Speech-Language Pathology degree in the nation. “It is an extremely rigorous program for individuals who are passionate about taking their practice to the highest level,” notes McNeil. “They make grand round presentations to faculty and also bring their clinical expertise to students. We all benefit.”

For some SHRS faculty like Judy Dodd, the clinic is the community.

A registered dietitian and assistant professor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition, Dodd has dedicated her life to helping members of the local community learn how to improve their health through nutrition.

“There is so much need for nutrition education these days,” states Dodd. “There are many people who don’t understand what a healthy meal looks like, or how to cook one when they’re on a fixed budget or have certain medical conditions.”

Dodd partners with local grocery stores, community organizations, health fairs and local food banks to develop recipes and promote healthy eating. She also instills the importance of volunteer work in her students.



*Professor  
Susan Whitney*



*Associate Professor  
Catherine Palmer*



*Assistant Professor  
Judy Dodd*



*Distinguished Service Professor  
Malcolm McNeil*

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**"OUR STUDENTS ASPIRE TO BECOME GREAT PRACTITIONERS, WHAT BETTER WAY TO EMPOWER THEM THAN TO **SURROUND THEM WITH OUTSTANDING TEACHERS WHO ARE ALSO TOP-LEVEL PRACTITIONERS?**"**

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"Good nutrition is a function of sociology, education and economics," Dodd tells students. "It is also our passion. As professionals, it is our obligation to share our passion with others."

Delitto notes that it is not just outstanding faculty clinicians who pass their expertise on to students. He salutes alumni who have become our clinical partners, preceptors and points of pride.

Assistant athletic trainer and physical therapist for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Jon Andino (BS '08, DPT '11), is one. Andino serves as a mentor for UPMC's Center for Rehab Services' Physical Therapy Post-Professional Sports Residency program and also as a clinical preceptor for Athletic Training (AT) students. Every year, one of his AT students is selected for a prestigious seasonal internship with the Steelers.

"The most distinguished aspect of our internship is that the student becomes part of our Sports Medicine staff," says Andino. "They have the opportunity to work alongside not only highly knowledgeable athletic trainers but also nationally recognized and renowned physicians in the field of Sports Medicine.

"While in school, I had an incredible experience with remarkable preceptors, so I enjoy providing the same for our students," he continues.

Alyson D. Stover (BS '03, MOT '05, JD '11) is the owner and clinical director of Capable Kids, a pediatric therapy clinic that provides occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy and a host of support services to children and families in the Mercer County, Pa., area. She is also a passionate advocate for children.

As an adjunct instructor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, Stover shares real-world, real-time stories of advocacy. "I show students where we have been successful in our attempts to advocate for patients and what happens when they don't have access to the resources they need."

Stover says she continues to be inspired and challenged by her role models and hopes the current students feel the same way. "Each new year of students brings fresh enthusiasm and brilliance," notes Stover. "It is fascinating to watch the next generation of practitioners emerge."

Katherine D. Seelman, professor and associate dean for Disability Studies in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, has faith that this generation of teacher-clinician-researchers will inspire—and challenge—the next.

"The idea that 'we practice what we teach' is somewhat of an ethical statement," suggests Seelman. "In addition to our coursework, we teach the importance of diversity and acceptance, and in fact, this is what we practice at SHRS. Our work is the evidence of that." ■





# TWO ACCREDITATIONS. ONE POWERFUL NEW DEGREE.

**T**he new Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling (CRMHC) program in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology was designed to meet a growing need to serve people with disabilities as well as those with mental and behavioral health concerns, and also provide greater professional opportunities for graduates.

Built on the strong foundation of the former Rehabilitation Counseling master's degree, the new program features an expanded curriculum with new coursework and clinical experiences. Courses such as Families and Couples Counseling, Crisis Counseling, Risk Management and Disaster Preparedness, Substance Abuse and Addictions Counseling, and Counseling Ethics will open up new employment avenues for counselors.

"One notable thing about this program is its dual certification," states Professor and CRMHC Program Director Michael McCue. "It is one of a few in the nation that is dually accredited by both the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP)."

Patricia Costantini, adjunct assistant professor, adds, "Our dual accreditation will allow all graduates to practice as mental health counselors, rehab counselors, or as both! They will also be eligible to pursue licensure as a Professional Counselor. Their options and opportunities will expand exponentially."

A recent shift in insurance reimbursements toward lower cost providers makes this degree even more desirable. "Instead of paying for high-cost therapy services from psychiatrists or PhD psychologists, insurance companies will be looking for counselors with master's degrees," comments Costantini. "Pitt's CRMHC graduates will be ready to step in to serve clients with a variety of counseling and case management needs."

The two-year program accepted its first cohort in the fall of 2015. Students previously enrolled in the Rehabilitation Counseling program were given the option to convert to the new CRMHC program.

A diverse faculty provides students with the perspectives of seasoned counselors along with the fresh insight of younger professionals. "This is a small program," says Assistant Professor Jamie Kulzer. "That means students get a lot of personal attention from faculty."

Kelly Beck, a PhD student in Rehabilitation Science and CRMHC instructor, notes an improvement among students so far. "The new curriculum is teaching students more advanced client conceptualization and professional counseling skills," she observes.

"Our program philosophy has always embraced empowerment, advocacy and strengths-based rehabilitation," reports McCue. "But now our students will be even more well-prepared." ■

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THE OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROJECTS  
**EMPLOYMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS WILL INCREASE 19 PERCENT FROM 2014-2024,**  
MUCH FASTER THAN THE AVERAGE FOR ALL OCCUPATIONS.

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# NUTRITION? IT'S PERSONAL.



If there's one thing Jessica Magnu has learned in her 27 years as a registered dietitian it's this: nutrition is different for every one of us.

An adjunct instructor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN) and part of a closely knit team of health care providers at the UPMC Matilda Theiss Health Center in the Oak Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh's Hill District, Magnu provides nutrition education and counseling to patients with a wide range of medical conditions. "We take a case-by-case, person-by-person approach," explains Magnu.

"Whether it's an individual who needs help managing his or her weight or someone with diabetes or another chronic disease, we help them plan and prioritize how to improve their nutrition and their health," Magnu continues.

She says it's important to build trusting relationships with patients. "Often they are overwhelmed with their total health care needs. I like to start small with one or two ways they can eat healthier foods and still stay within their budget. Gradually we create a connection and they keep coming back."

Nutrition services at the Matilda Theiss Health Center are provided through a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Magnu is the first dietitian assigned to the Center. The funding has allowed her to create a number of nutrition events that support the needs of patients.

At a monthly diabetes support group, for example, Magnu addresses many issues including how medication affects weight gain and how nutrition and lifestyle changes can help. Over the past year, she has seen several patients lose weight and improve their overall health. "As a result, they've been able to cut down on the amount of medication they need to manage their diabetes," remarks Magnu. "They are very happy and feel much more in control of their illness."

Magnu enlists the help of Nutrition and Dietetics graduate students to assist with community events.

Hannah Williams (BS '15), a student in the Coordinated Master in Nutrition and Dietetics, was excited to gain experience in community dietetics. "Patients in the diabetes support group were eager to learn and share their experiences with me," observes Williams. "They were full of questions about new foods, food labels, sugar levels and cooking techniques—all things I was excited to talk about as a dietetics student."



According to Nutrition and Dietetics Assistant Professor Deborah Hutcheson, director of the Coordinated Master in Nutrition and Dietetics, students gain valuable experience when they engage in community dietetics. “They have the opportunity to develop, implement and evaluate health promotion initiatives in diverse population groups,” notes Hutcheson. “They also have the opportunity to practice community-based nutrition intervention with guidance from their mentor.”

Sarah Spak, a first-year student in the Coordinated Master in Nutrition and Dietetics, reports many people are unaware of how much their busy lifestyle leads to poor nutrition. “Things like eating convenient yet unhealthy foods, stress eating, smoking and lack of exercise all contribute to the rise of diseases,” she says. “Dietitians can change the world by helping people to prevent these diseases and create a well-balanced and healthy lifestyle that is manageable for each individual.”

In November, Matilda Theiss Health Center teamed up with the National Football League and the American Cancer Society to sponsor the “Crucial Catch.” During this daylong event, they educated members of the community about the importance of early detection and early treatment of breast cancer, and provided no-cost or low-cost screening mammograms.

Magnu and her students were on hand to conduct cooking demonstrations and offer tips on healthy eating.

“Participation in events like the Crucial Catch taught me so much,” reports Williams. “I was inspired by how much everyone was willing to try new foods, their willingness to learn, and the support everyone drew from the community.”

“To see first hand how impactful community support can be, both in large scale and smaller group settings, was one of the greatest learning experiences from my time at the Matilda Theiss Center,” adds Williams.

Magnu has plenty of other ideas on how to bring healthy nutrition to this community. Participation in an after-school program is just one. “Kids are so interested in food. Our goal is to have them start conversations about healthy eating when they go to the store or watch parents prepare meals,” she states.

One child at a time. One household at a time. “That’s how you impact the nutrition of a community,” asserts Magnu. ■

## CRANBERRY QUINOA SALAD

### 6 SERVINGS

1½ CUPS RAW TRICOLOR QUINOA  
1 BAG FROZEN BROCCOLI  
½ CUP WALNUTS, CHOPPED  
¼ CUP DRIED CRANBERRIES  
½ CUP FETA CHEESE  
¼ CUP BALSAMIC DRESSING

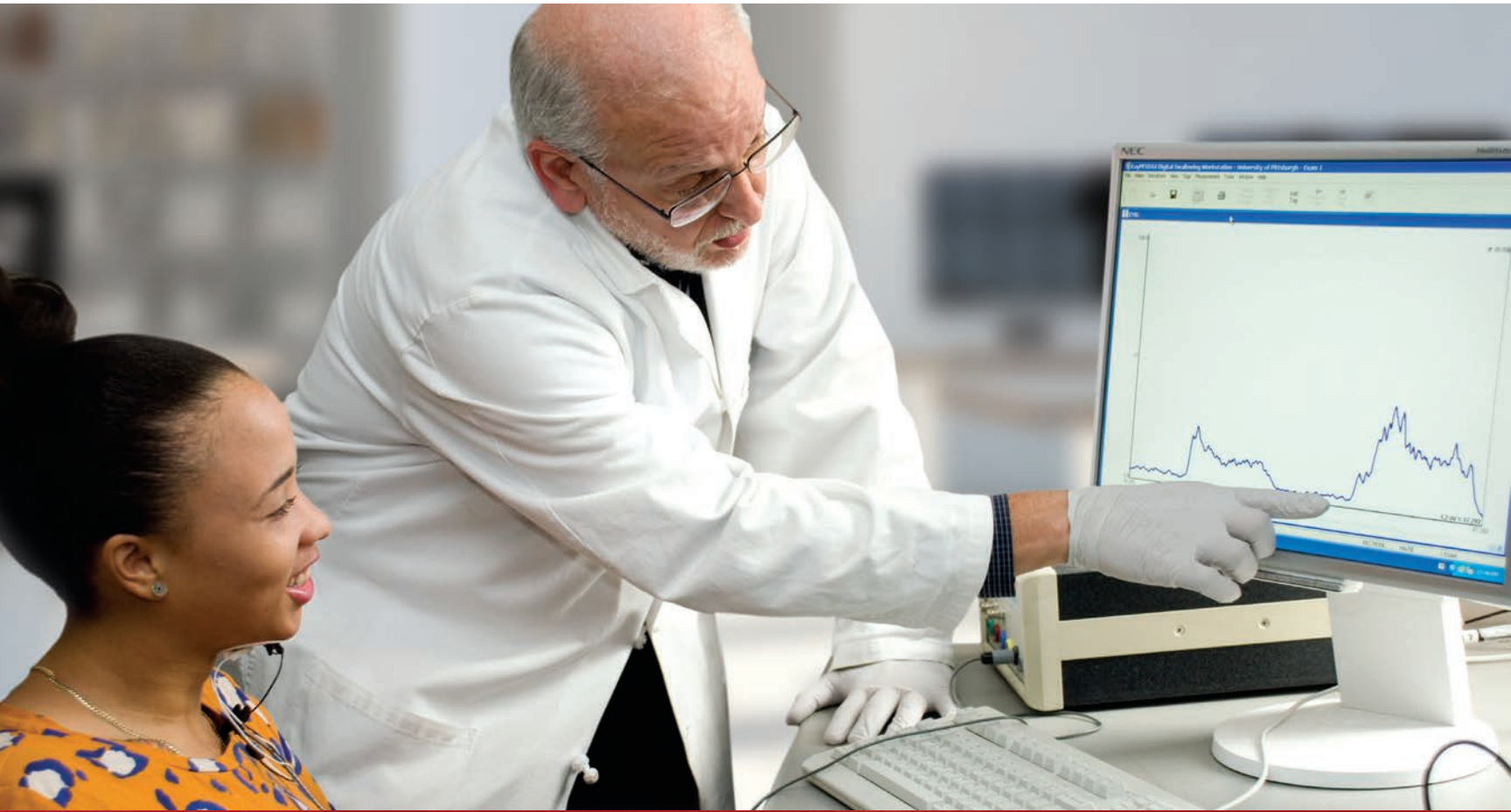
### DIRECTIONS:

RINSE QUINOA. ADD QUINOA AND 3 CUPS OF WATER TO A MEDIUM SAUCEPAN AND BRING TO A BOIL. REDUCE TO LOW HEAT AND COVER. SIMMER UNTIL ALMOST ALL THE WATER IS ABSORBED—ABOUT 15-20 MINUTES. LET COOL TO ROOM TEMPERATURE.

PREPARE BROCCOLI IN MICROWAVE ACCORDING TO PACKAGE DIRECTIONS.

COMBINE ALL INGREDIENTS IN A LARGE BOWL AND COAT WITH BALSAMIC DRESSING. ENJOY!

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size (133g)			
Servings Per Container			
Amount Per Serving			
<b>Calories</b>	330	<b>Calories from Fat</b>	150
% Daily Value*			
<b>Total Fat</b>	16g		25%
Saturated Fat	4g		20%
Trans Fat	0g		
<b>Cholesterol</b>	15mg		5%
<b>Sodium</b>	310mg		13%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	38g		13%
Dietary Fiber	5g		20%
Sugars	5g		
<b>Protein</b>	12g		
<b>Vitamin A</b>	30%	<b>Vitamin C</b>	70%
<b>Calcium</b>	15%	<b>Iron</b>	15%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	Less than	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4			



# CELEBRATING THE LEARNING PROCESS.

**S**ome students say you can never get a yes or no answer out of Dr. Coyle.

CSD Associate Professor James L. Coyle says there's a good reason for that. He enjoys pushing students to develop their own personalized set of critical thinking skills that will last throughout their careers.

"When a student asks 'why?' my initial response is 'What do you think?'" asserts Coyle.

Coyle then gathers what the student knows or does not know, and launches a series of probing questions designed to help the student scaffold knowledge.

"Critical thinkers must make cognitive connections and consider alternatives," explains Coyle. "At the end of this process, students often say 'I guess I knew that.' They

discover that they can access their growing stores of evidence efficiently and use it."

Distinguished Service Professor and CSD Department Chair Malcolm R. McNeil describes Coyle as "a deeply dedicated and masterful educator across academic, clinical and continuing education contexts."

In the clinic, even more than in the classroom, Coyle facilitates personalized learning.

"The clinic is where the real fun happens," quips Coyle.

As a board-certified specialist in swallowing and swallowing disorders, Coyle has conducted an active clinical practice at UPMC since 1999. Here, he not only provides the highest quality of care to his patients, but creates positive learning experience for his students.



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"CUSTOMIZING EACH STUDENT'S LEARNING PALETTE AND **SEEING THE LIGHT BULBS TURN ON** THROUGH THEIR CONNECTION OF DIDACTIC AND CLINICAL EXPERIENCES, IS LIKE **WATCHING THE STARS COME OUT AT NIGHT.**"

– JAMES L. COYLE, PHD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCE AND DISORDERS (CSD)

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According to Professor Ellen Cohn, "Dr. Coyle is the consummate clinical educator. In addition to mentoring students in the masters and doctoral programs, he provides guidance to attending physicians who seek advice on the management of complex patients with a variety of communication and swallowing disorders, and helps clinical staff in the UPMC Health System learn how to make evidence-based decisions."

His efforts have not gone unnoticed. This past winter, he received the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Teaching Award. In 2015, Coyle received the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Clinical Achievement Award, and in 2014, was elected a Fellow of the American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association in recognition of his teaching, scholarship and service.

Coyle's colleague, Associate Professor Susan Shaiman, shares his enthusiasm for challenging students to think critically. "Even high performing undergraduates appreciate 'learning how to learn'" remarks Shaiman.

Shaiman presents rigorous content to her undergraduate students, then helps them determine how it relates to previous knowledge, how it can relate to new knowledge, and more broadly, how course information has context outside of the classroom.

To facilitate learning, Shaiman developed a one-credit laboratory course to supplement each of her didactic-based courses. The labs provide students with opportunities to see how content is applied to the field of communication disorders.

"I see one of my important roles as that of an intellectual guide," reflects Shaiman. "I'm shaping the process of how students learn to apply information to novel situations."

Associate Professor Cheryl Messick considers Shaiman "a teacher's teacher" because of the way she collaborates with CSD faculty. "Dr. Shaiman is generous of her time, working with faculty to help them develop or refine their teaching skills," observes Messick.

Elaine Mormer, CSD assistant professor, concurs. "In my own development as a teacher, I have sought counsel from Dr. Shaiman on many occasions. I have observed her meticulous attention to the teaching techniques she employs, and her dedication to ensuring clear and organized content."

Her expertise as a teacher is validated every year through the annual SHRS Student Satisfaction Survey. She is frequently cited as "one of the best instructors I've ever had," as "the teacher who is always available to students" and "the professor who knows how to break down concepts so they are understood."

"In my own teaching evaluations I have gotten suggestions from students to adopt Dr. Shaiman's approaches to content delivery and learning assessment!" laughs Mormer.

"I set high expectations for both my students and myself," says Shaiman. "When former students report that they are well prepared for graduate studies and can apply their knowledge to actual clinical situations, they're making me proud." ■



▲ CSD Associate Professor James L. Coyle



▲ CSD Associate Professor Susan Shaiman



# A STRONG PARTNERSHIP REAPS BENEFITS FOR ALL.

**B**ack in 2013, Department of Health Information Management (HIM) Associate Professor Valerie Watzlaf had no idea that one seemingly small volunteer project would eventually impact so many people.

But nearly three years later, she acknowledges that her initial involvement with FOCUS Pittsburgh was the springboard to tremendous research and learning opportunities for HIM faculty and students, and improved access to health care for one medically underserved community.

FOCUS Pittsburgh ([www.FOCUSPittsburgh.org](http://www.FOCUSPittsburgh.org)) is a vibrant organization that offers residents of the Hill District access to wrap-around services such as healthy food for children, household and personal items for families, counseling for ex-offenders, bus passes, job training and health care. Watzlaf, with the help of Assistant Professor Leming Zhou and a team of HIM graduate students, set out to provide a new open-source electronic medical record (EMR) for the group.

When the organization decided to expand the FOCUS Pittsburgh Free Health Center (FPFHC), FPFHC and the HIM team determined that a system more comprehensive than an EMR was necessary. The result is the creation of imHealthy, a health information system designed to track and pinpoint the exact health care needs of each person in the system.

“This was important because there are individuals out there who face many challenges,” states Watzlaf. “They often have little or no health insurance. They may be unemployed or experience trauma in their everyday lives. Very often, they fall through the cracks of our health care system.”

The imHealthy system is being designed to help eliminate that problem.

According to Zhou, “There are four major components of the new system: a custom-built open electronic health record (EHR) system, a multi-domain well-being scale, a mobile app for data collection, and a data integration and evaluation program.”

The first step of the process was to replace FOCUS Pittsburgh’s existing system. Watzlaf, Zhou and their students went to work to provide all of the programming.

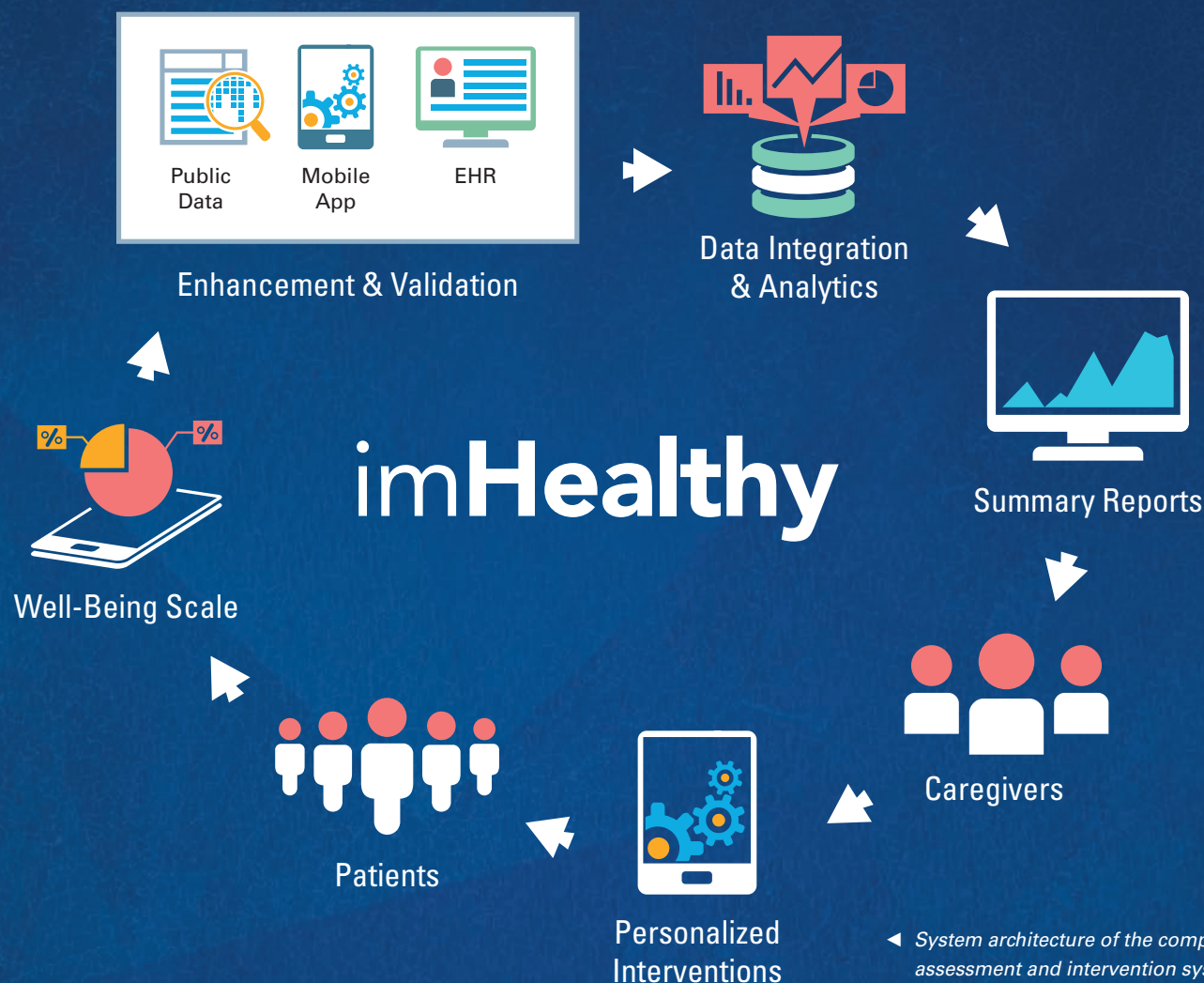
“This will allow FOCUS Pittsburgh to make changes easily, to collect, access and manage multiple types of data, plus perform various types of data analysis,” explains Zhou.

In addition, the team is developing an Android app that assesses five domains that contribute to wellness and quality of life: physical, behavioral, relational, spiritual, and socioeconomic.



◀ *imHealthy project team members Professor Leming Zhou, Steve Moeini, Kim Peterson, Kara Rogan, Gayathri Hebbar, Peijun Ren and Professor Valerie Watzlaf.*





"This tool will enable us to train and deploy social workers into neighborhoods that have high concentrations of need and limited access to resources," reports Rev. Dn. Paul Abernathy, director of FOCUS Pittsburgh and CEO of FPFHC.

Doctoral student Kimberly A. Peterson (BS '83, MS '95) is developing and evaluating content for the well-being assessment. She points out that the behavioral component features two sub-domains of trauma and resilience.

"This well-being assessment will be used to provide a baseline of the quality of life of the people living in the Hill District, and will demonstrate how trauma has affected their lives," explains Peterson.

Abernathy adds, "It will be a key component of a wider 'trauma-informed community development strategy' which will enable FOCUS Pittsburgh and partners to implement interventions based on the results of the imHealthy assessments."

Steve Moeini (BS '04, MS '06), working toward his PhD in Rehabilitation Science, contributed to the app programming, the design of the user interface, and the well-being evaluation algorithm that is part of the imHealthy system.

He sees the ability to tailor interventions to the specific needs of patients as key to the success of the whole system. "Respondents will be able to get the services they need quickly and conveniently, and the results will be more effective and cost efficient," he predicts.

Because information governance is critical to today's health care management, graduate student Mecredi Cruder is helping to establish policies for information flow and the oversight of patient information in the new system.

"The biggest advantage to this system is accessibility," notes Cruder. "Low-income households don't always have the means, mode or time to travel to medical appointments. By bringing health care tools directly to them, it helps with patient accountability, and gives the clinic continued oversight over their well-being."

"Working with FOCUS Pittsburgh is a win-win," concludes Zhou. "Our students are challenged by real problems, and have the opportunity to develop real solutions. Along the way they learn project management, programming, presentation skills and the value of volunteering."

Watzlaf adds, "All of these experiences are hands-on and are exactly what the students will experience after graduation from our program." ■



## BRINGING ***THE CLINIC*** INTO THE ***CLASSROOM***

“Management of the Medically Complex Patient” is not a new course for students in the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program. In fact, it’s been part of the curriculum for nine years. But every time this class meets, students experience “aha moments” that create new understanding. And new opportunities to become better practitioners.

Assistant Professor Andrea Hergenroeder says the course is designed to help students synthesize information learned in multiple courses in a way that prepares them for treating patients with multiple co-morbid conditions.

“Many times you hear about a disconnect between what is taught in the classroom and what is seen in the clinic,” offers Hergenroeder. This class offers an innovative format that brings seasoned physical therapists into the classroom every week to discuss complex patients that they have treated in the clinic. In turn, the students are asked to contribute to the discussion based on what they have learned in the classroom and justify their clinical decisions.



Patient cases cover the lifespan, and present a wide range of problems including illness, injury, impairment, functional deficits and disability.

“Real patients often have more than one medical issue,” says Hergenroeder. “Students can quickly become overwhelmed, which impacts their ability to problem solve and clouds their clinical judgment.”

“This class serves as a bridge between the didactic portion of the DPT program and the year-long internship,” she continues. “Students learn how to prioritize treatment based on the medical conditions of the patient, utilize best evidence-based practice that will lead to the desired outcome, and coordinate services with other disciplines.”

Students have the opportunity to review cases from diverse clinical settings. “Not every student has a chance for a clinical rotation in an intensive care environment, for example,” explains Hergenroeder. “But they will learn about the complications that a particular patient faces in that situation, and they’ll be required to think about appropriate use of physical therapy interventions. It broadens their perspective.”

Adjunct Instructor Hallie Zeleznik, also assistant director, Outpatient Neuro/Vestibular Program at UPMC Centers for Rehab Services, is an annual presenter in the class.

“I ask students to identify the challenges in the scenario presented to them and discuss how those factors can impact the appropriate diagnosis, intervention and outcomes in the clinical case,” reports Zeleznik. “By allowing them to go through their thought processes, tease out challenging factors in the case, and then create solutions that are appropriate, they gain confidence in their clinical decision-making skills.”

“The course gave me insight in to how many factors go into designing an appropriate treatment plan for patients with complex problems,” admits third-year DPT student Julianna Allen. “Without it, I might have gotten lost in the complexity when I got to my clinical internship.”

Fellow DPT student Natalie Novak (BS ’12) found it valuable to see how every clinician has a slightly different strategy and thought process. “It’s good to know that there is more than one way to reach the same set of goals and outcomes,” reflects Novak.

The class is driven by robust discussion that informs instruction.

“In listening to the student discussions, you really get a feel for their understanding of the patient’s condition, and how the rehabilitation course can be impacted by another medical issue, injury or co-morbidity,” observes Zeleznik.

“You can see the students light up as they answer more questions and bring more ideas to the table as they delve deeper into each case,” Zeleznik adds.

In this class, students also have opportunities for interaction with virtual patients and standardized patients (patient “actors”). According to Hergenroeder, this allows students to implement the best practices they’ve learned from their clinical experts.

“Working with the patient actors and receiving feedback from the ‘patient’ and the clinical instructor in the same session was a great learning experience,” says Novak.

She goes on, “The confidence boost I received from this class set me to succeed in my clinical year. I felt prepared and experienced and not afraid of anything in the clinic.” ■

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## EDUCATING **MASTER** PRACTITIONERS

There are countless reasons why Pitt's Department of Occupational Therapy (OT) consistently ranks among the best in the nation. The most recent is a new advanced practice program designed for occupational therapists who want to take their skills to a higher level.

"The Doctor of Clinical Science (CScD) in OT will be a change agent for clinicians seeking advanced training," reports Assistant Professor Pamela E. Toto. "The intent is to create master practitioners in highly specialized areas of care."

The CScD degree requires its fellows to complete advanced coursework and a capstone project as well as extensive clinical experiences that address the most current theories, assessments and interventions.

To complete the program, fellows must select one of four different master practitioner tracks: pediatric, geriatric, musculoskeletal rehabilitation or neurological rehabilitation. Or they may opt to follow a clinical educator track or a professional leader/advocate track.

Since the program began in June 2015, five fellows have been admitted. Each is guided by a mentor who is a nationally recognized expert in his/her area of specialization.

Anne Stankiewicz (MOT '15) became interested in geriatric OT during her graduate Level II fieldwork. "Helping people age with comfort and dignity is a cause that speaks to me," explains Stankiewicz. "I feel a closeness to the geriatric population that drives me to seek out new ways they may be empowered in their daily lives. In pursuing a clinical doctorate, my main motivation was to gain the skills necessary to be able to serve my clients to the best of my abilities."

For Jessica Leslie (MOT '15), occupational therapy is a second career. A former inner city high school teacher and Cleveland Clinic employee, Leslie is following the neurological rehabilitation track.



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“THE INTENT IS TO **CREATE MASTER PRACTITIONERS** IN HIGHLY SPECIALIZED AREAS OF CARE.”

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Leslie says, “I knew I wanted to expand my knowledge of neurological OT and become a master practitioner. But I also have aspirations to become a rehabilitation director and perhaps come back to the academic world as a professor. I believe this degree will afford me those opportunities.”

OT faculty is enthusiastic about the new degree. “Graduates from our CScD program will move us forward as leaders in the field of OT,” affirms Assistant Professor Roxanna Bendixen.

“The ability to increase knowledge and experience in assessment, intervention, evidence-based practice and data-based decision making and at the same time apply that knowledge within a specialized clinical rotation with mentored experiences will most certainly enrich the practitioner,” she adds.

Bendixen mentors Ken Reichl (BS '99), a seasoned occupational therapist with 14 years of experience in pediatric practice at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and The Children’s Institute. He also teaches the Pediatrics class in Pitt’s Master in Occupational Therapy program.

Although the pediatric track sounds like the obvious choice for Reichl, he chose to follow the clinical educator track instead.

“I realized the clinical educator track would be the ideal way for me to bridge my clinical skills and teaching skills to become a more experienced educator,” asserts Reichl.

“I am interested in developing greater experience in the creation and application of new and dynamic pedagogy and student assessment methods,” Reichl continues. “The CScD degree will allow me to reach this professional goal.”

“This is very exciting for our department,” declares Bendixen. “Ken has the opportunity to explore and learn innovative educational methods and technologies that he will integrate to enhance the strong curriculum we already provide.”

## master

[mas-ter, mah-ster]

1. a person eminently skilled in something, as an occupation, art, or science

## practitioner

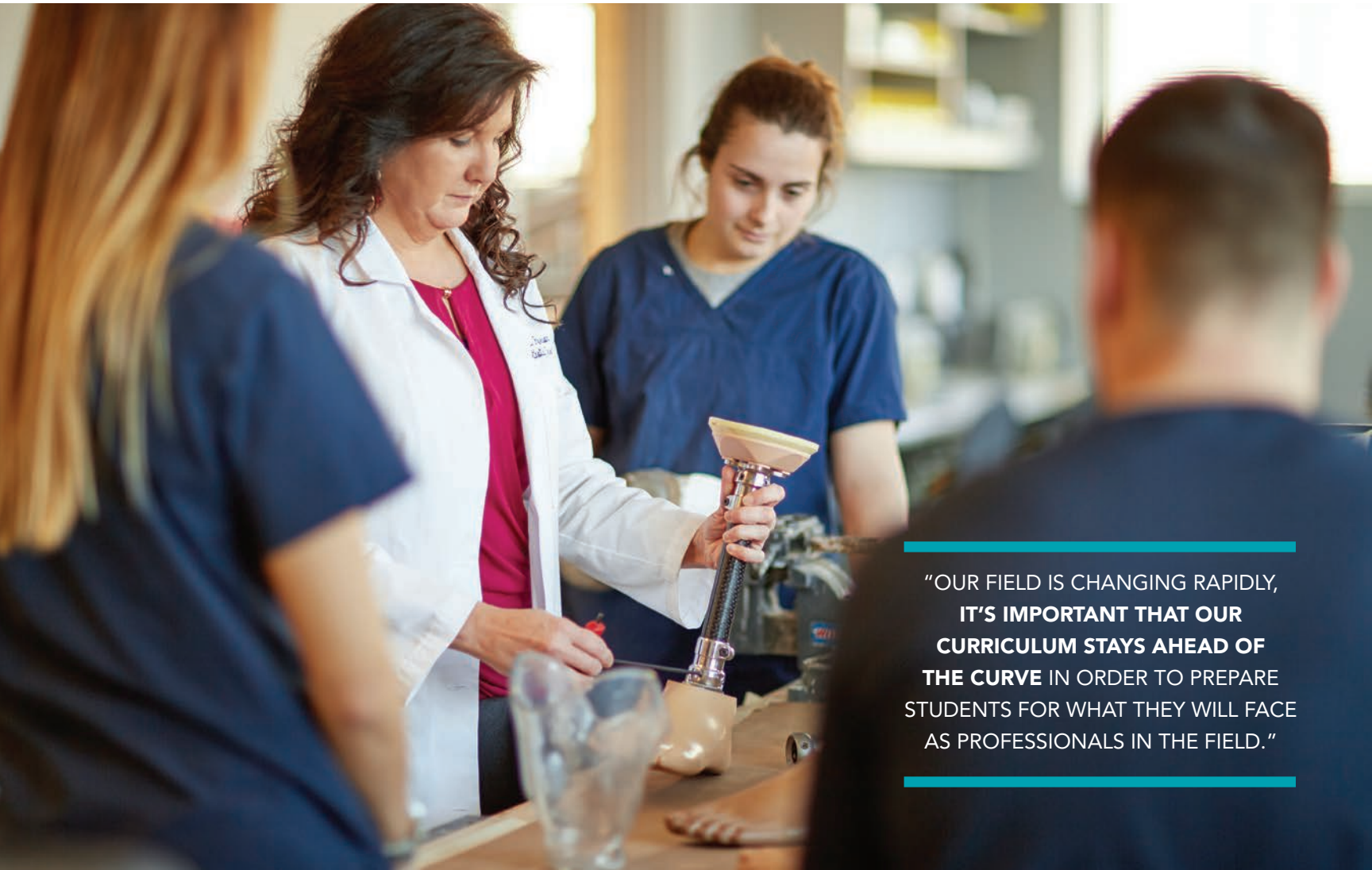
[prak-tish-uh-ner]

1. a person engaged in the practice of a profession, occupation, etc.

Toto says that the goal of the program was to create a different type of clinician—one who would rise to a leadership position in his or her field. “We designed a program that would raise the bar in advanced practice training,” Toto states. “We want to elevate our fellows to the highest level of their practice.”

As new models of care emerge and health care delivery becomes increasingly complex, there will be a critical need for occupational therapists with doctoral training and a passion for pursuing excellence.

The new generation of CScD graduates will fill that need. ■



**"OUR FIELD IS CHANGING RAPIDLY, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT OUR CURRICULUM STAYS AHEAD OF THE CURVE IN ORDER TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR WHAT THEY WILL FACE AS PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD."**

## Industry Report Confirms

# EXCELLENCE OF MSPO PROGRAM

**A**s health care educators, we strive to stay current with the latest thinking, and to be leaders in our fields.

A recently published report by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc. confirms that the course content of SHRS's Master of Science Program in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO) aligns perfectly with the findings of the Practice Analysis of Certified Practitioners in the Disciplines of Orthotics and Prosthetics, published late in 2015.

The report, which is their first since 2006, tracks changes in the profession that relate to the delivery of care, updates the knowledge and skills required for professional competency, and identifies future trends in the industry.

"Our field is changing rapidly," notes Sara Peterson, P&O program director and instructor. "It's important that our curriculum stays ahead of the curve in order to prepare students for what they will face as professionals in the field."

"We concentrate on the same domains of patient care that the Practice Analysis reflects," continues Peterson, "We stress patient assessment and the formulation, implementation and follow-up of the treatment plan, as well as practice management and ways to enhance professional practice."

Assistant Professor Goeran Fiedler says they are making an effort to bring more computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) technology into the classroom, as well as evidence-based research, as also recommended by the Practice Analysis report.



Students in the MSPO program each complete evidence-based capstone projects. “These projects are intended to contribute to the science of our field and not be just graduation requirements,” explains Fiedler.

MSPO student John Kesselring, for example, is evaluating the availability and potential use of additive manufacturing (3D printing) in the field of prosthetics and orthotics.

“Our field is advancing every day as new materials, components and techniques are being applied to patient care,” says Kesselring. “Evidence-based research is critical in evaluating new treatment methods in order to provide quality care and effective patient outcomes.”

“Evidence-based research is also important to help guide our decision-making process in treating a patient,” adds fellow MSPO student Christopher Cunningham, Jr.

In his capstone project, Cunningham is exploring the biomedical advantages of different types of prostheses for patients on boats. He explains that sailing is a feasible but under-explored hobby for lower limb amputees and people with disabilities. “By fitting them with the appropriate prostheses, we can help address problems of reduced physical activity in this population,” he asserts.

Fiedler states students gain experience by presenting their research at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (AAOP).

“By providing various opportunities for students to interact with industry organizations, we greatly expand their knowledge base and the scope of their professional network,” acknowledges Fiedler.

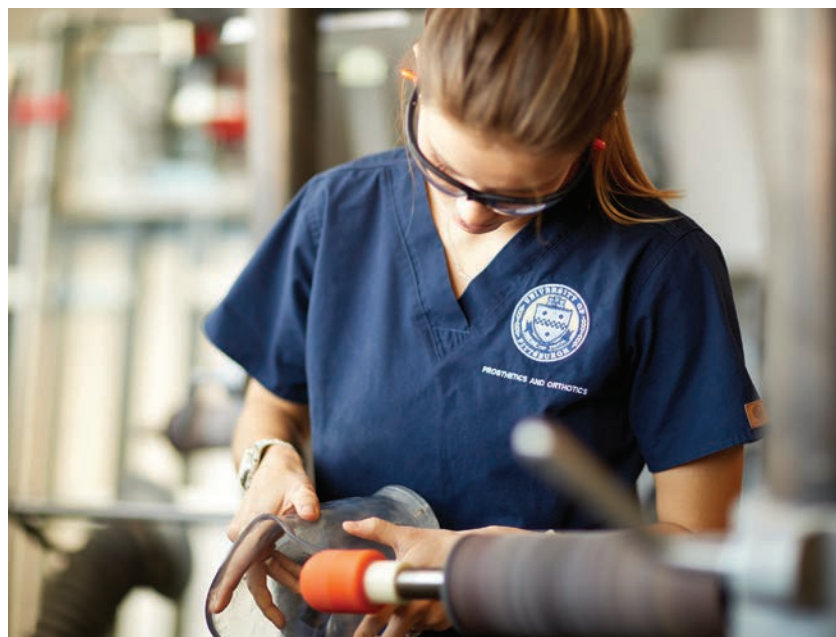
Corin Shirley serves as a student representative to the AAOP. In this role, she collaborates with other students and organization members to discuss issues such as student resources and mentoring. Last year, she attended a policy forum in Washington, D.C., where she met with lawmakers to discuss the challenges facing the P&O field, and possible legislative solutions.

“It was a fantastic experience as a future practitioner and as an American,” affirms Shirley.

Shirley’s capstone project, which focuses on the mechanical testing of prosthetic feet for developing nations, received a fellowship award from the Orthotic and Prosthetic Education and Research foundation.

“I like that evidence-based research is emphasized here at Pitt,” offers Shirley. “If doctors, patients, or insurance companies question our choice of treatment, evidence-based research can help provide the justification we need to support our decisions.”

“Our goal is to arm students with knowledge and experience that will carry over to their professional careers,” declares Fiedler. “We do that by teaching best practices.” ■



▲ (Top) MSPO student Emily Heskett buffs the edges of a prosthetic diagnostic socket for practice fitting a patient model.

(Middle) Advanced technologies such as 3D printing are incorporated into the MSPO classroom instruction.

(Bottom) Heskett and fellow student Angela Decandia collaborate on a lab project to sharpen their hand skills in preparation for their residency.





## A ROBE OF HONOR

The weather forecast called for a trace of snow on December 19, 2015. But inside the Twentieth Century Club in Oakland, there was a flurry of white. The fifth annual White Coat Recognition and Awards Ceremony celebrated the accomplishments of 32 women and seven men, graduates of the Physician Assistant (PA) Studies program.

“Our white coat ceremony is truly a special event for our students,” explains Deborah Opacic, assistant professor and PA program director. “The long white coat is a symbol of professionalism. It marks the end of their academic careers and the beginning of their journey as medical practitioners.”

Approximately 250 guests were on hand to witness this rite of passage.

During the course of the ceremony, each student was called forward and coated by his or her program advisor. Special awards were given to students for academic and clinical excellence and for embodying the spirit of the profession.

Graduate Celeste Rovito called it a day filled with feelings of relief, extreme joy, and nervousness. “The ceremony was meaningful to me because it beautifully wrapped up all the hard work and effort I have put into the past two years of my life,” she notes.

Rovito, who was honored with the Clinical Year Excellence award, adds, “The PA program was both mentally and emotionally demanding. Being able to officially put on a long white coat and accept my diploma made it all worthwhile!”

Although short white lab coats have been worn by the medical profession since the late 19th century, the tradition of donning a long white coat at a turning point in the student’s education became popular just a few decades ago. According to Opacic, white coat ceremonies have culminated Pitt’s PA program since its inception in 2010.

A highlight of the 2015 event was the keynote speech delivered by Benjamin Reynolds, PA-C and director of UPMC’s Office of Advanced Practice Providers.





“Mr. Reynolds’ speech about a patient returning to thank him after he helped him through a difficult time resonated particularly well with me,” remarks Rachel Johnson, recipient of the Spirit of the Profession award. “Our profession only exists because of our patients, and providing compassionate care for them is what we need to do.”

Academic Achievement awardee Samantha Kerin (BS ’12) agrees. “Mr. Reynolds spoke about many challenges that a physician assistant may face. But he stressed the positive impact we can have, not only on patients’ health, but also on their lives.”

Opacic used the occasion to thank faculty, staff and health care partners who guide students through their didactic and clinical years.

Cassandra L. Winter, senior physician assistant, UPMC Presbyterian Hospital, Department of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, reports that she was filled with “joy, happiness and complete surprise” when she received the Preceptor of the Year award.

“This recognition from my students showed me that my time, energy, and commitment to them made a difference,” says Winter.

While Winter acknowledges that most days in her department are hectic, filled with complex patients, a high census and busy operative schedules, she uses that to teach an important lesson.

“I first and foremost put my energy toward taking the best care of my patients and their families,” states Winter. “I believe that being a strong clinical preceptor means role modeling what it means to be a dedicated and caring physician assistant. In that way, I push my students to reach their highest potential and achieve new goals.”

In her closing remarks, Opacic reminded the class of 2015 of their charge moving forward.

“The advances in medical research, knowledge and technology will continue,” Opacic declares. “We all recognize their importance in the practice of medicine. However, we are not so naïve to think that these, although formidable, are all that is required to become an effective and successful PA. It will ultimately be our compassion, respect, trust, patience, honesty—and above all else—our integrity that will define us as clinicians.” ■





# The Real World

**D**octor of Physical Therapy (DPT) student Bonnie Virag feels right at home in a clinical setting. Prior to enrolling in the DPT program, Virag was employed as a certified athletic trainer for three years, working with high school and college athletes as well as a professional ballet company.

But during her yearlong internship at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Virag is acquiring experience with diverse populations and a wide range of needs.

“The VA is not sports medicine so it was a good way to push myself out of my comfort zone,” admits Virag. “I was very excited to be placed in a facility where I could expand my knowledge and improve my skills.”

“The yearlong internship is the culmination of extensive clinical rotations for DPT students. It allows them to spend the final year of their program working full time in a clinical setting,” points out Assistant Professor and Director of Clinical Education Lynn Fitzgerald. “At the completion of this year, our students are extremely well prepared to ‘hit the ground running’ as licensed physical therapists.”

Virag is finding exceptional opportunities to learn at the VA. During the first four months of her internship, she cared for patients at the VA inpatient hospital on University Drive in Oakland.

“This was my first time working in an acute care setting,” notes Virag. “I gained a very good perspective on what it’s like to help patients who are critically ill or recovering from surgery.”

During her rotation at the Community Living Center (CLC) on the VA’s H.J. Heinz campus in O’Hara Township, Virag treated long-term residents and those needing transitional and rehabilitation services.

Staff Physical Therapist Nicole Sinwell (BS ’10, DPT ’13) served as Virag’s clinical instructor during her assignment at the CLC, while Rehab Supervisor Elizabeth Tonarelli (BA ’03, DPT ’06) helped her learn how to treat patients who had suffered cerebrovascular accidents.



◀ Bonnie and her clinical instructor, Nicole Sinwell.





▲ Bonnie working with veteran John Gales in the MyHome rehabilitation area.

Both mentors agree that Virag is very adept at building rapport with veterans.

“Bonnie establishes trust by demonstrating a combination of not only empathy, but also the knowledge and skill sets necessary to better the veterans’ quality of life and functional mobility,” observes Sinwell.

“Nicole helped me understand what each patient needed,” explains Virag. “She always provided a proactive conversation before I saw an individual, and a reactive conversation after my patient visit. Her teaching method made me feel both comfortable and confident.”

Virag particularly enjoyed working with veterans in a unique rehabilitation area known as MyHome. In an environment that resembles a real home, she helped patients perform their daily activities safely and efficiently.

“Helping these individuals prepare for independent living in a real home environment was very satisfying,” states Virag. “MyHome is not something they would find in most other rehabilitation facilities.”

Sinwell describes Virag as an eager student who utilizes her time at the VA well. “Bonnie seeks out any learning opportunities available, whether it’s sitting in on product demonstrations, shadowing specialists or taking an active role in our ALS clinic.”

Through her participation with the VA’s Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), Virag interacts with a multidisciplinary team that meets weekly to present and discuss interesting cases.

“I am the only physical therapy representative in the group, and it’s valuable for me to see how different disciplines treat a patient,” says Virag. “It makes me realize that there are many factors that come into play to help a patient recover.”

Now that she is completing her final rotation, this time in the outpatient care facility, she reflects on her experience at the VA.

“The wonderful thing about being a yearlong DPT student at the VA is that I am working alongside and learning from so many excellent physical therapists,” exclaims Virag.

“The rehabilitation team at the VA is comprised of very knowledgeable individuals who are so kind and willing to share their expertise with me,” she adds. “I am very fortunate to have had such great mentorship.”

Tonarelli praises her dedication. “Bonnie’s adherence to the mission of providing veteran-centered care, along with her professionalism, confidence in the clinic and enthusiasm to learn has made her an outstanding student clinician. She is an asset to the PT profession.” ■

Change Service Requested

# SHRS STANDINGS

in 2017 *U.S. News & World Report* Survey  
of Best Graduate Schools\*

1

**PHYSICAL THERAPY**

4

**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

7

**AUDIOLOGY**

7

**SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY**

*\*Physical Therapy – Pitt shares #1 with University of Delaware, University of Southern California and Washington University at St. Louis; Occupational Therapy – Pitt shares #4 with University of Illinois, Chicago; Audiology – Pitt shares #7 with Northwestern; Speech Language Pathology – Pitt shares #7 with MGH Institute of Health Professions, University of Arizona, University of Kansas and University of Texas, Austin.*