

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN REHABILITATION SCIENCE NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

www.shrs.pitt.edu/rsbs

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



DANNY WINTERS

Danny Winters' interest in assistive technology (AT) stemmed from his father's work as an information technology specialist. Knowing that technology would become more and more integrated into our lives, Danny developed a curiosity towards AT. As a senior pursuing PT in the Rehabilitation Science program, he believes his interest in AT will benefit him in his career.

Danny says that getting to know professors who teach courses in AT opens up many opportunities. He added that since there is an emphasis on interdisciplinary teamwork, it is essential for anyone who is interested in PT, OT, PA, etc., to be exposed to assistive technology. We look forward to what the future holds for Danny as he prepares for PT school.



ABBY MURREN

Abby Murren, a current senior in the Rehabilitation Science Program, is interested in Orthotics and Prosthetics and is considering applying to the Pitt Master of Rehabilitation Technology (MRT) Program. Abby believes that, "one of the things that helped me in learning more about AT was working towards earning the ATR certificate. You get to take a lot of different classes that really do a great job at helping you learn more about AT."

One of Abby's favorite courses, Fundamentals of Rehabilitation Engineering, was an eye-opening experience that helped her understand how it feels to be a user of AT. Some advice she has for students interested in AT is, "there are so many different professions within the field, so don't be afraid to explore other options." We cannot wait to see where Abby attends graduate school, and we wish her the best of luck in the future.

Wednesday, 04/07
Grad School Panel via
Zoom 7-8:30 pm
Registration Required:
https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1NBHeVSPWLoqBQa

Check out our
upcoming
event in April!



University of
Pittsburgh

School of Health and
Rehabilitation Sciences

ABOUT US

If you have any questions about the newsletter or want to be featured in the next edition reach out to our writers!

Carla Alzola – cia7@pitt.edu
Julianna Braun – jgb39@pitt.edu
Nicholas Deschler – nld33@pitt.edu
Abby Murren – aem151@pitt.edu



MARK SCHMELER, PHD, OTR/L, ATP

MEET OUR SHRS FACULTY AND LEARN ABOUT PITT'S MRT PROGRAM!

Dr. Schmeler is an Assistant Professor and the Vice Chair for Education & Training in the Rehabilitation Science and Technology Department at SHRS. Dr. Schmeler is the interim director of the Center for Assistive Technology clinic where he “evaluates people with disabilities to determine what their needs are and to come up with technology solutions.” He works very closely with Assistive Technology Professionals (ATPs) who follow and maintain the technology they supply throughout its timeline.

Dr. Schmeler also conducts research in the area of assistive technology. He manages a registry database nationally and internationally, which he and many ATPs use for evidence-based research and quality assurance. His research focuses on influencing “not just evidence-based practice but supporting evidence-based policy.” Much of his research involves advocating for people with disabilities. With more than 30 years of career experience, Dr. Schmeler continues to make lasting impacts in the lives of people with disabilities.

PITT'S REDESIGNED MRT PROGRAM: *Future is Bright*

Assistive Technology Professionals work directly with clients to provide them with assistive technology, ensuring the client can perform their activities of daily living. Types of assistive technology include wheelchairs, ramps, steps inside the home, hearing aids, and more. The average ATP is 10 years older than the national work force, and the profession is not growing fast to keep up with demand.

Pitt's redesigned Master of Rehabilitation Technology Program aims to make it easier for students to join the AT profession. It is the first master's level program to be accredited by the Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. This program is extremely flexible, with options to complete the degree in one year, or multiple, online or in person. This program continues to grow and attract students interested in becoming ATPs.



RACHEL HIBBS, DPT

Dr. Hibbs is a 2010 Pitt BSRS and 2013 DPT alumna who currently works as a PT and Research Therapist for SHRS. In the past, she has conducted research related to wheelchair skills training and wheelchair maintenance. She currently is part of a grant with Pitt's Rehabilitation Science Department that is working on defining health policy related to wheelchairs internationally. Within the same grant, she is also identifying objective measures that could help determine which equipment to recommend. Overall, she aims to “get the right person the right treatment at the right time.”



RICHARD SCHEIN, PhD, MPH

Dr. Schein is a Pitt MSRT graduate and Research Health Scientist of the MRT program. He assisted in the revisions of the MRT curriculum and has many responsibilities in the program.

Dr. Schein's work focuses on the “whole body and the whole context” to give greater independence to individuals with disabilities. His team in the department is part of a large grant that has allowed them the opportunity to explore on a bigger stage the area of Complex Rehab Technology and advocacy. Dr. Schein works to educate students on AT topics to assist them in their knowledge of the field.



MITCH BELL

SHRS ALUMNI AND CURRENT STUDENTS

Mitch Bell is a 2016 Pitt BSRS and 2019 MSRT alumnus who works as an ATP. His work consists of discussing mobility needs and activities of daily living (ADLs) with clients, reviewing and suggesting potential devices, and conducting a home assessment with the client to ensure the device will work for them. Once the device is approved by insurance, he assembles, delivers, and teaches the client how to use it properly. He also provides support to the client after delivery should they need repairs or modifications.

Although Mitch is not currently involved in research, his last project outlined the functional outcome scores of telehealth, and his findings were published in the International Journal of Telerehabilitation. He states, “telehealth is also a huge benefit to the clients, as they do not have to make travel arrangements to get to a clinic and wait for their appointment.” Since it is also beneficial to the therapist and the ATP, he believes it will continue to positively impact practice after the pandemic. Mitch works passionately to provide and maintain equipment best fitted for his clients’ needs.



**MADELYN
BETZ**

Madelyn Betz is a current student in the University of Pittsburgh’s Master of Rehabilitation Technology Program. She completed her undergraduate education at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she majored in Integrative Physiology with a certificate in Public Health.

Madelyn found interest in AT from a young age because she was surrounded by friends and family involved in AT. She chose a 1.5-year track and works on a research project through the program in addition to her course work. Madelyn is happy that she chose Pitt’s MRT program because she loves the flexibility and holistic approach the program takes. She also likes how the professors and advisors are very helpful in figuring out what is going to work best for each student. We wish Madelyn the best of luck in the program!



ERIN CASEY

Erin Casey is a 2020 graduate of Pitt’s BSRS program. She knew that she wanted to study Prosthetics and Orthotics from the beginning of her undergraduate career. She says, “SHRS really opened my eyes to the amount of AT professions out there and how much variety within the field there is.” In undergrad, Erin’s favorite course was Intro to Rehab Engineering, taught by Dr. Goldberg and Anand. She states, “I enjoyed actually designing and building a piece of AT. My team and I designed an adaptive flower bed for wheelchair users.” A piece of advice she would give to undergraduate students is to “be open to trying everything, and don’t doubt your abilities! Everyone has something to bring to the table, and teams learn off of each other.”



**KARL
KEMMERER**

Karl Kemmerer, a 2015 BSRS and 2016 MSRT graduate, is the Online Continuing Education Coordinator in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology. He is involved in the educational sector of assistive technology, and he works to get curriculum online with the Flex@Pitt model and the MRT program.

Karl manages all of the continuing education content, including conferences hosted by the department. He describes his job as “the marriage of rehab and assistive technology with best practice and education.” Karl continues to enhance online curriculum and make it accessible for students in the MRT program and professionals seeking continuing education.