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WINTER 2021

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Dear University Community,

Hello! My name is **Steve Weyandt**, and I am proud to serve as the inaugural President of the USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board. It is with great honor I accept this position, and I will work diligently with my fellow board members to make this a successful endeavor for the University.

I hope to get to know many of you in the future and want to share a little about me. Following graduation from USAHS in January 2000 (MPT Yellow class), I relocated from my hometown in central Pennsylvania to Peachtree City, Georgia, where I continue to live and work. I am a clinician and partner with BenchMark Physical Therapy, where I have held multi-site leadership roles such as Area Director and Regional Vice President in my 18 years with them. I hold a Manual Therapy Certification from USAHS and am a Board-Certified Sports Clinical Specialist. In my free time, I enjoy golfing, fitness, watching sports, traveling and spending time with my family (my wife of 18 years, Betsy, my daughter, Maddie, and our cockapoo, Hines, named after the Super Bowl XL MVP, not the ketchup!).

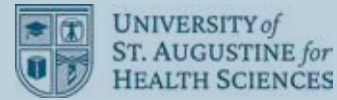
I am excited to be a part of this inaugural Board and look forward to getting started on the goals and aspirations we have outlined for its mission (read more on page seven). As a group, we have discussed and initially set out to do the following:

1. Work with Clinical Services to design a pilot for alumni-led clinical partnerships
2. Work with Career Services to strengthen the path for alumni who want to hire USAHS students and graduates
3. Explore solutions for creating mentoring opportunities between alumni and current students
4. Hold alumni networking events to interact with each other and key USAHS faculty and staff
5. Partner with each campus to establish a rewards program for alumni who volunteer or provide services to the University

On behalf of the USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board, thank you in advance for your partnership! The Board and I look forward to serving USAHS in this capacity and building the relationships between the University, its students and alumni. Should you have any questions or suggestions as we set out to accomplish these goals, or if you have an interest in a future role on the Board, please do not hesitate to contact me at USAalumassoc@usa.edu.

Professionally,

Stephen R. Weyandt, PT, DPT (MPT '00, tDPT '04)
President, USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board



Accolades | WINTER 2021

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Accolades is published by the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences University Communications department. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official University policy.

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Clinical Partnerships

Alumni, do you remember your first clinical placement? How nervous you were to meet your Clinical Instructor, wondering if their practice would be a good fit for you?

Well, now we need you! Help guide our students on their journey to being the best healthcare practitioners they can be. You know our University; you know our faculty; and you share our mission of providing access to high quality healthcare. **Will you join us in shaping the careers of the next generation of healthcare professionals?**

To express our gratitude to our clinical partners, USAHS offers a support plan that provides educational and professional opportunities to clinic staff. Please contact the Clinical Education department at 800-241-1027 ext. 1302 or by email at clinedsa@usa.edu for more information.



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As USAHS alumni, we invite you to become Continuing Professional Education partners either as a co-sponsor to host seminars or as an Exclusive Partner providing continuing education training solely to your clinicians. Please reach out to the Assistant Director of Continuing Professional Education with any questions by phone at 800-241-1027 ext. 1266.

If you have a specialty area in which you wish to develop continuing professional education content with USAHS, please contact the Director of Continuing Professional Education by phone at 800-241-1027 ext. 1203. For general information, please contact Continuing Professional Education at 800-241-1027, ext. 1400 or by email at cpe@usa.edu.



STAY CONNECTED

Stay connected with your fellow alumni and the University through usa.edu/about/usahs-alumni/.

On these web pages, you'll find ongoing alumni association news and benefits, view past editions of *Accolades* and access helpful links, such as transcript requests or contact info updates. Plus, here is where you'll discover upcoming continuing professional education, networking and events opportunities especially for USAHS alum! and successes with your fellow alumni!

CAREER SERVICES

Whether you are seeking a USAHS graduate for an open position or looking for a health care career change, the Alumni Careers page at usa.edu/about/alumni/careers has you covered!

- Employers can post jobs for USAHS graduates on our virtual job board.
- Help build our academic community; see current employment opportunities, including for core and contributing faculty.
- Develop effective job search strategies and interviewing skills. The USAHS Career Services mission is to provide exceptional service to students and alumni across all modalities and programs.

POSITIVE IMPACT

2021 Board Excellence Awards Distinguished Alumni Recipients



The Board of Directors of the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) is committed to identifying and recognizing excellence among our faculty, staff and alumni, and the roles they play in the success of our students and our institution.

On October 6, the USAHS Board of Directors hosted its sixth annual Board Excellence Awards ceremony. Award recipients are nominated by their peers and students as role models of the University. Each of them, in their unique way, plays an integral part of our students' journey, in making their dreams a reality and in transforming health sciences higher education in our country.

This year's awards recognized a stellar group of 15 faculty, staff and alumni who are dedicated to the University's mission, core values and service to our students. The **Distinguished Alumni award category** celebrates the accomplishments of alumni whose success exemplifies the University spirit and vision.

The 2021 award recipients in this category are **Dr. Leilani Hermosura-Bautista, Nursing '21** (San Marcos, CA) and **Dr. Steve Sudell, DPT '09** (St. Augustine, FL).



Leilani Hermosura-Bautista, MSN, RN, FNP-C, NE-BC has been a nurse practitioner since 2007. Her experiences include practice in an outpatient setting as a nurse practitioner for medical home setting

for stroke population; also, duties and responsibilities include oversight of outpatient services as an Assistant Nursing Director since July 2018.

Dr. Hermosura-Bautista currently serves as an Assistant Nursing Director for the Outpatient Care Services at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center as well as a Nurse Practitioner providing primary care services to patients with stroke and other neurological disabilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she led an interprofessional team in the outpatient care services in implementing clinical operations that protected both patients and staff from heightened exposure to COVID-19. As the director of their Employee Health Services, she led the organization with the surveillance plan for the workforce members due to COVID-19 infection or exposure. Here she provided guidance to employees including their return-to-work plan and generating a notification alert to departments exposed to the employee, further minimizing spread of the infection to others.



Steve Sudell, DPT, ATC specializes in working with athletes on their mobility, prehab and post-injury physical therapy at his clinic, Prehab2perform.

In 2015, along with two of his patients, he co-founded StretchLab, an assisted stretching facility that helps individuals improve their overall flexibility through stretching versus traditional massage.

“Each of them, in their unique way, plays an integral part of our students’ journey.”

He created the comprehensive stretching protocols still in use today and trained hundreds of “flexologists.” StretchLab went from one location to over 220 in less than four years.

He is also the founder and creator of the Neck Hammock, a simple device that attaches to any door for neck pain relief in just 10 minutes or less. The idea came to life after watching his younger sister battle leukemia. The Neck Hammock was launched on Kickstarter in October 2017, where it raised more than \$900,000, placing it in the top 1% of all 2019 Kickstarter campaigns.

Dr. Sudell hopes to inspire other physical therapists to use their degrees and ideas to innovate and create new opportunities outside of the clinical setting.

If you or someone you know should be nominated for a Board Excellence Award, please contact alumni@usa.edu. The 2022 awards should open for nominations in late spring.



<https://www.usa.edu/blog/celebrating-the-2021-board-excellence-award-recipients/>
<http://www.prehab2perform.com/>
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hermosurabautista>

Introducing the Alumni Association Advisory Board

The USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board was formed in September 2021 and provides valuable insight into how the University can support and engage with its alumni. The volunteer board members help share alumni engagement initiatives to strengthen the University in pursuit of its mission to develop professional healthcare practitioners.

The Board held its inaugural meeting September 18. During this time, Chief Academic Officer **Dr. Brian Goldstein** gave a University update, including these highlights:

- Enrollment has doubled in the last four years.
- Last year, 50 new faculty positions were filled.
- We have grown to five campuses across three states, with plans for future expansion and a move for the St. Augustine campus to a new location in 2023.
- With COVID-19, we became better versions of ourselves, using innovation in technology and teaching methods to keep students on track for graduation.
- Three new tracks in Nursing have been added to the degree offerings, with 300 students now enrolled in Nursing programs.

During the meeting, the Board approved adoption of the alumni association's purpose and mission statements, approved three committees (Governance, Alumni Engagement and Advocacy), and approved its leadership and officers. The Executive Committee is:



President
Steve Weyand, PT, DPT, SCS, MTC (MPT '00, tDPT '04)



First Vice President
Stephen Elam, PT, DPT, EdD (MPT '96, tDPT '11)



Second Vice President
Jane Min, OTD, OTR/L (OTD '21)



Third Vice President
Rebekah Jarrar, MA, MOT, OTR/L (MOT '17)

The Executive Committee will consist of the President, three Vice Presidents, the Immediate Past President, and the Director of Alumni Engagement in a non-voting role.

Representing most degree programs, campuses and the broad range of graduation years of our alumni, the founding USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board members, who hold a three-year term, are:

- **Morgan Beard (MS-SLP '21)**—Speech Language Pathologist, North Mississippi Medical Center
- **Kevin Brueilly (MPT '96)**—Professor; Associate Program Director, Charleston Southern University
- **Gregory Dean (MOT '04, DPT '06)**—President/Owner, Achieve Physical Therapy Solutions LLC
- **Stephen Elam (MPT '96, tDPT '11)**—Assistant Professor, University of Lynchburg
- **Paige Funderburk (MOT '05, OTD '06)**—Developmental Services Clinical Program Manager; Occupational Therapist, Cortica Pediatric Neurology
- **Gabrielle George (OTD '20)**—Occupational Therapist, Houston Pediatric Therapy, Remarkable Kids Therapy, Encompass Health
- **Rebekah Jarrar (MOT '17)**—Faculty Instructor, USAHS
- **Cristine Johnson (DPT '09)**—Supervisor Outpatient Rehab Services, Ochsner Health
- **Wendy Larkin (DNP '20)**—Assistant Chief, Quality Management Service, James A. Haley VA Hospital
- **Chris Long (DPT '16)**—Clinic Director/Partner, Benchmark Physical Therapy
- **Tomika Lowe-Lopez (Flex DPT '15)**—Piedmont Healthcare
- **Deveshma Maharaj (OTD '21)**
- **Craig McGhee (MPT '96)**—Chief Ambulatory Officer, Akron Children's Hospital
- **Jane Min (OTD '21)**—Occupational Therapist, High Five Hand Therapy and Rehabilitation
- **Chelsea Monte (MOT '21)**
- **Molly Patel (DPT '02)**—Owner, Reform Physical Therapy
- **Sara Story (PPOTD '11)**—Chair, Associate Professor, Spalding University
- **Steve Weyandt (MPT '00, tDPT '04)**—Regional Director/Partner, Benchmark Physical Therapy
- **Ryan Wooley (DPT '09)**—Owner, Clinician, Sentry Safety and Physical Therapy Specialists, LLC

To reach a member of the Board Executive Committee, please contact USAalumassoc@usa.edu.



MS-SLP Seeks Input on Strategic Plan



“We have been fulfilling the current strategic plan by seeking full accreditation and designing and offering curriculum aligned with accreditation standards and quality instruction and experiences.”

Leadership and faculty in the Master of Science Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP) program have been evaluating the program’s strategic plan and looking to the future to pave the path for the next five years.

“Since the inception of the MS-SLP program in 2018 on the Austin, TX campus and 2019 opening of a satellite location on the Dallas, TX campus, we have been fulfilling the current strategic plan by seeking full accreditation and designing and offering curriculum aligned with accreditation standards and quality instruction and experiences,” says Program Director **Meghan Savage, CCC-SLP, PhD.**

The current strategic plan has also included recruiting diverse faculty to deliver curriculum to students and provide quality educational and clinical experiences; developing and consistently providing quality clinical experiences for students; and recruiting a diverse population of students and providing them with comprehensive

knowledge and clinical experiences that qualify them for certification and licensure.

As the MS-SLP team crafts the program’s next five-year strategic plan (2022-2027), it has been garnering input from students, alumni and faculty through a variety of surveys, evaluations and events, including a September alumni virtual event to gain feedback on program developments. In addition, the MS-SLP Advisory Council, comprised of community members in Austin and Dallas, as well as other national and international representation met to discuss the program and current trends in the field.

“After collating data from multiple sources, the program has identified several main target areas for the next strategic plan, including mapping interprofessional education across

the curriculum; planning academic enhancements; enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion; elevating clinical education training; and infusing more research and scholarship opportunities for students and faculty,” says Dr. Savage.

She also states that the program has edited its mission statement and program learning outcomes (PLOs) to better align to the USAHS mission. “We are specifically adding swallowing to our mission and PLOs, and also changing the word ‘disorders’ to ‘conditions’ to better represent the spectrum of communication and swallowing conditions we encounter as SLPs,” continues Dr. Savage. “The program will continue to further define the goals, assessments and timelines of our new strategic plan. The future is bright in MS-SLP!”



The MS-SLP program is gathering feedback from students, alumni, advisory council, community members and faculty as it works on its next five-year strategic plan. Please contact Meghan Savage at msavage@usa.edu if you have any questions/input about the MS-SLP program.

KARINA LEE (MS-SLP '20)

Educating teachers, parents about autism

Alum Serves as SLP Liaison to a Jamaican University

BY KRISTIN BARENSEN

Karina Lee, CCC-SLP (MS-SLP '20) is engaging with the speech-language pathology (SLP) profession in impressive ways. Alongside her work with patients, she is educating, writing and serving as an advocate for Autistic people.

Recently, Lee answered a call for a volunteer SLP liaison to Mico University College in Kingston, Jamaica. The university’s *Child Assessment and Research in Education* (CARE) Centre provides special education services to schoolkids with learning differences, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Lee is advising the center’s manager and clinical psychologist in virtual meetings.

“The psychologist sees many children with difficulties in communication,” Lee says. “But once she identifies these children, many of their parents and teachers are then at a standstill on how to actually help them. There are only a few SLPs on the island, and even getting a formal diagnosis is difficult.” Lee consults about red flags for autism, differential diagnoses and developmental speech and language milestones.



“There are only a few SLPs on the island, and even getting a formal diagnosis is difficult.”

Working in Private Practice

Education is also part of Lee’s day job. She works in a private practice in Boca Raton, FL, in which about 70% of her clients are Autistic. She specializes in feeding therapy and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), which comprises both high-tech and low-tech ways to communicate outside of standard verbal communication. “AAC is a way for people to communicate,” she says, “which is a basic human right.”

One of Lee’s patients, an Autistic teenager, is non-speaking and uses an AAC speech-generating device to communicate. Lee created a case study for *Simucase*, a virtual learning platform in which members observe, assess, diagnose and provide intervention for actual patients. “My patient, Leora, can make requests and label a variety of objects, but she has a much harder time using verbs,” Lee says. “In our case study, I coach Leora’s occupational therapist on how to model verbs on her AAC device. I’m hoping our Simucase can teach students to be comfortable and confident working on AAC with teenagers—and learn to collaborate with OTs.”



Entrepreneurship and Advocacy

On the side, Lee is developing a *private practice* in which she provides boutique-style speech, language and feeding therapy services individualized to each child’s specific needs, whether in home, at school or via teletherapy.

She is also writing a children’s book to help neurotypical children and parents better understand Autistic children, using language that celebrates the neurodiversity movement. She explains, “I’ve learned that the Autism community prefers identify-first language, such as ‘Autistic person.’ If it’s seen more like something they ‘carry’ (like ‘a person with autism’), it appears it can be taken away—and it’s not.”

Lee’s passion for speech and language began pre-USAHS during a year of teaching English and studying Spanish in Spain. She has worked at a non-profit organization as a speech-language pathology assistant in addition to her role as an SLP in the private sector.

“There are so many different things I can do with this degree,” she says. “I’ll never get bored!”

At Your Service

Community outreach is an important part of the University's mission, and service learning is a key component of our programs as a **Certified B Corp Institution**. The following is just a snapshot of some of the community service activities that have occurred across our campuses.

UNIVERSITY WIDE

During the week of June 6-12, students, faculty and staff from the **Doctor of Education (EdD)** program participated in the program's third annual Service Week event. Students, faculty and their families volunteered for service opportunities in support of organizations that give back to their communities. Activities included a beach cleanup, blood donation, local business building repairs and food donations.



SAN MARCOS

Doctor of Physical Therapy students at the San Marcos, CA campus took part in a beach clean-up October 3 at Oceanside City Beach in honor of **PT Day of Service**. During the three-hour event, organized by the campus **Student Physical Therapy Association (SPTA)**, volunteers collected 10 full bags of trash.



As a proud sponsor of the **U.S. Open Adaptive Surfing Championships**, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences and its occupational therapy students and alumni provide encouragement and support to the athletes competing in this event. University students, faculty and staff on the San Marcos, CA campus volunteered September 9-12 during 2021's four-day event to assist contest organizers on the sand.



ST. AUGUSTINE



Held the third Saturday in September around the world, volunteers gather in the **Annual Coastal Clean-up** to wipe out debris that left untouched would endanger humans and wildlife. Fifty-nine USAHS students, faculty and staff from the St. Augustine, FL campus participated in the 2021 volunteer event at Crescent Beach.

MIAMI

The **Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA)** at the Miami, FL campus visited **Youth'n Action Therapy Center** in October to present an \$850 check from funds the students had raised. Youth'n Action, an adaptive fitness center for people of all ages with diverse types of disabilities, will use the funds to help their facility acquire an adaptive harness and pull-up bar for their rock-climbing wall.



"Youth'n Action is an amazing facility that believes that individuals' capabilities are endless and that youth with special and physical needs can do things that others told them couldn't be done," student and Miami SOTA President **A'yanna Wallace** says. "As a result, this facility shows youth with disabilities or developmental delays that they can do anything they put their mind to because of the fun and active environment that Youth'n Action provides. We are honored that we are able to provide much needed equipment that will help them."

AUSTIN

SOTA at the Austin, TX campus partnered with **Down Home Ranch**, an organization that provides both residential and day camps for individuals with a variety of disabilities. SOTA members helped work in the ranch greenhouses.

These volunteers moved more than 7,000 seasonal plants to be sold to the community. Plant sales are the main source of revenue for Down Home Ranch. "SOTA values giving back to our community while also becoming closer as a student body," says **Olivia Vasisko**, Master of Occupational Therapy student and SOTA Community Service Chair. "We cannot wait for our next volunteer opportunity."



DALLAS

Nickole Hines-Staples, Director of SLP Clinical Education for the Austin, TX campus, **Robyn Martin**, Director of SLP Clinical Education for the Dallas, TX campus, **Ashley Meaux**, Assistant Program Director based on the Dallas, TX campus, and **Meghan Savage**, Program Director based on the Austin, TX campus, participated in the ASHFoundation (American Speech-Language Hearing Foundation) virtual 5k this fall. The team's name was the "Walkie Talkies."

The ASHFoundation stated, "Thanks to all of you for your promotion and participation in our virtual 5K walk/run fundraiser! We were 1,034 people strong on walk/race day! Results are not yet in, but we believe we can comfortably indicate that the ASHFoundation will benefit from more than \$34,000 in proceeds."



If you have an idea for a service event or have participated in community outreach efforts that *Accolades* can highlight, please email details and photos to alumni@usa.edu.

After COVID-19 Losses, DNP Student Finds Healing by Helping Administer the Vaccines

Nifiah Reid-Sanders, MSA, BSN, RN, was working as a director in infection prevention and earning her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences when the first cases of a previously unknown virus began appearing in the United States.

Reid-Sanders lost 12 blood relatives to COVID-19—two aunts, two uncles and several first cousins. She also lost several members of her church family to the disease.

“All these people were dying all around me,” she says. “But there were no funerals, no closure. The hardest part was I didn’t know what to do. I felt useless. Previously, I had been part of a lifesaving team in the ICU. Now I was unable to do anything. I was in a dark place for a long time.”

Reid-Sanders has been a nurse for nearly 20 years, with eight of those years working in critical care at Michigan Medicine in Ann Arbor. After earning her Master of Health Administration (MHA), she became Director of Implementation at BioVigil, an infection prevention company. In this role, she travels domestically and internationally, designing hand hygiene programs for hospitals.

She says that although more of her work is virtual now, the company is especially busy “because institutions are more aware, with different protocols in place because of COVID.”

Alongside her work at BioVigil, Reid-Sanders completed her clinical rotation at Detroit Community Health Connection (DCHC), a non-profit, community-based primary care



“All these people were dying all around me. But there were no funerals, no closure.”

organization. She had the opportunity to engage in project management work during this rotation, coordinating and implementing a flu vaccine clinic and now COVID-19 vaccines. She recently completed a pediatric clinical rotation at DCHC as part of earning her *Family Nurse Practitioner* (FNP) role specialty in the DNP program.

Despite all her work as a director and graduate student, Reid-Sanders felt like she wasn’t doing enough. In January 2021, she started volunteering with DCHC to provide COVID testing and vaccines to residents throughout Detroit and surrounding areas. “There’s a historical fear of vaccines in the African-American community,” she says, referring to the U.S. government’s unethical experiments on Black men with syphilis from 1932 to 1972.^[1] “That’s a hurdle I’m passionate about

overcoming. So, I’m getting out there and educating. I’ve been a member of this church for 22 years. I show a familiar face, one that they trust. I’ve changed a few minds.”

Once she passes the FNP board exam, Reid-Sanders plans to continue educating patients about preventive medicine to keep them out of the ICU.

Now that she is doing something to directly help her community in this pandemic, her grief and sadness have lifted somewhat. “The heart of the nurse is to get in there and do what I can,” she says. “Now I’m doing that. That’s what’s getting me through this. I always tell people that when I leave, I want to be empty—I want to have given my all.”

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “U.S. Public Health Service Study at Tuskegee”: <https://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/timeline.htm>

Alum Advocates for OTs’ Role in Teen Mental Health

In the aftermath of the 2018 shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, occupational therapists (OTs) across the state discussed in earnest how they could expand their services in schools to identify and help troubled teens earlier.

“I’m a mother and an OT, and I know that our scope of practice includes mental health,” says **Anjali Parti, OTD, OTR/L** (OTD ’09).

An alum of one of USAHS’ first Doctor of Occupational Therapy cohorts, Dr. Parti and her colleagues in the Florida Occupational Therapy Association (FOTA) are advocating for OTs to perform more mental health evaluations of students and to educate teachers about the signs of mental illness.

Dr. Parti chairs FOTA’s Ad Hoc Special Interest Section Committee on OT and School System Tragedies, a group comprised of mental health-focused practitioners. In this capacity she co-authored, with three other OTs, an official position paper on how OTs can help address community violence. The American Occupational Therapy Association also asked her to co-author a second position paper on the topic, which is in process.

Dr. Parti helped modernize the language of the scope of OT practice in Florida. Proposed wording in the position paper further defines the role of occupational therapy in mental health. Her colleague Sharon Rosenberg, the governmental affairs chair of FOTA, put this language forward in a bill introduced in the Florida Legislature’s 2021 session. Although the bill passed both chambers, the Senate leader did not sign it. “We hope to push this through in the next session,” Rosenberg says.

Rosenberg explains their end goal. “We would like for OTs to be recognized as qualified mental health professionals



in Florida. Currently, this is only the case in 11 states. This is important for reimbursements. Now, insurance companies have leverage not to cover occupational therapy.” In 2018, Dr. Parti and Rosenberg collaborated on a bill to allow young students to receive OT services without a physician’s referral. This bill passed.

Although the heartbreak of Parkland spurred their initiative, Dr. Parti

says her group’s advocacy is much broader, encompassing a range of childhood mental health issues and their consequences. “OTs can be on the front lines of identifying problems,” she says. “We need to advocate more for what we are licensed to do. Mental health interventions are the roots of our profession.”

Dr. Parti is a part-time coordinator for the Polk State College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program and recently became the Master of Occupational Therapy Program Director and Associate Professor at University of Texas at Tyler. She and her husband Vik have three young children, Aria (8), Shaan (7) and Vera (2). She says, with a smile, that their youngest “may or may not have been named after one of the core values in the AOTA Code of Ethics: veracity.” During the pandemic, she homeschooled her kids while working online. “I don’t know of any other job where I’d have so much balance as a working mom,” Dr. Parti says. And indeed, motherhood is what calls her to her advocacy work.



“We need to advocate more for what we are licensed to do. Mental health interventions are the roots of our profession.”

Creating an Optimal Workspace

Student Volunteers Learn, then Teach Ergonomics

BY CHRISTINE VAN DUSEN

Wildlight, FL.-based *Rayonier* had just created beautiful, new offices when the pandemic hit and forced the forest products company's 400 employees to work from home.

It quickly became clear that these home offices weren't necessarily ideal, with beds, couches and kitchen counters turned into desks that were often shared with working spouses and children who were attending virtual school.

An employee at Rayonier reached out for help from her friend, **Dr. Kaitlyn Cremer**, Assistant Program Director and Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy (OT) programs.

"Rayonier gave its employees an allowance to create their own workspace," she says. "What the company found was that people were buying things that were aesthetically pleasing but not optimal for the body."

USAHS OT students and faculty stepped up, volunteering to give a presentation on how to set up a home office for comfort, safety, injury prevention and efficiency. More than 100 Rayonier employees from six states attended.

One student taught about choosing, measuring and positioning a chair. Another focused on where a computer should be placed for best and safest viewing and use; a third looked at desk selection and structure; and a fourth student shared accessories that could be used to adapt what was already in the home.

"The students loved it," Dr. Cremer says. "They ended up serving as experts. One student was a doctoral student and changed her capstone to ergonomics."

Says student **Paige Clary**, "We provided education on a topic people seem to



"What the company found was that people were buying things that were aesthetically pleasing but not optimal for the body."—Dr. Kaitlyn Cremer



"We taught how to better assist, advise and adapt an individual's work set-up and body mechanics."—Paige Clary

know little about. While most people have heard the term 'ergonomics,' they may not have accurate information tailored to their specific health concerns and needs. We taught how to better assist, advise and adapt an individual's work set-up and body mechanics."

The USAHS team's presentation also focused on the employees' bodies—"their neck, back, arms, wrists, legs and eyes," Dr. Cremer says. "These are hot spots for desk jobs, as these body parts can easily become strained. We talked about building in 20-20-20 micro-breaks: Every 20 minutes you take a

20-second break and look at something 20 feet away."

"The best part of this experience was participating in something bigger than our classroom setting, while still being supervised by a professor," says Clary. "Ergonomics is something that I am interested in and could potentially pursue as a future career."

Dr. Cremer says that Rayonier sees the value and bigger picture of workplace ergonomics and creating a healthy workforce. "The presentation was well received, and we have been asked to continue ergonomic education for them!"

Advancing the Future of Healthcare

Healthcare of the future requires digital literacy, agile thought leadership and interprofessional collaboration. At the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, (USAHS) our student-centered culture of innovation advances new technologies, ideas and approaches that prepare future healthcare professionals to creatively address healthcare needs among diverse populations.

USAHS incorporates modern simulation technology in its rehabilitative science programs with the Center for Innovative Clinical Practice (CICP) at each campus location. The CICP is an immersive learning laboratory that allows students to practice

clinical skills and apply them in realistic, interprofessional environments.

The University's unique culture of innovation is powered by educators and practitioners who, through their deep understanding of and engagement in various health science fields, identify opportunities to advance healthcare education. Through the interprofessional Innovation Steering Committee, any member of the USAHS community can submit pilot proposals that advance student learning experiences and outcomes. Projects are resourced and assessed, and if successful, cascaded across campuses. Recent projects include:

DOUBLE ROBOT:

Occupational Therapy students piloted a self-driving telepresence robot to evaluate and treat patients from a remote location.

CASM: Innovative Approaches to Fieldwork: Using the Double Robot in a Skilled Nursing Facility



3D PRINTING SCANNER:

Physical Therapy students worked with faculty to 3D scan and print anatomical models, custom assistive devices for patients, and affordable prostheses and orthoses.

FLMI: 3D Printing and Scanning: Expanding Clinical Applications



OCULUS VIRTUAL REALITY (VR):

Occupational Therapy students piloted this simulation gaming technology and engaged in an immersive VR experience to interact with clients in various community settings to assess ADA universal design.

FLSA: Using Virtual Reality for OT Clinical Skills Development



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Reaching for the Gold in Oncology and Sports

PT alum reshapes cancer rehabilitation and aids Paralympic athletes



“Selfishly, I wanted to learn how to fix myself. Then I realized physical therapy could be a good career for me.”

GRANT JACKSON

BY ALLISON EATOUGH

As a child, **Shana Harrington, PT, PhD** (MPT '00) excelled in sports. The Florida native swam, played basketball, ran cross-country and track, and became a nationally ranked triathlete who trained at a U.S. Olympic Training Center.

Even with her superior fitness and athletic skills, Dr. Harrington couldn't escape sports-related injuries. Although an impediment, these injuries also inspired her career as a physical therapist (PT)—a career that has since impacted the lives of athletes and patients with cancer nationwide.

Finding Her Focus in Oncology

Physical therapy was an ongoing part of Harrington's youth, helping to get her back,

literally and figuratively, on her feet.

“Whenever I got injured, I ended up having physical therapy,” she says. “Selfishly, I wanted to learn how to fix myself. Then I realized physical therapy could be a good career for me.”

In high school, Dr. Harrington shadowed physical therapists to learn about sports injuries and prevention. The experiences solidified her interest, and she enrolled at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill to earn her bachelor's degree in exercise and sports science. To advance her career, she earned her Master of Physical Therapy at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) and her PhD in human movement sciences from UNC.

Early in her PhD program, she met an exercise physiologist who developed an in-person exercise and wellness program for women with breast cancer.

“He realized he needed a physical therapist and someone who understood the shoulder to help with the program. It introduced me to a new world,” she says.

That new world included women with decreased range of motion and strength because of their cancer treatment.

“It affects function and their ability to do things they used to do,” Dr. Harrington says. “Depending on surgery and treatments, these women could have restrictions due to scarring and develop frozen shoulder because they're not moving their joints.”

For example, one woman Harrington worked with could not raise her arms over her head to get dressed. Together, they worked on strength and function. Eventually, she could lift both arms above 90 degrees and pull a shirt over her head just as she did before treatment.



GRANT JACKSON

Seeing firsthand how physical therapy improved the women's lives, Dr. Harrington made it her mission to involve PTs in patients from the moment of diagnosis. She routinely talks with doctors about the benefits of physical therapy throughout a patient's cancer journey.

“There's emerging evidence that pre-rehabilitation, rehabilitation before surgery, can lead to better outcomes for patients with cancer,” she says.

Now a clinical associate professor and interim physical therapy program director at the University of South Carolina, Dr. Harrington is leading some of that research. She and her team of graduate students are studying early rehabilitation for women who received mastectomies. They are also developing a free cancer wellness program for patients transitioning from skilled rehabilitation to at-home exercise.

Keeping Sports Alive through Paralympian Support

As her career grew, Dr. Harrington found ways to keep sports in her life and help others reach their full athletic potential.

While working as a PT in 2002, she began

coaching children in an adaptive skiing program, using equipment and training to help children with disabilities ski. Word of her skills spread, and a colleague recommended she become a classifier for the U.S. Paralympic swim team. As a medical classifier, she helps evaluate athletes to determine competition eligibility and sport class allocation.

“The goal of classification is to allocate athletes into sport classes representative of their function,” Dr. Harrington says. “Each disability is not the same. For example, you might have two athletes with spina bifida, but they can function in completely different manners.”

Since she began as a classifier, Dr. Harrington has worked globally with swimming and para-triathlon athletes and recently served as head of classification for paratriathlon under the World Triathlon Organization.

She says the education she received at USAHS helped prepare her for all her professional roles, from manual courses and hands-on work to the mentorship she received from faculty.

“I hope to replicate this mentorship with my graduate students,” she says. “I love to see the learning and the process of how they get from point A to point B to achieve their goals and be successful.”

“There's emerging evidence that pre-rehabilitation, rehabilitation before surgery, can lead to better outcomes for patients with cancer.”



Chief and medical classifier Dr. Shana Harrington with technical swimming classifier Glen O'Sullivan at the Peachtree Para Games in June 2020



Dr. Catherine Patla Receives APTA's Catherine Worthingham Fellow

Catherine Patla, PT, DHSc, MMSc, FAPTA has been awarded the American Physical Therapy Association's (APTA) Catherine Worthingham Fellow. This honor is the highest APTA membership category and is an inspiration to all physical therapists.

The award recipient must demonstrate excellence in three of these categories established by APTA: advocacy, education, practice or research. Dr. Patla's nominating committee focused on the categories of advocacy, practice and education.

As an Associate Professor in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program on the St. Augustine, FL campus, Dr. Patla has been a part of the University since it was founded in 1979 and was the original developer of several courses. Her husband and founder of USAHS, is Dr. Stanley Paris, also a past Catherine Worthingham Fellow recipient, which makes the duo the second couple in which both individuals have received the award.

Dr. Patla has been a practicing physical therapist for 44 years and a Board Certified Orthopaedic clinical specialist (OCS) for 34 years. She was significantly involved in the musculoskeletal curriculum development at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, which has grown to become the nation's largest graduate-level, physical and occupational therapy school.

Dr. Patla has been an advocate for the physical therapy profession throughout her career, serving as an examiner for the Manual Therapy Certification (MTC) offered by USAHS since 1980. She is a member of APTA's sections on Orthopaedic and Education. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Therapists (FAAOMPT) and has served on the Florida House of Delegates for 16 years, and as a chief delegate and Florida Chapter President for three of those years.

Dr. Patla was recognized as a Catherine Worthingham Fellow at the APTA Centennial Gala Weekend awards event in September in Washington, D.C.

"My acceptance of this award goes to show that hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed," Dr. Patla proclaims. "It is an honor and a privilege to be recognized by my peers."



CLASS NOTES

With this edition of Accolades, we introduce Class Notes, where USAHS alumni share updates about their professional achievements and personal milestones.



Meredith (Victor) Castin (DPT '10)

launched the Non-Clinical PT in October 2017, when

she realized there were many rehab professionals seeking to leverage their skills in non-clinical careers. Dr. Castin had felt alone when she left patient care after just five years, so she created her company to help others feel supported and inspired when they felt the urge to leave direct patient care. The Non-Clinical PT, which now has more than 20,000 subscribers, offers guidance, community and career resources to support the transition to non-clinical work.



Laurie Neal (DPT '11) has been married to her spouse for 14 years.

They have one daughter (7) and one son

(4) and live in Louisiana. Since graduation, Dr. Neal has become manual therapy certified and specializes in orthopedics and works for a hospital that is making great strides in her community.



Sara Story (PPOTD '11) was recently promoted as Chair of the Auerbach School of Occupational Therapy at Spalding University and the Program Director of Spalding's Occupational Therapy Doctorate programs.



Chris Long (DPT '16) became a father to his beautiful baby girl Aubrey Rose in June 2021.

Courtney Scholl (DPT '16) has two beautiful girls, Harper (21 months) and Ripley (3.5 months). She and husband, Jordan, recently moved from Indianapolis to Seminole, FL, where she started her own cash-based practice, Scholl PT.



Hiral Khatri (OTD '17) was honored in June 2021 with the Top 100 Healthcare Visionaries Award by the International Forum for Advancement in Healthcare (IFAH). As quoted in OT Practice magazine's September 2021 issue:

"This award was based on her unique work as CEO and Founder of OT Park Corp., which started with an activity box she curated during the pandemic to support parents of children younger than 3 years with age-appropriate and developmentally correct activities and materials. Dr. Khatri also started a virtual OT practice and now has an OT clinic and sensory gym for the pediatric population in Silicon Valley. Dr. Khatri is the Chair of the Membership Committee for the Asian Pacific Heritage OT Association, an AOTPAC Ambassador for California and Region 3 Director Elect for the OT Association of California."



Kelly Twichel (MOT '17): Access Trax was officially awarded a US Patent in August 2021 for the Access Trax portable pathway, which empowers people of all physical abilities to easily access outdoor terrain. The product was inspired by adaptive surfers and invented by Kelly Twichel and Eric Packard while OT students in 2016.



Meghan Skidmore (OTD '21) developed self-paced teaching modules on farming and ranching with disabilities for her capstone project in partnership with Texas AgrAbility. The course aims to improve OT services for farmers and ranchers by educating occupational therapy practitioners on agricultural practices, tasks, culture, hazards, modifications, assistive technology and more. Course materials include videos, case studies, factsheets and knowledge checks for a broad range of learning. This course received approval from the Texas Occupational Therapy Association for Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

Alumni may submit updates about their professional or personal lives to share with fellow USAHS alumni. Share a short note using the Class Notes Form on www.usa.edu/about/alumni/.



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