

Department of Physical Therapy

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Huggins Elected DEI Director	1
Early SPOTS Program	2
PT Moves Me	2
White Coat Ceremonies	3
Teaching Awards	4
Odom Paves New Way for PT	4
Day of Service	5
Popielarczyk Funds Fellowship	6

Dr. Carla Huggins Elected as APTA Georgia's Inaugural DEI Director

After being elected to the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Consortium Executive Board in 2020, Dr. Carla Huggins was recently elected as the inaugural DEI director of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Georgia.

In her new position, Dr. Huggins says that her primary goals are engagement, education, and outreach, as well as helping to establish a cohesive mission and vision for DEI within the organization. She also hopes to organize a DEI symposium as well as related scholarships for physical therapy students.



In addition to her service to the profession, Dr. Huggins recognizes the value of DEI education in the next generation of physical therapists. One of her current lines of research, focused on creating a culture of DEI within DPT programs in order to create more culturally competent PTs, will be presented as a platform presentation at next year's APTA Combined Sections Meeting in San Antonio, TX. Dr. Huggins hopes to continue to expand this line of research, and we can't wait to hear more great things from her!

Message from the Chair

Greetings,

The Department of Physical Therapy has continued to innovate and re-invent itself during a time of uncertainty due to the ongoing pandemic. I am truly proud of our faculty and students who did rise to the challenge, and not only met it, but surpassed expectations. Congratulations to our DPT Program Director Dr. Kimberly Morelli who has been promoted to the rank of Clinical Professor and Dr. Jane Gore who has been promoted to the rank of Clinical Associate Professor.

The Department continues to develop new programs and opportunities for our students. The most recent addition being the Certificate in Early Intervention, that our students can complete in addition to their DPT within their 9-semester entry level program. GSU DPT students continue to excel in their academics, and despite the pandemic all our students graduated on time, and we continue to maintain a 100% employment among our graduates.

A hard-working team produces exceptional results, and in this newsletter, we share with you the success we have celebrated in 2021. I thank our Alumni for their continued support in many ways, Special thanks to Dr. Debbie Popielarczyk and her husband John for establishing the [PT Research Fellowship](#) and for her continuing support for the PT Alumni Scholarship.

Best wishes,

Sujay Galen, PT, PhD, FHEA, Chair and Associate Professor

Spotlight on the “Early SPOTS” Program with Dr. Yu-Ping Chen

Associate Professor Dr. Yu-Ping Chen is the subject area lead researcher on the newly established Early Speech, Physical, and Occupational Therapy Services (Early SPOTS) interdisciplinary personnel preparation program. Directed by Dr. Emily Graybill in the School of Public Health, Early SPOTS is a collaborative effort between multiple departments at Georgia State that aims to address a shortage of Early Intervention (EI) services providers in Georgia.

The first cohort of four third year DPT students pursuing a certification in EI just started the program in August of 2021 and will complete their training in May of 2022. A future goal for the program includes expanding this training to prepare more future pediatric therapists to work in the EI field.



PT Moves Me!

In 2021, the APTA launched its “PT Moves Me” campaign which focuses on “providing resources that support recruitment of the next generation of physical therapists.” It also seeks to “increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within the profession of physical therapy by helping chapters and academic programs focus their community outreach efforts on diverse populations of K-16 students nationwide.”

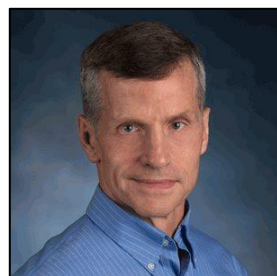
Student Ambassador Jessica Brown Helps Others Learn Why “PT Moves Me”

When APTA’s newly launched “PT Moves Me” campaign sought out student ambassadors, second year DPT student Jessica Brown immediately volunteered. The goals of PTMM are “near and dear to [her] heart,” she said. “I am a minority student in a DPT program whose journey to get into PT was not as simple as others. I was denied from PT school 3 times simply due to my lack of understanding of the requirements and underestimating how rigorous the application process is.”

The goals of PTMM are critically important, says Brown. “When looking at statistics of 2019 applicant, only 6.7% of applicants were African American and only 4.87% were accepted into programs. There is some discrepancy between those students applying to DPT programs and those who are accepted into a program. This ultimately decreases the amount of diversity of the profession; if students are not getting into school, the profession will continue to lack diverse clinicians.”

Brown hopes to continue her leadership and mentorship efforts throughout her studies and after graduation. “I would not be where I am today without...mentors in my life, she says. “I’ve made it my goal to lift others as I climb.”

Dr. Gordon Warren Receives DOD Grant



Distinguished University Professor Dr. Gordon Warren is part of a team recently awarded a \$1.5M grant from the US Department of Defense for their project “Regenerative Rehabilitation Solutions to Improve Functional Limitations and Plasticity Following Volumetric Muscle Loss.”

The study is being led by Dr. Sarah Greising from the University of Minnesota and will take place over the next 4 years.

DPT Class of 2023 and Class of 2024 Participate in White Coat Ceremonies

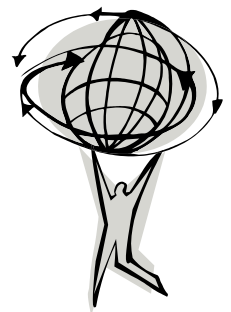
This year the department was excited to hold White Coat ceremonies for TWO of its student cohorts! White Coat ceremonies are a special occasion that officially marks the new students' entry into their clinical studies. In addition to speeches from classmates and faculty, the students were presented with their white coats by Dr. Carla Huggins, Dr. Kimberly Morelli, and Dr. Sujay Galen.



In March, a belated White Coat ceremony was held for the Class of 2023. Although this event usually occurs in the fall, the COVID-19 pandemic required a postponement of the celebration. The faculty and staff were so excited to finally get to recognize the Class of 2023 with their white coats!



Shortly thereafter, in September, the Class of 2024 were presented with their white coats in a similar ceremony. Although the students' family and friends could only attend virtually, it was still a time of celebration for faculty, staff, and all three cohorts of DPT students. Congratulations, Class of 2023 and Class of 2024!



Dr. Gena Priest Collaborating on New R-21 Grant to Study Early Intervention in At-Risk Infants



Dr. Gena Priest, Clinical Assistant Professor, will serve as a co-investigator on a newly funded NIH grant titled "Role of early motor experience in infants with Down syndrome." Principle investigators Dr. Jianhua Wu, from the department of Kinesiology and Health, and Dr. Seyda Ozcaliskan, from the department of Psychology, will lead the study, which seeks to examine the effects of treadmill walking and training with Velcro mittens on the motor, cognitive, and language development of infants with Down syndrome.

Two DPT Faculty Receive Teaching Awards



The department of Physical Therapy is proud that the Lewis College Teaching Excellence Award has gone to our faculty members for two years in a row!

In 2020, Clinical Professor Dr. Kimberly Morelli won the award for her proposal “Addition of virtual reality for student learning of human gross anatomy.”



This year, Clinical Associate Professor Dr. Jodan Garcia continued the tradition! With his proposal, “The Role of Pain Neuroscience Education in Education Curricula,” Dr. Garcia hopes to “improve our student's ability to evaluate and manage patient's population with chronic pain, focusing on their functional progression to promote improved therapeutic alliance”

Congratulations, Dr. Morelli and Dr. Garcia, and thank you for all you do for our students!

Alumnus Dr. David Odom Leads the Way on Paving a New Path for PT

Dr. David Odom, DPT, CSCS has come a long way since he graduated from Georgia State’s DPT program in 2010. He began his career working in a traditional outpatient orthopedic setting, but his talents for helping clients reach their maximum potential quickly led to him working with professional athletes, dancers, and performers all over the world.

When asked what he most wants to share with current students and new grads, he said “PT needs an overhaul, and it is up to us to change the way PT works within healthcare. I would like students to know there are other options. We need to change the PT practice together and find a new path. We can pave that path ourselves.” Dr. Odom currently operates a concierge practice called “Flux Formula” in Los Angeles, where he provides his clients with high level PT services “on the road with tours, in [his] garage, or at a client’s home.”

“I see PT being undervalued and under paid. I offer a high-level service and charge appropriately,” says Dr. Odom. “My business model makes people put the time in on their program and value it.”

He also likes that traveling with his clients gives him the opportunity to provide them with more holistic education, teaching about “nutrition, hydration, body mechanics, and other aspects of health and well-being.” Dr. Odom has also begun integrating Qi Gong into his treatments, as well as practicing it personally. “My commitment is to make my clients happy and healthy,” he says.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

[CLICK HERE FOR A FULL LIST OF ALL FACULTY PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM 2021](#)



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#GSUDPT

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DPT Students Participate in PT Day of Service

On August 28, 2021, many of our DPT students volunteered their time to help out our community on the PT Day of Service. At Booker T. Washington High School, our students helped set up a newly renovated sports medicine lab. Students also helped with landscaping improvements at D.M. Terrell High School and worked to clean up trash on GSU's downtown campus. We thank all of our students for their hard work and service!



2021 Alumni and Clinical Partner Awards

The PT department presented several awards at this year's White Coat Ceremony. The 2021 distinguished alumni award was presented to Class of 1972 alumna Jane DeLoach. Dr. Deborah Popielarczyk, an alumna from the PT Class of 1975, received the Physical Therapy Recognition Award. Dr. David Buuck from the PT Class of 2016 received the Outstanding Clinical Educator Award. Tender Ones Physical Therapy Services was awarded the Outstanding Clinical Facility Award. Dr. David Smelser received the Marylou R. Barnes Endowed Faculty Award. The department was pleased to be able to recognize these distinguished clinicians, faculty, and clinical facilities!

Dr. Debbie Popielarczyk Funds New Lab and Research Fellowship with \$75K Gift

Dr. Debbie Popielarczyk, a 1975 graduate of the GSU PT program, and her husband John have recently pledged \$75,000 to Lewis College. A matching grant allowed 10% of the donation to go to the PT Alumni Scholarship Fund

\$25,000 of this donation will be used to support the new biomechanics and exercise science lab in Student Center West, which will be named "The Debbie Proctor & John Popielarczyk Lab for Biomechanics" in honor of their gift.

The additional \$50,000 will establish the Proctor-Popielarczyk Physical Therapy Research Fellowship. It will encourage students to earn their terminal degrees in physical therapy and promote research by decreasing financial burdens on students. Recipients awarded the fellowship will receive a full tuition waiver and a \$2,000 stipend for the spring and fall semesters. Lewis College and the PT Department are so grateful to Dr. Popielarczyk and her husband John for their generous pledge!

Thank You to Our Donors!

Benchmark Physical Therapy

Team Rehabilitation

- Debbie and John Popielarczyk
- Jane DeLoach
- Pamela and Patrick Buttram
- Karen Volkmann
- Susan Effgen, PhD
- Dan Pham
- Grace Gibson
- Synetha and Ernest Gilchrist
- Allison Stowers and Alexander Daley
- Steve Parent-Lew
- Jeremy Holbrook
- Leigh Palubinskas
- Curtis Deer
- Carolyn Crutchfield
- Laura Cayce
- Wendy Schell
- James Freeman
- Pearl Pettersen
- Melanie Sherrod
- Michelle Porteous
- Yu-Ping Chen
- Kara Strauss
- Rebecca Thomas
- Ravi Patel
- Elizabeth Danish

We need your support to continue the momentum of high rankings, national exposure, and cutting-edge research that transcend the boundaries of our city, state, nation – and our world. Gifts of all sizes add up to make an immediate and important impact for our students. Your donations to the general fund are contributions made without limitation as to their use. Support our students as they push beyond boundaries!

[Support GSU PT Now!](#)