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#### NPTE PASS RATES THAT CAN'T BE BEAT!

100% Ultimate Pass Rate 2019 - 2023

3 Cohorts with 100% First-Time Pass Rate *2020, 2022 & 2023* 

# Unique Clinical Opportunities in the Heart of Atlanta

GSU located in downtown Atlanta is a special place for learning because of its diverse student body, the state-of-the-art labs and digital media facilities to name a few. GSU isn't just located in Atlanta - it is genuinely a downtown college town.

When one walks through downtown Atlanta, our campus stands out with its iconic greenway at the heart of its campus. Students can just as easily grab lunch at a dining hall or in the historic Sweet Auburn Market, just steps away from the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Walking south down Hank Aaron Drive, they can catch a football game at one of the University's newest facilities – the repurposed Turner Field, where the Atlanta Braves used to play, is now Center Parc Stadium decked out in GSU blue. Just across the street from the stadium is Atlanta's historic Summerhill neighborhood with its rows of restaurants and shops.

But the connection that GSU has to the city goes well beyond food and sports. The Physical Therapy program benefits from the many lauded healthcare facilities that sit on its doorstep – Grady Memorial Hospital, the Shepherd Center, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Grady Memorial, the 10<sup>th</sup> largest public hospital in the nation and a Level 1 Trauma Center, sits directly adjacent to campus and provides several students with phenomenal inpatient clinical experiences each year.

The Shepherd Center is a world-famous hospital specializing in rehabilitation of patients with spinal cord injury, Multiple Sclerosis, brain injuries, stroke, and neuromuscular conditions. GSU students visit the hospital during core and elective courses and may also opt participate in long-term clinical experiences or research opportunities.

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, one of the largest pediatric healthcare systems in the country, also sits on our doorstep. Students benefit from expert clinicians that guest lecture in our pediatric courses and have access to multiple pediatric clinical rotations in all settings.

As the oldest PT program in the state of Georgia, we love what our location in the heart of Atlanta offers our students. We couldn't be prouder to be <u>#TheStateWay!</u>

#### A National Leader in Board Pass Rates

Prior to graduating from the DPT program, students must pass one final hurdle on their path to becoming a licensed physical therapist – the NPTE board exams. At Georgia State, we view preparing our students for their boards as a critical component of their education. Third year students undergo a rigorous preparation course in their final semester under the direction of Dr. Jodan Garcia and the results speak for themselves!

Georgia State graduates over the past 5 years boast a 100% ultimate pass rate overall, and 3 of the past 5 cohorts have achieved a 100% first-time pass rate. In fact, over the last 5 years, 202 of our 207 graduates have passed their board exams on their first attempt!

We couldn't be prouder of our students and their success on the NPTE! Congrats, Panthers! That's #TheStateWay!

### Message from the Chair

#### Greetings,

I am excited to share with you all the progress the Department has made over 2022-23 through this newsletter. First, I wish to thank all of our alumni and donors for your generous support, that has helped us in meeting our mission and to work towards excellence. Following our CAPTE review in 2022, I am pleased to inform that the DPT program has received a re-affirmation of our accreditation until 2033. I am grateful to our excellent faculty for their tireless work in providing the best physical therapy education, and in helping our students achieve a 100% first time pass-rate both during 2022 and 2023 in the national board exams.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Liang-Ching Tsai who received a \$2.02 million R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health as the principal investigator to study the effects of knee rehabilitation following injury to preserve long-term knee cartilage health. In addition to Dr. Tsai, several of our faculty received grants both from federal agencies and from foundations, as presented in this newsletter.

The Department of Physical Therapy also started its first <u>residency program in Pediatrics</u> during Fall 2023. The Department also has a new PhD program in Translational Rehabilitation Sciences. The Department now has 3 DPT/PhD students and 3 PhD in translational Rehabilitation Sciences Student.

I am grateful to Dr. Carolyn Crutchfield, Professor Emerita for her generous donation to help establish an endowment to support research endeavors in two of the following named Physical Therapy Research Laboratories in the Department of Physical Therapy. The <u>Marylou Riddleberger Barnes Laboratory for Muscle Physiology</u>, and the <u>Carolyn A. Crutchfield Laboratory for Movement Technologies</u> both have endowments to support the research activities in these laboratories.

Finally, the Department of Physical Therapy has strengthened its international collaborations by establishing both teaching and research collaborations with the Federal University of Health Sciences (UFCSPA), Porto Alegre (Brazil). During 2022-23, the Department received funding from the US State Department to host its first Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence. Dr. Aline Pagnussat from UFCSPA was appointed as an Associate Professor in our Department, and has helped setup a number of collaborative programs including a annual health fair for the Brazilian diaspora here in Atlanta, a PhD student exchange program between GSU and UFCSPA and a study abroad program for GSU students at UFCSPA.

I hope you find this newsletter informational, and I hope you will connect with us. We welcome all our alumni to engage with us, and in coming together, I am a firm believer that our best days are ahead of us. Thank you again for your support and Go Panthers!!



Best wishes, Sujay Galen, PT, PhD, FHEA Chair, Department of Physical Therapy



### SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Georgia State's PT Department brought in \$3.6 million in external grant funding this year!

Five student projects were accepted for presentation at the Combined Sections Meeting in 2024.

Faculty are collaborating with researchers at Emory University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



# Dr. Liang-Ching Tsai Awarded \$2.2 Million Dollars to Study Knee Osteoarthritis

Dr. Liang-Ching Tsai, Associate Professor, has been awarded over \$2 million in funding from the NIH for his project titled "Regenerative Rehabilitative Principles in Modulating Weight Bearing and Joint Kinematics to Delay Post-Traumatic Knee Osteoarthritis."

Noting that the risk of early knee osteoarthritis (OA) is greater for individuals with a history of traumatic knee injuries, Dr. Tsai hopes to investigate ways to improve outcomes and allow these patients to maintain an active lifestyle. Dr. Tsai explains, "Current postiniury rehab guidelines for the knee focus on helping patients return to pre-injury activity and function safely and quickly with little emphasis and knowledge regarding whether we can optimize the rehab to also delay the onset of post-traumatic knee OA."

By using a pre-clinical animal model, Dr Tsai will investigate the relative contributions of multiple factors of post-surgical rehabilitation – weight-bearing, activity level, and lower limb kinematics – to knee cartilage health. Several lucky DPT students working with Dr. Tsai on this project are being trained to conduct animal research, including handling, assisting with surgeries, and providing post-surgical interventions.

Dr. Tsai is enthusiastic about the potential this line if inquiry holds; "This project," he says, "if successful, has the potential to advance current clinical practice with a paradigm shift of how we provide rehab service to patients to preserve the long-term knee health and function following traumatic knee injuries."

# Dr. Katherine Hsieh Awarded Department's First Center Grant for Work on TechSAge

Dr. Katherine Hsieh, in collaboration with lead researchers at Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, has been awarded a multicenter grant totaling \$4.6 million for her continued work on TechSAge. TechSAge is an innovative multidisciplinary program designed to support the needs of people aging with long-term disabilities where they live, work, and play by conducting advanced engineering research and developing innovative technologies.

Dr. Hsieh's share of the funding amounts to approximately \$100,000 for her development project that will result in a mobile health app to reduce fall risk in older adults with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). "The app aims to measure both intrinsic (e.g., balance, fear of falling) and extrinsic (e.g., environment) fall risk factors," she explains. Once validated, the app can help individuals living with MS measure their fall risk using technology. Additionally, Dr Hsieh notes that her results will "inform the design and conduct of future, targeted fall prevention interventions in the home and community settings tailored for those older adults with MS."

Dr. Hsieh's research also provides an excellent opportunity for our DPT students! Students interested in working with older adults and understanding and mitigating fall risk will be assisting Dr. Hsieh throughout the project, gaining valuable experience collecting and analyzing data while getting hands-on experience working with this patient population.

## Dr. Carla Huggins Recognized for Continued Excellence in DEI Work

It is becoming a familiar story that Dr. Carla Huggins, Clinical Associate Professor, is being recognized for her work. Since establishing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) interest group within the GSU DPT program, she has also served on the college's DEI committee, has been elected to serve on the DEI consortium of the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy (ACAPT), and was elected as the first Director of DEI for the American Physical Therapy Association of Georgia.

Most recently, Dr. Huggins was awarded Georgia State University's JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) award. She states that she is guided by the APTA's vision statement of Inspired modification whose goal is, "transforming society (inclusive of all society) by optimizing movement [and equitable opportunities] through the human experience."

Dr. Huggins is also the GSU Physical Therapy program's director of clinical education. In addition to her teaching and advocacy work, she ensures the appropriate clinical placement of 120 students each year.



Dr. Jake Irwin, Clinical Associate Professor, has been treating athletes for over 20 years. His experience even includes providing PT services to the US Olympic Bobsled team. But this year he started working with an even bigger client – the entirety of GSU's athletics department! In recent years, GSU has grown its athletics department which now includes a competitive football team and a major sports arena. The university also has teams in men's and women's soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, golf, tennis, and more!

Dr. Irwin first connected with the head trainer of the athletics department, Bob Murphy, when he was treating injured student-athletes at GSU's faculty clinic. The connection, born of a mutual respect and a deep sense of caring for the student-athletes themselves, has now grown into an official position within the athletics department.

As the only PT employed by the athletics department, Dr. Irwin collaborates with athletic trainers to apply physical therapy principles to the injured student-athlete. In addition to evaluating and treating injured athletes, Dr. Irwin also advises and consults with the athletic trainers to provide the best possible training, conditioning, and injury prevention as the students train for their respective sports.

This position will eventually provide opportunities for DPT students as well, including shadowing, co-treating, and working alongside the athletic trainers, with the shared goal of keeping our student athletes strong and safe on their respective fields of play. Long term goals include continued DPT student involvement and a potential sports residency!

Although Dr. Irwin denies being an elite athlete himself, his participation in competitive sports is extensive and includes high school tennis and basketball, and college intramural volleyball, basketball, softball, football, indoor hockey, golf, ping pong, tennis, soccer, and billiards! So while he hasn't been playing on the field in a few years, he brings an athlete's perspective to his new role. With Dr. Irwin's years of experience, board-certification as an orthopedic clinical specialist, and long record of getting and keeping athletes on the field, this is an undeniably exciting collaboration!







Dr. Anne Lorio

"Many people have asked if it has been worth it, and the answer is DEFINITELY YES!"



Dr. David Smelser

"It is my opinion that interdisciplinary training is vital to bridge the gap between research being done in other fields and the practices of our own."



Dr. Carla Huggins

"Having my terminal degree will encourage other Black DPT students to do the same."

### Building the Best Faculty: GSU Supports 3 Professors in Obtaining Terminal Degrees

While some DPT programs struggle to meet CAPTE standards that require 50% of all core faculty to hold terminal academic degrees, Georgia State is seeking to go above and beyond! Currently just over half of our core faculty hold such a degree, but thanks to the generosity of two distinguished professors emeriti, three additional core faculty are in the process of obtaining theirs as well! The Marylou R. Barnes Endowed Faculty Award, established by a generous donation from her long-time partner Dr. Carolyn Crutchfield, supports faculty development by providing funding for individuals who show potential for leadership and scholarship. Dr. Anne Lorio, Dr. David Smelser, and Dr. Carla Huggins are three recipients of this award that are using the funding to pursue their terminal degrees.

Dr. Anne Lorio knew even in PT school that she wanted to pursue a PhD – although her 5-year timeframe ended up being delayed by more than a decade! Dr. Lorio is nearing completion of her PhD in Educational Psychology here in GSU's College of Education, where her dissertation involves exploring patient education and health literacy knowledge in both PT and PTA providers in Georgia. While she freely acknowledges that the process has been challenging, Dr. Lorio set out to complete this degree to become a better researcher and feels like that mission has definitely been achieved! Dr. Lorio plans to use these improved skills to guide her students through the research process here in our DPT program.

Dr. David Smelser's desire to pursue a terminal degree was born after a few years in the clinic, when he noticed how often healthcare providers struggle with communicating with their patients in ways that don't increase patient fear about their diagnosis. Despite good bodies of evidence in the fields of health and educational psychology that this type of communication results in poorer outcomes, he noticed that many providers simply lacked the interdisciplinary experience to apply these findings to their own practice. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Educational Psychology as well with the goal of "bridging the gap" between physical therapy and other fields of study to improve patient outcomes. For his dissertation, he hopes to investigate how providers educate patients about their conditions, and how these explanations shape patients' fear and outcomes.

Dr. Carla Huggins always knew that a terminal degree was one of her career goals, and once her children grew up and left for college, she saw that the time was right for her to go for it! Dr. Huggins has just begun her studies to complete an EdD in Higher Education Administration from the University of West Georgia. Dr. Huggins notes that both higher education in general, and PT education specifically, lack faculty from under-represented minorities. By pursuing her terminal degree, she hopes to encourage other Black DPT students to do the same and increase the number of core Black faculty in PT programs across the nation. Dr. Huggins has not yet begun the dissertation process but plans to study DEI and Belonging within the PT profession. No terminal degree program is easy, but Dr. Huggins has plenty of support! "Both of my parents were educators," she says, "and I'm certain that they would have been very proud to see how far I have come. Not one day goes by without me pulling some of their strength!"

We are so proud of the work our faculty are doing and are well on our way to seeing 70% of our faculty hold terminal academic degrees! At Georgia State we strive to instill the value of scholarship in all of our DPT students. Cheers to our hard-working faculty who are leading by example!

### **GSU** Welcomes New Pediatric Residency

This August, GSU's PT program marked an important milestone – the matriculation of our first two pediatric residents! This exciting moment was the culmination of two years of work by Residency Director Dr. Gena Priest.

With less than 50 pediatric residency positions available nationwide, Department Chair Dr. Sujay Galen knew that adding an additional pediatric residency program would meet a need within the profession. And with 3 core faculty with pediatric backgrounds and an existing graduate certificate program in Early Intervention, he recognized that GSU was uniquely qualified to do so! Dr. Priest, as the only core faculty member who is a board-certified pediatric clinical specialist, took the lead in developing the curriculum and setting up clinical placements for the newly minted <u>GSU Pediatric Residency Program</u>.

On August 1st, Dr. Becky Bandy and Dr. Emma Thompson joined the GSU family as our first residents. The program is currently in its candidacy phase with the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency & Fellowship Education but hopes to achieve full accreditation in 2024. With the help of our wonderful clinical partners, Beyond Limits Pediatric Therapy Center, All About Kids Therapy Services, Mobility Physical Therapy, and the Ellis Center of Atlanta, we are excited to have the opportunity to continue shaping the future of pediatric physical therapy!





### GSU Expands its PhD Programs Under the Leadership of Dr. Yu-ping Chen

Dr. Yu-ping Chen is in charge of a LOT of doctoral students these days! In addition to her teaching responsibilities within the DPT and <u>Early SPOTS programs</u>, Dr. Chen is now at the helm of two exciting PhD programs – the <u>DPT/PhD program</u> and a new <u>PhD in Health Sciences</u>.

The DPT/PhD program is a unique opportunity that allows GSU DPT students to complete the didactic portion of a PhD during their DPT studies. Upon graduation from the DPT program, they may begin to practice as licensed physical therapists while completing a dissertation under the supervision of a mentor from the Department of Kinesiology and Health. The new PhD in Health Sciences, the first of its kind in Georgia, offers a PT-based concentration in Translational Rehabilitation Science. Currently three students are enrolled in the DPT/PhD program, and an additional two in the Translational Rehabilitation Science concentration of the Health Sciences PhD program.

Dr. Chen notes the critical nature of these programs, saying, "[PT] is a growing occupation in the US with more demands to have more physical therapists to meet the rising demand in current society. To educate and mentor these future clinicians and to train more competent researchers, there is a high demand in academic and clinical fields for faculty with proper clinical credentials and PhD degrees." She continues, "Our programs...can provide advanced professional training for careers as researchers and educators at major research institutions and state-level universities where graduate programs in healthcare related disciplines are provided. We expect our graduates will contribute to new knowledge and better understanding of critical health problems and to the development of innovative and evidence-based interventions to promote health and wellness of the public."











#### **SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE**

# The Farmworker Family Health Program in Moultrie, GA

Each June, a consortium of physical therapy students, nursing students, clinicians, and educators from several universities comes together to make its way to Moultrie, GA. The purpose of their collective efforts is to provide a place for underserved migrant farmers of the region to access healthcare that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

After their second academic year, GSU students can opt to serve this community, just before their third long-term clinical rotation. Each year clinical faculty members Dr. Kimberly Morelli and Dr. Jodan Garcia guide the students through the experience.

As with all service-learning, the experience is beneficial to both the recipients and the practitioners of the care being provided. For the recipients, this program means being medically, orthopedically, and neurologically screened and treated, free of cost. These patients are provided with treatment plans, supplies, and education regarding their personal health, so that they can keep working the long hours necessary to provide for their families. Student volunteers also treat children who are enrolled in the associated summer school program. Approximately 300 children, and 200 farm workers are evaluated every year.

For the student providers, this program is a microcosm of the hospital and outpatient healthcare environments. Students can medically screen, refer to other providers as necessary, treat/co-treat their patients using a variety of interventions, and create home programs for patients to utilize later. Students have the chance to apply their clinical skills, under supervision, to a population that is undeniably deserving of care.

# Service Learning in the Dominican Republic

In October 2023, our 3<sup>rd</sup> year students had the opportunity to travel to the Dominican Republic for their service-learning project led by Dr. Anne Lorio and Dr. Jake Irwin in partnership with <u>Communidad Connect</u>.

In their week on the island, students worked with the local rehabilitation center and the local assisted living center. They evaluated and worked with patients ranging from infants to centenarians, and with a wide variety of conditions. They were able to experience how physical therapy is conducted in a developing country, all while stretching their skills of communication. The students also had the opportunity to visit a local sports club. They donated supplies including baseball bats, gloves, pants, and more. They also played some baseball with the local youth. The trip was wrapped up with a trip to a baseball academy outside of Santo Domingo. There, students worked with aspiring players, aged 13-16.

Now, these students are in their fourth long term clinicals, but they will undoubtedly take the lessons and skills they have learned into their experiences here at home. Andie Daniell, one of the third-year students said, of the trip, "I was able to take time to journal and reflect on how I wanted to be as a clinician. It was the first time in a while that I truly felt inspired, and I now feel like I have the extra 'spark' I need to push through this year!"

Check out the students' blog from the trip here: <a href="https://www.tumblr.com/gsudptindr2023">https://www.tumblr.com/gsudptindr2023</a>

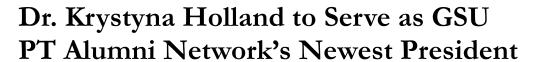
### Dr. Kara Strauss Joins GSU DPT Faculty

The Physical Therapy program is welcoming Dr. Kara Strauss, PT, DPT, MBA to the core faculty this fall. Dr. Strauss graduated from the GSU program in 2012 and brings with her 11 years of clinical experience. She has also taught as an adjunct professor for 6 years in topics including pain science, psychological and behavioral aspects of chronic pain, yoga, pelvic floor, fascia and visceral mobilization, and orthopedic evaluation and testing.

Dr. Strauss also comes to the program with knowledge from a career in marketing and business development. She studied at the University of Delaware (BSBA 2002) and the University of Georgia (MBA 2006) and worked in the field before returning to her first love, physical therapy. The business acumen she acquired along the way helped her to start her own practice, <u>Super Human Therapy</u>. There she serves the Atlanta community and specializes in pelvic floor rehabilitation, aerial rehab, and orthopedic care.

It is her continued desire to learn and contribute to the growth of the physical therapy field that has her excited to join the PT department faculty. She hopes to bring a holistic perspective to the program by emphasizing the importance of mental health for patients, and students alike.

Welcome, Dr. Strauss! We are so excited to have you join our team!



Dr. Krystyna Holland is a woman who wears many hats. Since graduating from GSU's PT program in 2018, she has specialized in pelvic floor rehabilitation, started her own private practice, contributed to several scientific articles, taught and spoken around the country, and even become a little bit internet famous.

In 2023, Dr. Holland was recognized as one of Georgia State University's 40 under 40 honorees. This award is given to alumni of the university making an impact in their field. Dr. Holland's extensive advocacy for transgender people and trauma-informed care made her a clear pick.

She has also just published the hard copy of her book, "The Playbook for Painless Sex." True to form, Dr. Holland seeks to provide accessible, inclusive, and useful information to people who want to know more about their own sexual function.

In case that wasn't enough, she has assumed the role of the PT Alumni Network President a few months ahead of schedule. She was slated to take on the role in January of 2024, but when Dr. Kara Strauss took on a new faculty role, Dr. Holland graciously stepped up.

When asked about her goals for her term as president, Dr. Holland has a clear vision. "To improve awareness of and engagement with the alumni network. GSU DPT grads have an incredible breadth and depth of skills and would really benefit from a developed professional network. We're getting the ball rolling with that, emphasizing inclusive participation over the dollar amount donated."

Under Dr. Holland's leadership, we are sure to see continued growth of a network that is a diverse, supportive community, where all alumni will benefit from the connections they have to each other.







Are you a GSU DPT Alum? Stay connected with the Alumni Network here!

https://www.facebook.com/gsuphysicaltherapyalumni/

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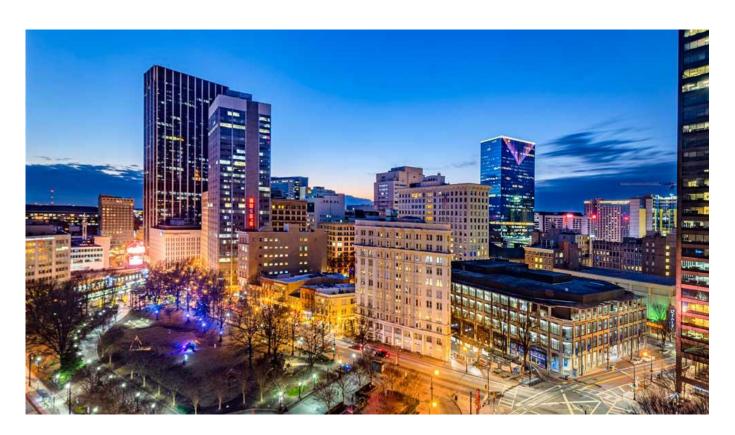
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