Citizenship and Uncertainty: A Path Towards Excellence

Throughout our Department’s long history, we have woven two threads into the fabric of our mission: developing sound citizenship and understanding how to tolerate uncertainty in a complex world. Our annual 360-degree professionalism assessment of all faculty, staff, and students has helped us develop the virtues of honesty, respect, responsibility, communication, and teamwork within our educational culture. We are reminded, through these assessments, that even though we achieve a promotion, procure a grant, publish a paper, pass a test, treat a patient, graduate, and meet with other successes, our journey towards excellence relies on internalized virtues that must rise to the fore during uncertain times.

We believe that cultivating an ability to thrive amidst uncertainty is critical to our department’s pursuit of excellence and is essential for the next generation of health care practitioners. Measuring our students’ tolerance for uncertainty is a cornerstone of our Department’s educational outcome benchmarking program. In the last year, a concrete test of our ability to tolerate uncertainty appeared with little warning in the form of a global pandemic; a threat that forced all health care practitioners to undergo a real “gut check” as to who they are, where their commitments lie, and how their own virtues, like taking responsibility, would inform their actions.

Under the prescient guidance of UI Healthcare and Carver College of Medicine leadership, our Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science academic community pushed to new heights during this uncertainty. As the UI campus closed in March, we launched the Pandemic Impacts Value over Time (PIVoT) program. Our goal was to transform the interruption of the pandemic into an opportunity to enhance the value of an Iowa DPT education.

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Within one week, faculty transitioned to online instruction, developed COVID-19 learning objectives, and wove them throughout the 104 semester credit hours that we deliver within our program. Even one of our graduates practicing within our medical center contributed new knowledge for our students by pioneering the first rehabilitation protocol for high-acuity COVID-19 during pregnancy. We used state of the art technology in the Frank Hazelton Teaching Laboratory to create new material for our core curricula, rather than relying on archived lectures. Just 3 weeks after the closure of campus, we delivered new PT telehealth education programming that allowed our students to bring telehealth knowledge and skills to their clinical rotations, particularly in rural health practices in the Midwest.

I thank our alumni, faculty, staff, and students for their commitment to professional virtues and their unwavering capacity to excel during times of uncertainty.

Richard K. Shields, PT, PhD, FAPTA
Professor, Chair, and DEO

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IOWA EDUCATIONAL VALUE CONTINUES TO GROW

In our continuing journey toward educational excellence, our Department emphasizes two key domains: educational quality and affordability, the factors that determine the "value" of an Iowa DPT education. In 2020, U.S. News and World Report highlighted the quality of the education we offer (table, left).

While we are proud of this recognition, we readily acknowledge that there are many outstanding academic physical therapy programs across the country. Many institutions train top-caliber clinicians who are innovators and leaders in physical therapy care, while also driving scientific discovery with faculty who are global leaders in rehabilitation and educational research.

As we strive toward excellence, we keep part of our attention on the other determinant of educational value, the affordability of a DPT degree. The education we offer is affordable thanks to our efforts to keep tuition low and to the scholarship support that every admitted student receives. This affordability enables us to attract the best-qualified students, both from within Iowa and the rest of the country. The talent and energy that these gifted students bring to our Department pushes us ever farther along our continuing journey toward excellence.
Our Department was saddened to hear of the passing of Mrs. Marion Hazelton, 94, in Cedar Rapids on February 8. Mrs. Hazelton was a longtime leader in elementary education in Iowa. She served for many years as the district project leader/coordinator for early childhood education in the Cedar Rapids public schools. Her late husband, Mr. Frank Hazelton, was an Iowa physical therapy alumnus who led the successful effort to license physical therapists in Iowa in 1965.

In 1998, the Hazelton family established a scholarship fund within our Department that has assisted 47 students to complete their physical therapy education. For many years, Mrs. Hazelton and other members of the family hosted a luncheon for scholarship recipients, creating a personal connection that underscored Frank and Marion’s values of service and leadership. In 2003, the family supported the creation of the “Frank Hazelton Classroom”, our primary teaching and learning laboratory.

To honor the memory of both of their parents, the family has renamed the scholarship the Frank and Marion Hazelton Memorial Scholarship Fund. Through their generosity, the Hazelton family has helped us to enhance the quality and reduce the cost of an Iowa PT education, enabling us to offer a top-caliber education at an affordable price.

We are grateful for their support and join many others in offering our condolences at Marion’s passing.

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Professor Emeritus Gary L. Soderberg PT, PhD and his wife Dr. Loretta Knutson have invested in the future of Iowa physical therapy by creating the Gary L. Soderberg Endowed Professorship in Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science. Dr. Richard K. Shields became the inaugural recipient of this Professorship at a ceremony officiated by Carver College of Medicine Dean Dr. Brooks Jackson and by University of Iowa President Bruce Harreld.

Soderberg was recruited to the University of Iowa in 1972 to advance the newly established PhD degree program, which was one of the first in the country. He served as the department’s director from 1984 – 1992, overseeing its transformation into a nationally-recognized leader in physical therapy research.

Through his own outstanding scholarship and mentoring, Dr. Soderberg paved the way for the next generation of physical therapy scientists. Now through his and Dr. Knutson’s generosity, this endowed Professorship will equip our Department for the next era of advances in scientific discovery and clinical excellence.

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Pictured above, left to right:
- Lynnette Marshall, University of Iowa Center for Advancement
- Bruce Harreld, President, University of Iowa
- Dr. Loretta Knutson
- Dr. Richard Shields
- Dr. Gary Soderberg
- Dr. Brooks Jackson, Dean, Carver College of Medicine
DONORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR STUDENTS

“The cost of a DPT degree has created a significant barrier to the ability of recent graduates to achieve financial stability” (APTA, 2020). APTA identified burgeoning student debt as a barrier to increasing diversity within the profession, and student debt may prevent graduates from taking jobs in their desired practice settings.

Our program contends that moderating student debt is key to ensuring that a DPT education is a good financial investment (PTJ 2018). We safeguard the “value” of an Iowa DPT degree (quality/cost) through a robust program of student scholarships. One hundred percent of students graduating from Iowa receive Departmental scholarship support. Generous gifts from many alumni and friends enable our graduates to begin their careers on good financial footing. We are proud that many of our graduates choose to work in rural clinics and in other underserved settings. Without strong financial health, we know it would be much more difficult for students to follow these calls to serve.

Our Department wishes to express its gratitude to all those who have created scholarships for Iowa students. Your generosity is helping our graduates begin their careers with the freedom that comes from strong financial health.

The Tracy Dahl Family
The Frank and Marion Hazelton Family
The Louis and Dorothy Laubenthal Family
The Marilyn M. McCoid Family
The Mary Lou Fairchild Family
The Jean Hammill Family
The Norman and Ruth Goldman Family
The Stanley Mendelson Family
The Gerald and Barbara Lee Graham Family
The Karen and Jeff Kincart Family
The Randy Boldt Family
Kepros Physical Therapy
Rock Valley Physical Therapy
Byron E. Bork, PT
David G. Gerleman

SLUKA RECEIVES OLIVE C. FARR AWARD

In April, the Iowa Physical Therapy Association (IPTA) recognized Professor Kathleen Sluka, PT, PhD, FAPTA with its highest honor, the Olive C. Farr Distinguished Service Award. Farr was the first director of the physical therapy education department at the University of Iowa, serving from 1942 until 1963.

Throughout her career, Dr. Sluka has advanced the frontiers of pain science and translated new discoveries into physical therapy clinical care. She has garnered over 30 million dollars in external grant funding and is recognized as a global leader in pain research. Sluka currently oversees two 5-year, multi-million dollar R01 grants from the National Institutes of Health. She and her multi-disciplinary team are working to identify a metabolic signature (“biomarker”) for fibromyalgia, a complex pain disorder that currently can only be diagnosed based on symptomatology. Her team is also working to identify the role of local immune cells in the protective effect of regular physical activity for people with chronic pain.

Dr. Sluka leads two large NIH-funded multi-site trials that are working to reveal how the basic biology of pain can be harnessed by rehabilitation interventions. The Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures (A2CPS) Program aims to identify biomarkers and biosignatures (combinations of several biomarkers) that can help predict whether a patient who experiences an acute pain event will develop a chronic pain syndrome. The Fibromyalgia TENS in Physical Therapy Study (TIPS) is working to determine if the addition of TENS (Transcutaneous Electric Nerve Stimulation) to PT care reduces pain, increases adherence to PT and allows patients with fibromyalgia to reach their specific functional goals with less reliance on pharmaceuticals.

We extend our congratulations to Dr. Sluka on receiving the Olive Farr Award and we await with interest the results of her groundbreaking clinical research.
AN IOWA FOUNDATION

Stanley Mendelson, PT, is a 1953 graduate of the University of Iowa Physical Therapy program. Now an energetic 90-year-old, as a 22-year-old newlywed he chose Iowa because of its strong reputation and low cost, factors that are still hallmarks of the program today. Mendelson studied under Olive C. Farr, the first director of the program and one of the state's most respected physical therapy pioneers. Ms. Farr ran a tight ship, and Mendelson recalls that “Every time I had a practical exam, I drew the short straw and had to be assessed by her!”

That rigorous Iowa training prepared Mendelson well for a career in clinical practice. He has fond memories of Iowa, despite enduring the worst of our weather. “It was the first time I ever lived through a tornado. We heard this terrible noise all night, and we get up and there’s a tree impaled into another tree...there’s a tree growing out of a car...” Mendelson and his 28 classmates, many of whom were veterans, finished the 2-year Certificate program and graduated to clinical positions around the country.

Mendelson and his wife, Isabelle, moved to her native New Jersey to begin his career and start their family. He took with him a key message gleaned at a seminar conducted by the Iowa Physical Therapy Association (IPTA): “If you want to make a mark, get involved.”

Mendelson began working at Beth Israel Hospital in Newark NJ, then opened a private practice in 1960. For the next decade he balanced his independent practice with continued work in hospitals and nursing homes, developing expertise in caring for patients with hand injuries and those recovering from trauma.

He took the IPTA’s advice seriously; early in his career he accepted many responsibilities and leadership roles within the New Jersey chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Mendelson also served on a number of advisory committees for academic institutions in New Jersey, and in the late 1960’s he developed a strong interest in teaching. He completed a Master’s in Education from Seton Hall University, and in 1972 became an instructor at the newly formed Physical Therapist Assistant program at Essex County College.

“WE’RE ALL TEACHERS”

It quickly became clear that the Essex program faced an uphill battle to graduate PTAs who were ready for the challenges of clinical practice. In this era, standards for training and credentialing of PTAs varied widely and their scope of practice was being codified. Few of Essex’s students were prepared for the school’s Associates’ degree curriculum. Mendelson perceived his first year of teaching to be a failure, as 50% of his students did not achieve a passing grade. His mentor, the director of allied health programs, disagreed; she insisted that a 50% pass rate was evidence of progress, given the educational and social challenges his students faced.

Mendelson redoubled his efforts, and upon becoming program director in 1975 he instituted a range of policies designed to support student success. He increased the rigor of the didactic curriculum, insisting that his students learn the biological foundations of the therapeutic techniques they’d use as professionals. Mendelson gradually introduced higher academic expectations and enlisted the stronger students to help their struggling classmates.

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Throughout his career as an educator, Mendelson maintained a thriving private practice. He drew a direct link from his work as a clinician to his effectiveness as a teacher. “We’re all teachers”, he said, “whether we’re in teaching or we’re in practice. We’re all teachers.”

In 1983, APTA recognized his work to enhance the success of his students via the Award of Excellence for Minority Recruitment and Services. While he is proud of that achievement, he is most proud that his Essex students “learned what it’s like to live in a society. That I’m especially proud of; they learned how to be good people.”

RAISING STANDARDS FOR THE PROFESSION

Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s, Mendelson drew upon his experience as an educator and clinical leader to help elevate standards for education and licensure across the country. He served with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) as an on-site reviewer for PTA educational programs, later serving as a reader/consultant for developing PTA programs. In the late 1990’s he led the efforts of the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy to develop uniform educational standards for foreign-educated PTs. This work created the foundation of the competencies that are still used today.

Mendelson is grateful for the start that Iowa provided to his long and productive career. “I think I owe it all to Iowa. I think I was a great therapist, and I learned well at Iowa.”

“I think PT is the greatest profession...the greatest thing I could do in my whole life.”

His many trainees and former patients undoubtedly agree.
CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2020!

Commencement exercises for our Department’s 79th graduating class took place on December 18, 2020. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, faculty, staff, scholarship donors, and graduates gathered virtually on Zoom to celebrate the class’ achievements. Dr. Brooks Jackson, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean of the University of Iowa Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine, provided the keynote address.

Thanks to the generosity of many individual and corporate donors, each student in the class received Departmental scholarship support during their studies.

ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIPS
Kayln Hugdahl Jared Lichman

BOLDT FAMILY PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AWARD
Anna Hendrix

FRANK HAZELTON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Jeanna Becker Michael Boykin

GERALD AND BARBARA LEE GRAHAM SCHOLARSHIP
Maria Anstoetter

ILEND TRAINEE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD
Stefanie Cunard Emily Geison

JEAN HAMMILL SCHOLARSHIP FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY
Maria Anstoetter

KEPROS PHYSICAL THERAPY SCHOLARSHIP
Bailey Wetherell

KINCART FAMILY RURAL PT SCHOLARSHIP
Michael Boykin Bailey Wetherell

LOUIS & DOROTHY LAUBENTHAL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Lisa Becker-Schmall Travis Siwiec
Emily Geison Matthew Wilson
Jennifer Obman

Marilyn M. McCoid Scholarships
Jeanna Becker Kathryn Sheehy
Grant Cooper

MARY LOU FAIRCHILD CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD
Grant Cooper

PHIL & MARGE ABOOD SCHOLARSHIP
Margaret Blackford Kameron Kahler
Sara Cassabaum Claire Ludwig
Eric Chestnut Nicolas Ziniel

ROCK VALLEY PHYSICAL THERAPY SCHOLARSHIP
Brian Allsup

TRACY DAHL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Megan Andrew Austin Kreber
Lisa Becker-Schmall Allyson Merfeld
Seth Bonifas Jennifer Obman
Grant Cooper Bailey Wetherell
Katherine Finch Matthew Wilson
Michaela Huey Nicolas Ziniel
Kayln Hugdahl

LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
Megan Andrew Jared Lichman
Seth Eash Kathryn Sheehy

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
All

RESILIENCY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
All

EXPERIENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
Brian Allsup Melanie Hamilt
Megan Andrew Kayln Hugdahl
Emily Arkenberg Jenitha Jomi
Jeanna Becker Aryn Jones
Lisa Becker-Schmall Joseph Landon
Seth Bonifas Allyson Merfeld
Michael Boykin Nathan Shank
Grant Cooper Kathryn Sheehy
Stefanie Cunard Gabrielle Stecker
Seth Eash Kenan Todd
Katherine Finch Ellie Wallace
Anna Hendrix Matthew Wilson

In addition, several special scholarship awards were announced at the graduation ceremony:

JUDY BIDERMAN PROFESSIONALISM SCHOLARSHIP
Kathryn Sheehy

BYRON E. BORK DEDICATION TO EDUCATION AND SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP
Seth Eash

DAVID G. GERLEMAN DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AWARD
Megan Andrew

FIRST IN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP
Kameron Kahler

STANLEY MENDelson SCHOLARSHIP FOR CLINICAL EXCELLENCE
Lisa Becker-Schmall Koleton Cochran

Congratulations to all our 2020 graduates, and best of luck in your PT careers!
**PHD STUDENTS RECEIVE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS**

Two current Iowa PhD students have received Promotion of Doctoral Studies (PODS-I) scholarships from the Foundation for Physical Therapy Research. These highly competitive awards support the coursework phase of PhD studies prior to candidacy.

Andrew Post, PT, DPT, is mentored by Dr. Ruth Chimenti. Dr. Chimenti’s Orthopaedic Gait Analysis Laboratory works to enhance the evaluation and treatment of tendon pain, with a focus on altered movement strategies, tissue pathology identified via imaging, sensitization of the central nervous system, and psychological factors.

Kristin Johnson PT, DPT is mentored by Dr. Richard K. Shields. His Human Movement Control/Performance Laboratory investigates the biopsychosocial factors that underlie human performance, using tools that range from genetic/epigenetic studies, evaluation of systemic biomarkers, movement control analysis and assessment of cognitive function.

Congratulations to Andrew and Kristin on receiving PODS-I awards!
SAVE THE DATE!

2021 Physical Therapy Education Summit

“Unconscious Racial Bias: Where Do We Go From Here?”

Friday, September 17, 2021

Mark your calendar for this important event, and be on the lookout for more information coming soon!

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS FOR 2020


Sluka KA, Danielson J, Rasmussen L, Kolker SJ. Pain Rep. Regular physical activity reduces the percentage of spinally projecting neurons that express mu-opioid receptors from the rostral ventromedial medulla in mice. 2020 Dec 2;5(6):e857. PMID: 33294758
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RESEARCH GRANT SUPPORT

Ruth Chimenti PT, PhD  
**Assistant Professor**  
NIH R00: $747,000 (PI)  
Mechanism-based Treatment Approach to Chronic Tendinopathy Pain

Laura Frey Law, PT, PhD  
**Associate Professor**  
NIH-R01, $1,422,770 (Co-PI)  
Metabolic Biomarkers for Fibromyalgia  
NIH-U24, $7,547,998 (Co-PI)  
Clinical Coordinating Center for the Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures Program  
CDC-T42, $30,538,747 (Co-PI)  
The Heartland Center for Occupational Health and Safety Research Center

Richard Shields, PT, PhD  
**Professor**  
NIH-R01, $1,574,628 (PI)  
Musculoskeletal Plasticity after Spinal Cord Injury  
NIH-R01, $1,575,397 (PI)  
Long Duration Activity and Metabolic Control after Spinal Cord Injury  
Academy of Physical Therapy Education, $17,000 (PI)  
Benchmarking Outcomes in Physical Therapy Education

Kathleen Sluka, PT, PhD  
**Professor**  
NIH-RO1, $2,579,385 (PI)  
Role of Macrophages in Activity-Induced Pain and Analgesia  
NIH-R01, $1,422,770 (Co-PI)  
Metabolic Biomarkers for Fibromyalgia  
NIH-UH3, $26,311,300 (Co-PI)  
Fibromyalgia TENS in Physical Therapy Study (TIPS): An Embedded Pragmatic Clinical Trial  
NIH-U24, $7,547,998 (Co-PI)  
Clinical Coordinating Center for the Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures Program

Jason Wilken PT, PhD  
**Associate Professor**  
Department of Defense, $2,437,788 (PI)  
Comparative Effect of Commercially Available Custom Dynamic Orthoses  
Department of Defense, $99,947 (PI)  
The Major Extremity Trauma and Rehabilitation Research Consortium (METRC 3)  
Department of Defense, $14,744 (PI)  
Objective Clinical Prescription of Passive-Dynamic Ankle-Foot Orthoses to Optimize Patient Outcomes  
Department of Defense, $901,986 (Project Co-PI)  
Translating Metabolic Responses to Mechanical Insult into Early Interventions to Prevent PTOA

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Please share this newsletter with your classmates, and remind alumni to update their contact information with:  
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