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NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SPRING 2022

# Perspectives

DR. PALLAVI PATEL COLLEGE OF HEALTH CARE SCIENCES



**Managing Change**  
Adapt | Inspire | Innovate

# SHARKS DO MORE THAN SURVIVE. THEY THRIVE.



## DR. PALLAVI PATEL COLLEGE OF HEALTH CARE SCIENCES

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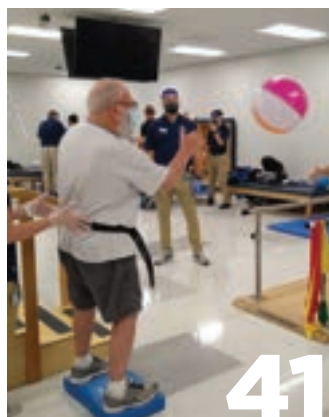
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10-034-2ISAT



Welcome to our final issue of *Perspectives* magazine. We are transitioning to a new publication called the *Perspectives LINK*, which will be smaller in size but still feature a mix of interesting content.

As the pandemic lightens, our desire to educate future health care practitioners continues and remains strong. Perhaps even stronger than before.

I am truly impressed by our students and their devotion to learning. This is professionalism at its core. They have, and continue to display, drive and fortitude that will serve them well as they progress in their profession.

The pandemic has lived up to a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt: "If life were predictable, it would cease to be life and be without flavor." This is such a fitting quote. Our students and faculty and staff members have

adapted, flourished, and made the most of the past few years. We are back in the classroom, and things are normalizing.

Our clinical partners have been outstanding. They believe in our students and have been valuable partners. We truly appreciate their continued dedication to educating future clinicians.

We are now in the season of celebration and new beginnings. We have become stronger, wiser, and technologically proficient, with increased passion.

My wish for all of you is good health and well-being.

Guy M. Nehrenz, Ed.D., M.A., RRT

Interim Dean and Professor

Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences

Nova Southeastern University

I am truly impressed  
by our students  
and their devotion  
to learning. This is  
professionalism at  
its core.





# MANAGING CHANGE

As we celebrate 19 issues of *Perspectives* magazine, we are looking forward to transitioning to a new format called *Perspectives LINK*. This style will offer shorter and more concise articles that continue to highlight the innovative projects that faculty and staff members, students, and alumni are creating across our 37 academic programs.

This will be the last issue of *Perspectives*. As we wrap up our magazine-style format, you will find this issue to be particularly robust. Get comfy, grab a snack, and be inspired as you enjoy the many stories and pictures of our talented team in action. We'd like to thank the many faculty and staff members, students, and alumni who have written stories during the past 10 years. Finally, we'd like to thank you, our stakeholders, who read and share our stories within your network. Together, we are creating the Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences story of students realizing their potential, faculty and staff members' research and teaching excellence, and alumni serving with integrity in their professions and community.

With gratitude,

Brenda Van Hoose  
Comanaging Editor

Terry Morrow Nelson  
Comanaging Editor

(Continued on page 4)

# Perspectives

## THROUGH THE YEARS





# PLACING FIRST



*Wagner observing students during lab finals.*

## NSU SECURES ITS PLACE AS THE NATION'S PREEMINENT EDUCATOR OF ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANTS.

BY SHANNON BROWN WAYTE, CFRE



There are passionate educators and engaged department chairs—and then there is Robert Wagner, D.H.Sc., M.M.Sc., RRT, CAA, associate dean and chair of the Department of Anesthesia at Nova Southeastern University's (NSU's) Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences. They haven't yet come up with the adequate attribute to fully capture his commitment to NSU or the ripple effect he has had on the field of anesthesiology.

If you are a practicing anesthesiologist assistant in the United States—certainly, if you received your training in Florida or Georgia—there is an excellent chance Wagner had something to do with it.

Wagner, a certified anesthesiologist assistant (CAA) for the last 30 years, is originally from Sarasota, Florida. He earned his bachelor's degree in respiratory therapy at Florida A&M University, his master's degree in anesthesia from

# PLACING FIRST

Emory University, and his doctorate from A.T. Still University. He spent 18 years in Georgia practicing as a cardiothoracic CAA and became chief of anesthesia at Saint Joseph's Hospital. He also accepted the position of president of the American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants.

During this time, the anesthesiologist assistant (AA) profession

was not recognized in Florida. In 2000, the Florida Society of Anesthesiologists enthusiastically committed to the legislative process, and NSU stepped forward and offered to establish a program if the profession was licensed in the state.

The process took four years, but once the licensing was complete, NSU asked Wagner to launch the first AA program in the state—and

at the university—in 2006. “I wanted to come back to Florida,” Wagner said. “At the time, there were only three anesthesiologist assistant programs in the country. And NSU believed in me. It believed in my profession, and it believed in the students.”

Wagner recruited his fellow Emory alumnus Don Sokolik, M.D., to join him at NSU as medical director. Wagner and Sokolik successfully lobbied together in Tallahassee, Florida, until the profession's licensure was passed.

“There were only 29 students in that first program in Fort Lauderdale,” Sokolik said. “We had interviewed a lot of high-quality students, but they weren't accepting our offer to come to NSU. When we investigated why, we learned our tuition was cost-prohibitive.”

Thus began the effort to engage philanthropic donors and corporate partners to help offset student tuition. Both Wagner and Sokolik are themselves major NSU gift benefactors and have contributed significant personal resources to provide scholarships for the best and brightest students in the AA program.

Over the years, Wagner has positioned philanthropy as a tenet of his role as department chair. He has inspired the philanthropic engagement of corporate partners and vendors, as well as faculty members and industry colleagues. His efforts have resulted in more than \$2.7 million in donated equipment and scholarship contributions, enabling promising students—many of whom would not otherwise be able to afford a quality education—the opportunity to



*Top, from left, Wagner with Kathleen and Don Sokolik and Stanley Wilson, Ed.D., PT, CEAS, dean emeritus, at the Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences' donors reception.*

*Bottom: Wagner teaches AA students.*





*Wagner provides proper spinal technique instructions.*

pursue their dreams of becoming anesthesiologist assistants.

With Wagner at the helm, NSU's AA department has grown considerably during the past 15 years. With programs operating at the NSU campuses in Fort Lauderdale/Davie, Tampa Bay, and Jacksonville, as well as a fourth program that opened in Denver, Colorado, in January 2022, the university is now the largest educator of anesthesiologist assistants in the nation.

Yet, Wagner remains humble, often minimizing his individual impact and pointing to the collaboration among NSU's

university, Health Professions Division, and college leadership as the catalyst for the growth and success of the AA department.

"Everyone, at every level, was willing to try new ideas and offer new opportunities to students. I hope our students find that passion in themselves and make that a contagious environment. We've had graduates who want to teach, and I think that's a great compliment when you inspire the next generation to come back," Wagner said.

"NSU has given so much, not just personally to me, but to my profession," Wagner added.

"I just wanted to give back somehow. Whether or not the gifts I've made inspire others to contribute student scholarships or support a new lab, the journey to give back was a personal one for me and my family."

To discuss how you can work with University Advancement to support a programmatic vision or student initiative, as Wagner has, please contact Shannon Brown Wayte at (954) 529-6776 or [shannon.wayte@nova.edu](mailto:shannon.wayte@nova.edu). □

*Shannon Brown Wayte is executive director of advancement.*

# ON THE RISE

## Anesthesiologist Assistant Program Adds New Site

BY NATHAN WEIRICH, M.H.Sc., CAA

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) entered the anesthesiologist assistant (AA) profession in 2006 by opening the inaugural AA program in Florida at its Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus. The inaugural class helped propel the AA profession forward by becoming one of the largest AA classes to ever graduate from a program and represented NSU and the profession at the highest level.

The other AA programs in the country quickly took notice and began to emulate NSU's program success by updating their own facilities and curricula. In many ways, you can say NSU is responsible for much of the national growth of the AA profession by leading the way in innovative curriculum delivery, high-fidelity simulation, and overall expansion of the profession.

Soon after the Fort Lauderdale program's initial success, NSU pushed the AA profession forward again when it opened two more anesthesiologist assistant programs in Florida—Tampa Bay in 2009 then Jacksonville in 2020. The latest progress for the AA profession is the addition of a fourth NSU AA program in Denver, Colorado, which matriculated its first class in January 2022.

This is NSU's first out-of-state AA program, but hopefully not the last. With the Denver program, NSU will be able to add another 35 anesthesiologist assistant students a year and will become the leader in AA education, graduating roughly 40 percent of all the AAs in the United States—bringing the number of AAs graduating from NSU each year to roughly 140.

The new program is actually in Centennial, Colorado, a suburb of the greater Denver area. The facility, with

two cutting-edge mock operating rooms and high-fidelity simulators in each, is roughly 16,000 square feet. It has easy access to major highways and the Denver International Airport.

NSU's Denver program is led by Robert Wagner, D.H.Sc., M.M.Sc., RRT, CAA, associate dean and chair of the Department of Anesthesia. Jason Kotun, M.H.Sc., CAA, one of NSU's proud alumni from the Tampa Bay AA program, serves as program director, while influential anesthesiologist Michael Hurley, M.D., is the medical director.

The trio's leadership and direction, along with a strong supporting group of anesthesiologists and anesthesiologist assistants, will help ensure that the sky is the limit for this program. They will be the standard-bearers for NSU's anesthesiologist assistant programs out west by helping to fill a void of quality anesthesia providers in the area caused by the pandemic and rapid population growth.

There is an old Chinese proverb that states, "Don't be afraid of growing slowly; be afraid of standing still." With NSU leading the way in anesthesiologist assistant education, our profession has seen the most rapid growth and expansion in our history during the past 15 years.

We still have much to do and many states to open in to reach our goal of practicing in all 50 states. The faculty members of NSU's Department of Anesthesia will not look back on these last 15 years as the "golden years," but as the start of the acceleration of our profession for many years to come. □

*Nathan Weirich is an assistant professor in the Department of Anesthesia—Tampa Bay.*





*Left: NSU's Colorado Campus*

*Below: From left: Jermaine Leclerc, M.H.Sc., CAA, program director of the anesthesiologist assistant program at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus and assistant professor, watches students prepare for simulation finals in the mock operating rooms.*







*Kofsky participates in the Human Conditions and Occupations II course and strives to understand the impacts of a stroke.*



# Special Interest Internship



Deborah Kofsky, a class of 2023 Doctor of Occupational Therapy (O.T.D.) student at Nova Southeastern University's (NSU's) Tampa Bay Regional Campus, was appointed as a student intern with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Rehabilitation and Disability Special Interest Section (RDSIS).

This prestigious appointment recognizes and provides opportunities for students eager to become leaders and change agents in the field of occupational therapy. The AOTA Special Interest Section (SIS) student intern collaborative focuses on building clinical reasoning, advocacy, leadership, and communication skills by interacting and educating about occupational therapy's distinct value.

Student interns are chosen through an application process. Once accepted, they are assigned to one of nine AOTA sections covering rehabilitation and disability, academic education, developmental disabilities, mental health, work and industry, children and youth, productive aging, home and community health, and sensory integration and processing.

During the yearlong internship, students participate in monthly,

virtual meetings and engage with members of the SIS committees on various projects designed to benefit the profession, as well as recipients of occupational therapy services.

Kofsky is an active student member of the Florida Occupational Therapy Association (FOTA) and has served as the Legislative Oversight Committee lead in the FOTA Government Affairs section since January 2021. In this role, she contributes to state-specific initiatives to advocate for improved legislation regarding occupational therapy services and requirements. She also takes an active leadership role in the NSU O.T.D. program, serving as the class representative for her class of 2023 cohort and as treasurer of the Professional Spanish for Occupational Therapists club.

She is recognized among students and faculty and staff members as a problem-solver and strong advocate for those served by occupational therapy and for the occupational therapy profession. In addition to receiving recognition for her role as a leader and advocate through the appointment with the AOTA RDSIS, Kofsky is a recipient of the NSU Chancellor's Scholarship.

Kofsky was also chosen to be an Area Health Education Center scholar in December 2020. The scholar program focuses on opportunities to improve care in medically underserved communities and to work in interprofessional teams. The program involves a combination of requirements,

including didactic coursework and experiential hours.

She entered NSU's O.T.D. program in 2020, after working for more than 10 years in hospitality and communications, where she gained extensive experience in management and sales. Her interest in pursuing a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree began when she observed the benefits of occupational therapy with her grandfather after he sustained a shoulder injury.

The occupational therapists working with her grandfather helped him learn how to accomplish everyday tasks. The focus on occupation, looking at each patient holistically and developing unique goals that serve each person, spoke to Kofsky, who resides in Altamonte Springs, Florida, with her husband.

After spending a few years exploring other health care career options, Kofsky realized occupational therapy was a perfect fit. Her dedication to serving her community, problem-solving skills, creativity, and leadership qualities all make her an excellent O.T.D. student, as well as an ideal candidate for the AOTA RDSIS internship appointment. She looks forward to translating her skills into a rewarding career in health care, with an interest in working in neurorehabilitation after she earns her O.T.D. degree. □

*Christina Kane is an assistant professor and doctoral capstone coordinator in the Department of Occupational Therapy—Tampa Bay.*

## O.T.D. Student Earns Prestigious Placement

BY CHRISTINA KANE, ED.D., M.S., OTR/L



*Physical therapy students from the Tampa Bay Regional Campus practice simulation on a task-trainer foot.*

# VIRTUAL REALITY

## UNDERSTANDING SIMULATION-BASED LEARNING

BY JEFFREY JURKAS, M.B.A.

The art of simulation-based learning as an educational concept was adopted by the Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences (PCHCS) to provide students with the NSU edge. Originally housed within the physician assistant program, the simulation program was integrated into the Office of Professional Development and Education in 2018 to extend its reach across all campuses and programs. The program strives to be a leader in teaching, research, innovation, and service learning of simulation, as well as the use of simulation for allied health profession education.

### WHAT IS SIMULATION, EXACTLY?

“Simulation refers to the artificial representation of a real-world process with enough realism to achieve a particular goal,” said Melissa Morris, M.S.N., R.N., CPN, CHSE, director of simulation and interactive technology. “The aim is to facilitate learning through emerging reflection feedback and practice without the risk associated with a real-life experience.”

Simulation as an educational tool is one that is malleable and can be implemented through different modalities. These methods can be simple or complex.



“Simulation can be something as straightforward as a Word document, case study, or board game,” Morris explained. “It can also be more sophisticated, such as a 3-D virtual space where you are walking around in first-person view while completing health care tasks. Then, it can be more focused to help learn a specific skill. Many simulations use a task trainer, which is a simulated body part. An example would be a prosthetic arm to practice IV placement.”

### **SIMULATION ACROSS THE COLLEGE**

Within the PCHCS, each allied health program can tailor simulation to meet its own educational needs for patient safety and best patient outcomes. In health care education, simulation is used to prepare prelicensure health professions students to be confident and competent health care providers. Each program uses different modalities to enhance the student experience.

“Our students can practice their skills through not only different types of equipment, but also in a fully

functioning space,” said Alyssa Needleman, Ph.D., clinical director and professor, who provides her experience with simulation in the audiology program. “The fun thing about our laboratory space is that it is set up as a replica identical to our patient hearing examination, vestibular, and electrophysiologic rooms in clinic. Students can work with simulated participants and standardized patients in that simulated clinical environment.”

Needleman added that, “As the students progress into the patient-clinical environment, we, as faculty members, can watch the students remotely and help them reflect on their clinical experiences. There are cameras in each patient room through which we can follow with the students from down the hall, providing the students with independence, while still keeping close enough to ensure the students’ and patients’ safety.”

For Morris, the key learning occurs during the debriefing phase of the simulation activity. This is where students can reflect on their actions, both positive and



*Evalena Behr, B.A., fourth-year audiology student, performs a hearing evaluation in a sound-treated test room as her peer Nicole Boullaine, B.S., acts as a simulated participant.*



*Stephen Andreades, D.H.Sc., PA-C, director of the Physician Assistant—Fort Lauderdale program, debriefs with students on a clinical simulation.*

**“We want to validate that the students care about their progress and have a desire to learn and improve. We try to focus on what the student did well, and then, together, we explore what led the student to that decision.”**

**—Melissa Morris**

challenging. They can repeat what went well, understand what was challenging to learn, and then improve their practice. “Our students are here to learn; I want to create a safe space for them to explore their actions and practice to their potential,” she said.

With the diversity of health-based programs within the college, needs may differ in the delivery of simulation-based learning, but debriefing remains consistent. “Debriefing is so important and so difficult to do safely. We want to avoid just giving feedback, so we dive deeper and reflect with them,” Morris explained.

“We want to validate that the students care about their progress and have a desire to learn and improve,” she added. “We try to focus on what the student did well, and then, together, we explore what led the student to that decision.”



## NEXT STEPS

Simulation continues to grow with each additional program the college offers. With the variety of different health-related degrees, it sets the stage for the PCHCS to be impactful in the simulation community. “My vision is that the PCHCS simulation program becomes a recognized and accredited simulation multisite center,” Morris said.

“One of things I was asked to do, and I am still doing, is to continue to align best practices and standards of simulation across our college,” she continued. “There are health care simulation standards of best practice as defined by the International Nursing Association for clinical simulation and learning. These include topics such as professional development, pre-debriefing, simulation design, facilitation, debriefing, operations, outcomes and objectives, professional integrity, enhanced IPE, and evaluation of learning and performance.”

According to Morris, there are also “standards that need to be met for accreditation as defined by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. These are categorized as core and teaching/education,” she said.

“The core standards include things such as security, facilities, technology, simulation modalities, and human resources, while the teaching/education standards include learning activities, qualified educators, curriculum design, learning environment, ongoing curriculum feedback and improvement, and education credit,” Morris explained. “There are a few different organizations that play a hand in the advancement of simulation, but they work together. However, there is a lot that we, as a college, will need to develop to reach that accreditation.”

She also mentioned the impact the simulation program is making in extracurricular programming. In partnership with the Multicultural Affairs Committee, simulation is recognized as an impact area. This impact area has made video simulations for topics such as proper pronouns. Another simulation that is being developed will focus on microaggressions.

Morris has also leveraged her health care theater course. The undergraduate students enrolled in the course act as simulated participants in different projects. Other areas of involvement include interprofessional education, human trafficking, and telehealth. □

*Jeffrey Jurkas is the director of admissions and outreach and the HPD background investigation chair.*



## MEET THE DIRECTOR

**As the director of simulation and interactive technology, Melissa Morris, M.S.N., R.N., CPN, CHSE, supports students and faculty and staff members with the utilization of simulation resources across the college. She works with the faculty members to help assess and align best practices, while meeting program and accreditation standards for simulation.**

**Morris, who joined the PCHCS family in April 2018, has a master's degree in nursing with a concentration in education and is certified in pediatrics and as a health care simulation educator. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in Health Professions Education with a concentration in simulation. Prior to joining the PCHCS faculty, Morris served as the clinical manager of human patient simulation and skills for NSU's Ron and Kathy Assaf College of Nursing.**

**Additionally, Morris possesses simulation experience that stretches back more than a decade to her graduate studies as an NSU alumna. “I fell in love with simulation when I was studying,” she said. “When I started, I saw an ad looking for a teaching assistant for the skills lab, which I answered. I walked into the skills lab, and it's been a love affair ever since.”**

# ON YOUR MARK

## ***Preseason Screenings Benefit NSU Student-Athletes and Trainers***

As the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II athletic teams began the return to their competitive seasons in fall 2021, faculty members and students from the Department of Health and Human Performance played a critical role in the evaluation and assessment of preparticipation exams for student-athletes.

Exercise and Sport Science faculty members Monique Mokha, Ph.D., ATC, CSCS, professor, and Pradeep Vanguri, Ph.D., LAT, ATC, associate professor, worked with Amanda Leon, B.S., NSU athletic trainer, on the Functional Movement Screenings (FMS) for multiple teams. All three of these individuals received training and earned their FMS certification to utilize the screening tool for patients.

Each participant performs various movement patterns through the screening, where the evaluator selects a score based on the efficiency of each pattern. “FMS is a vital part of injury prevention when it comes to screening our athletes. It allows us to identify abnormal movement patterns and imbalances,” Leon said.

“With this information, we can collaborate with strength and conditioning to make improvements in the weight room and treat injuries,” she added.

“Additionally, our relationship with the Exercise and Sport Science program supports our collaboration for research projects and includes students in this real-world experience.”

NSU student-athletes were scheduled on multiple days to meet at the NSU EXSC lab to participate in the FMS screenings. Mokha recruited multiple Exercise and Sport Science students to participate and assist in the evaluation of the FMS screening.

“This collaboration keeps my functional-testing skills sharp, provides a living lab for our student assistants, and benefits the student-athletes,” Mokha explained. “Results are used by the clinicians to construct injury prevention programs. It’s a win-win for everyone involved.”

Because Mokha actively encourages Exercise and Sport Science students to complete the FMS certification, class of 2021 alumna Emily Udvardy, B.S., received her certification and was able to assist with the testing.

A bonus benefit of the collaboration is that the NSU athletic coaches and student-athletes utilize screening information to help prevent injury during the season, which helps reduce the amount of time lost from competition. The data collected from these assessments will also be used for research on injury prevention. □





*Above: Emily Udvardy*

*Right: Monique Mokha evaluates a patient on the in-line lunge.*

*Below: Amanda Leon evaluates a patient on the hurdle step.*



## BEYOND Diversity

### NEW STUDENT TASK FORCE CONSIDERS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION.

BY KEIBA SHAW, D.P.T., ED.D., M.A., PT

The focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has reached a proportion rivaling that of the civil rights era. As society becomes more diverse, it is important for the physical therapy profession to reflect those differences. Increasing the diversity of the profession and fostering growth in cultural competence is a mission shared by both Nova Southeastern University's (NSU's) Fort Lauderdale and Tampa Bay Professional Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) programs.

The D.P.T. programs' mission statement asserts, in part, that "the programs embrace diversity; facilitate accessibility to physical therapist education through innovative, instructional delivery models; and promote intellectual curiosity, reflection, and lifelong learning skills." Both programs support the premise that having diverse backgrounds helps physical therapy providers better connect with a diverse patient population by offering person-centered care that is sensitive to the patient's individual beliefs and needs. The greater the diversity, the deeper and richer the understanding of the needs of a varied population.

In February 2021, in response to growing concerns from the physical therapy student body, a diversity, equity, and inclusion task force was created to examine NSU's Professional D.P.T. Tampa Bay program's student life, curriculum, policies, mission, and vision statements from a fresh perspective.

The hope was to create an open environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and comfortable for students and faculty and staff members involved at NSU—especially within the Tampa Bay D.P.T. program. Students under the guidance of faculty facilitators Robin Galley, D.P.T., PT, OCS, CLWT, associate professor, and myself were tasked with providing honest feedback and creative solutions to identified issues in an environment that was safe, respectful, and nonjudgmental.

**"Through a group like this, I think we are utilizing direct relationships with one another, in a safe space, to educate and relate to each other, with the intention of dispelling ignorance and fear."**

—Mary (Casey) Costello

The task force consists of representatives meeting from all four D.P.T. cohorts—class of 2025 B.S. students Alexis Jackson and Seles Powell and M.S. student Melissa Holsinger, class of 2024 B.S. students Marviana Mackey and Charles (Ty) Nichols, and class of 2023 B.S. student Sarah Repasky.

"Part of patient-centered care is considering and respecting the many ways people can identify themselves, as well as how individuals fit into society at large," Repasky said. "This task force and the initiatives we create can help to ensure that these topics are brought to the forefront, becoming an important part of every patient interaction."

Inside this venue, students were able to respectfully consider and voice their perspectives on the cultural climate within the program. From this dialogue, issues related to the inclusion and delivery of diverse content in the curriculum were made apparent and reflected the paucity of information delivered on health disparities and inequities.

The use of diverse training models and the inclusion of culturally competent patient-care language were also identified as important areas of training for students. Task force members recognized the





*Top row, left to right: Keiba Shaw, Carlo Morante, Seles Powell, Alexis Jackson, Robin Galley  
Bottom row, left to right: Charles (Ty) Nichols, Melissa Holsinger, Mary (Casey) Costello, Marvianna Mackey, Sarah Repasky*

importance of diversity and equity concerns and recommended that all students and faculty and staff members undergo training to bring to the forefront an awareness of implicit/unconscious biases, stereotypes, sense of identity, and the factors that contribute to providing health care to diverse populations.

To meet this need, Carlo Morante, M.Ed., a diversity, equity, and inclusion trainer and leadership and sustainability coordinator for residential life at UCLA, was invited to conduct a 90-minute informational training session to promote learning and understanding and encourage dialogue and self-reflection from a broad cultural viewpoint. In his presentation, Morante highlighted the need for people to embrace a shared vocabulary from which meaningful conversation can ensue.

He also asserted that awareness of the many identities that people may claim as their own includes, but is not limited to, age, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, and religious and spiritual affiliation. When acknowledged, this awareness can increase the quality of care health care providers offer.

Students and licensed health care providers alike benefit from knowing that the multiplicity of identities, along with the knowledge of social determinants of health, can help health care providers understand their patients from a holistic lens. Knowing this

enables them to provide care that is individualized and more valued by their patients.

The importance of the task force was summarized by Mary (Casey) Costello, D.P.T., a 2021 graduate and former member of the college's task force. "While we are tasked with addressing inequity and lack of diversity in general, racial inequities are culturally entrenched in American culture, so solutions from this task force could be applicable in our communities outside of the university," she said. "Through a group like this, I think we are utilizing direct relationships with one another, in a safe space, to educate and relate to each other, with the intention of dispelling ignorance and fear."

When queried as to why she wanted to join the task force, first-year D.P.T. student Alexis Jackson said, "As a believer in social justice, being a member of the task force would give me the opportunity to promote diversity and equality within NSU's D.P.T. program."

Participation in the task force makes it clear that students and faculty members in the D.P.T. program are committed to promoting a culturally diverse and equitable atmosphere where everyone feels welcomed and included. □

*Keiba Shaw is a professor in the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program—Tampa Bay.*



*Patricia Vargas provides instructions about the technical performance of carotid duplex evaluations.*

## Joining Forces

Interprofessional Collaborative Leverages Strength of NSU's HPD

BY PATRICIA VARGAS, D.H.SC., RVT, AND DEBORAH MENDELSON, D.H.SC., RDMS, RDCS, RVT

Point-of-care ultrasonography (POCUS) is the current trend in medical students' education and has been added to the curriculum in several medical schools across the United States and Canada. In this training, physicians and health care professionals provide the lectures and hands-on clinical skills necessary to perform and interpret ultrasound images.

Most medical schools face some hurdles in training their students in POCUS. For instance, Harvard Medical School added it to a pilot program in ultrasound training, and although the pilot program has accomplished its objectives, Harvard faced multiple obstacles, such as equipment availability to meet the number of students

enrolled and available trained faculty members, as well as lack of time required to organize the sessions. Furthermore, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York found that one of its main constraints was the limited number of experienced faculty members to teach ultrasound.

The Nova Southeastern University Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine (NSU MD), which will graduate its first class in 2022, has the added benefit of having an accredited medical sonography (MS) program in place. The logistics of both programs created a strong impetus that led to a collaboration between the programs and is unique in comparison to medical

curricula of other schools, as there is an interprofessional relationship between departments. Combining resources helps alleviate most of the financial burden, as the experienced faculty members and ultrasound equipment necessary to implement this training are readily available.

First-year NSU MD students are being provided with lectures and training sessions from faculty members and students from the MS program, while sonography students are being introduced to the medical students' training sessions using simulated scenarios with standardized patients. Because they are supervised by faculty members, they can teach sonographic technical skills and



image identification to their counterparts. In turn, medical students share experiences with patient diagnosis and treatment decisions.

In addition, the MS program is providing access to the ultrasound equipment with faculty participation in supporting specialty clubs hosted by the medical students. They are given the opportunity to practice scanning prior to the interest group sessions, such as in emergency medicine and pediatrics. Such activities are creating an open communication of treatment options and outcomes.

Initially, the medical students are provided with an introductory lecture aimed at ultrasound physics, with the objective to teach image acquisition and optimization. The second phase incorporates simulation sessions that correlate with course material the medical students are learning throughout the different phases of their curriculum. The ultrasound portion was integrated into the sessions by simulating challenges in obtaining patient histories, as well as developing a working hypothesis regarding a diagnosis through the patient's symptoms, resulting in a treatment plan.

Ultrasound played a role by either confirming or ruling out a diagnosis and allowed the medical students to scan the standardized patient. The goal is to expand the medical student's knowledge and ultrasound skill acquisition as it relates to the expanding role in practicing medicine.

The sonography students have achieved a better understanding of their role in being part of a team, with the knowledge that POCUS is an adjunct to the bedside exam that cannot replace an official diagnostic ultrasound study. Students from both professions are gaining a better understanding for the part each plays independently and together in improving the quality of health care.

For the past eight years, faculty members from the MS program

benefit both professions. Physician training in ultrasound is minimal in comparison to the in-depth ultrasound training offered to sonography students in accredited programs. The aim is to demonstrate the need for similar training from skilled sonography educators in designing an ultrasound curriculum for medical students. A secondary goal is to create a model for future ultrasound training within a medical school curriculum.



*Deborah Mendelsohn assists two medical sonography students during a simulation session.*

located at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus have been invited to provide an annual lecture with a correlating lab session to the physician assistant (PA) program in Jacksonville, Florida, as well as to the PA program in Fort Lauderdale. Now, the POCUS trainings have expanded to the NSU MD program, and it is expected to continue expanding to other NSU programs.

The trajectory of the collaboration is to standardize ultrasound training in medical schools that

Realizing the vision could lead to well-trained sonographers becoming medical school educators, expanding their career options. Medical professionals will obtain the necessary skills to perform a bedside ultrasound in the same way they use a stethoscope during physical examinations. □

*Patricia Vargas and Deborah Mendelsohn are both associate professors and clinical coordinators in the Department of Health Science Medical Sonography—Fort Lauderdale.*

# PAs in Poland

## PA Faculty Members Facilitate Growth of PA Profession Abroad

BY CHARLENE COUILLARD, M.P.A.S., PA-C

When Sylwia Bareja, M.M.S., PA-C, was 21, she came to the United States for a six-month vacation from Poland to visit her uncle. Her parents thought it would be a good experience for her to explore what the country had to offer for higher education. Little did they know that 20 years later, their daughter would play an instrumental role in establishing the physician assistant profession in her motherland.

Bareja knew she needed to return to the United States after visiting her uncle and eventually settled in Fort Myers, Florida, where she began taking prerequisite courses at Edison College, now called Florida Southwestern State College. It was there that she learned about the physician assistant (PA) profession and became interested in a career in medicine.

In 2005, only a few years after being introduced to the English language, she was accepted into the inaugural class of Nova Southeastern University's (NSU's) Fort Myers Physician Assistant program. She would go on to graduate in 2007 with a Master of Medical Science degree and practice in the emergency room.

Over the next nine years, she gained skills and experience, but was left feeling stagnant and wanting more from her career. She had always enjoyed precepting students in the emergency room; however, this still did not fill the void to do more for her profession.

Fortunately, she ran into her former professor at a convenience store, and this chance meeting opened a new door to becoming a faculty member at NSU's Fort Myers Campus.

During her time as an NSU faculty member, Bareja made frequent trips to Poland, which inspired her to consider how her native country would navigate an impending provider shortage. Consequently, she began to research the topic extensively.

According to Bareja, Poland once had similar professionals called *feldshers* that provided care alongside physicians in the battlefields and to the general population. The popularity of the feldsher profession increased in the 1950s. However, by the 1980s, due to a rise in physician training, the demand for feldshers declined rapidly, and the training programs were closed.<sup>1</sup> Armed with this history, Bareja's interest in bringing the PA profession to Poland continued as she sought more information about how she could make a difference.

Meanwhile, halfway across the globe, Marian Zembala, M.D., Ph.D., FESC, a Polish cardiothoracic surgeon and professor, had also been contemplating how to fill the provider shortage in Poland. He was piloting a training program for PAs in his hospital as director of the Silesian Center for Heart Disease. He began in 2009



with five candidates who were previously trained as emergency medical technicians, proposing an 18-month didactic education for them, followed by clinical training, which would focus on surgical and intensive care patients.

Over several years, and following successful integration of three of these PAs into the Silesian Center medical team, it was time to bring this PA education model to the government and Ministry of Health, but he needed help.

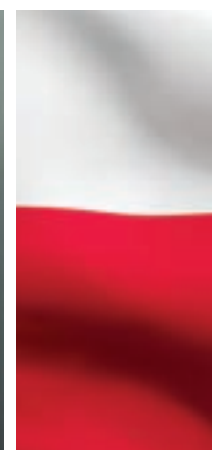
One night in October 2017, around 1:30 in the morning, Bareja was inspired to email Zembala, as she had been following his journey and had read a publication about his pilot PA program. Due to Bareja's email, Zembala's mission to expand PA education in Poland was rekindled, and they began to exchange emails about what other physician assistant specialties and their foundational education would look like in Poland.

They discussed timelines, curriculum, responsibilities, and supervision. These exchanges about a PA program in Poland turned into a reality when Zembala organized a group of physicians, nurses, deans of universities, and hospital CEOs to meet at a symposium with the Polish Ministry of Health to discuss the next steps to make the dream a reality.

Bareja recalled that being part of this process and describing how PAs are utilized in the United States to the members of the symposium was very exciting. The consensus that emerged from the symposium attendees was that PAs could be part of the solution to address the physician shortage in Poland. The next steps involved legislative approval and getting the commitment from the universities to continue the pilot program on a larger scale.<sup>1</sup>

Amid this historic process, Bareja wrote an article for the *Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants* to herald the progress of PAs in Poland. This was noticed by PA faculty members and students alike, so she made it possible for two PA students to assist her in presenting her research at the Physician Assistant Education Association Education Forum in October 2020. The students were also recognized for their contributions, and now PA educators nationally were made aware of Bareja's and Zembala's efforts.

Finally, in July 2021, Bareja received word that the physician assistant profession was approved by the



Top: PA students Therese Dessoie, M.M.S., PA-C, and Karson Hoagland, M.M.S., PA-C, display the poster they presented at the American Academy of Physician Assistants. (PHOTO CREDIT: CHARLENE COUILLARD)

Bottom: From left, Marcin Chrapek, B.S., pilot program alumni; Karol Fron, M.P.H., pilot program alumni; Sylwia Bareja; and Jacek Waszak, M.P.H., pilot program alumni, at the June 2019 symposium on creating the PA profession in Poland. (PHOTO CREDIT: JAAPA)

Polish Ministry of Health and would continue to train PAs as integral parts of the medical team. The work had paid off and a new chapter had begun. Bareja visited Poland again in September 2021 and returned with another idea—to begin an exchange program between her colleagues in Poland and the United States.

Considering her past success, this is not the last we will hear from Bareja and her mission to support the PA profession globally. □

*Charlene Couillard is the program director in the Department of Physician Assistant—Fort Myers.*

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# Resilient Residency

BLENDING FACULTY RESIDENCY PERSISTS THROUGH PANDEMIC

BY MELISSA MORAN TOVIN, PH.D., M.A., PT

There is a growing demand for health care workers nationally, and some professions are seeing a rapid growth in the number of new programs to fill this need. Despite this, there is a troubling shortage of qualified individuals to fill faculty positions in allied health professions academic programs.

Many factors contribute to this shortage, including the growth of new academic programs, retirement among Baby Boomers, disparities in salaries between academic and clinical/industry settings, and a low level of interest in academic careers among recent graduates.

Of further concern, those who are interested in academic teaching face challenges in making a successful transition from the clinic to academia. The myriad obstacles can dissuade even the brightest, most passionate, and skilled clinicians from pursuing a career in academia. Institutions search for individuals who have earned a terminal degree or



Core faculty for the PT residency program, left to right: Tovin, professor and director of residency programs and faculty residency mentor; Kathleen Rockefeller, Sc.D., M.P.H., PT, professor, faculty residency program coordinator, and mentor; and Heather Hettrick, Ph.D., PT, professor, faculty residency mentor.

specialty certification; have some formal training and mentorship related to effective teaching; have experience with learning platforms and instructional technology; and possess the knowledge and understanding of academic culture, organization, governance, and higher education laws necessary to hit the ground running.

In 2018, the NSU Department of Physical Therapy developed a faculty residency program to respond to the growing demand. Faculty residency education provides focused development

in four competency areas for successful transition to academia: teaching, scholarship, service, and governance.

The NSU program is one of only two faculty residency programs fully accredited by the American Physical Therapy Association. Moreover, NSU's program is unique, as it utilizes a blended educational model that incorporates a variety of online learning strategies combined with face-to-face experiences and mentoring. In retrospect, the blended format proved to be critical to the



program's sustainability throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fact, the blended design propelled the program to the forefront of residency education in the field of physical therapy and provided a model for preparing faculty members to be teachers, leaders, and scholars during the uncertainties of a pandemic and beyond, as health professions education transforms to a new normal of remote and blended learning.

collegial discussions alongside faculty members.

CAPE courses are supplemented by a flagship residency course series to steer and manage their progress in mentoring and practice hours (see figure). Lastly, residents gain understanding and experience with less tangible aspects of being an academician, such as institutional culture, teamwork, communication, leadership, and finding a life-work balance. The program is cross-campus, and residents

SharkMedia recordings, screen sharing, and breakout room activities. They observed faculty members guide and counsel students who struggled with social isolation, remote learning, and failed Wi-Fi connections.

They attended virtual graduations and met families and pets. And they experienced the challenge of maintaining life-work balance as Zoom meetings and work tasks crept into our lunch hours, evenings, and weekends.

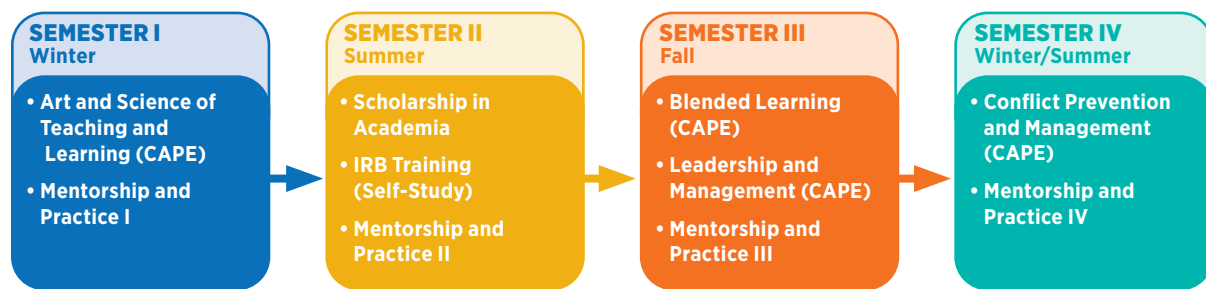


Figure: Faculty Residency Curriculum Flow

The curriculum and blended delivery model were initially designed to address two issues:

- The growing options provided by emerging technology and communication platforms and consumer demand for convenience and cost containment.
- The need of some applicants to maintain current employment and residence while enrolled in a faculty residency program. (The residents gain experience and content knowledge in the four pillars, for a total of 1,800 hours over 18 months.)

The didactic curriculum is entirely online and was shaped around the Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences' Center for Academic and Professional Excellence (CAPE). By completing the online CAPE courses, residents engage in didactic coursework and

experience high-quality education and diverse delivery models offered through PT programs located at the Tampa Bay Regional and Fort Lauderdale/Davie campuses.

As COVID-19 took hold of our communities of learning, and restrictions in on-campus activities were put in place, the blended design allowed the faculty residency to continue without skipping a beat. Moreover, faculty residents were able to witness the flexibility, instructional design tools, and skills needed to flip classrooms and engage students through video-conferencing technologies.

They witnessed how faculty members in a traditional, campus-based PT program were able to quickly transform lectures and labs into Zoom sessions,

As we continue to find our way through the uncertainties of this evolving pandemic, we can see the writing on the wall—remote and blended learning are here to stay. Even the most traditional of programs will continue to incorporate distance technologies.

The blended approach to faculty residency education prepares residents for a career in this new normal. So far, four faculty residents have successfully graduated, and they are all now employed at academic institutions. Collectively, these graduates express the value of the residency in building a strong foundation for a career in academia. □

*Melissa Moran Tovin is the director of postprofessional clinical advancement, a professor, and a board-certified clinical specialist in pediatric physical therapy in the Department of Physical Therapy—Fort Lauderdale.*



PA students wear Project SEED participant shirts from various years.

# Project SEED

## A TRADITION CONTINUES

BY CHARLENE COUILLARD, M.P.A.S., PA-C

In 2010, the NSU Physician Assistant (PA) program began a community outreach project called Project SEED (Serving Everyone Embracing Diversity). Project SEED was created to help fill a health care gap and fulfill the mission of the PA program. The intent was to provide health screening services to the rural and underserved area of Immokalee, Florida, where 43 percent of the population lived below the poverty line.

This community includes migrant and seasonal farmworkers and continues to struggle with

access to primary care, patient education, and other health services. Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Immokalee contributed and hosted the event for many years, except when its building was damaged due to Hurricane Irma in 2017.

During the past decade, the event has looked a bit different depending on support from partnering organizations. Some years, the students were able to provide dental screenings and free mammograms to the community. However, the foundation of the event focused on

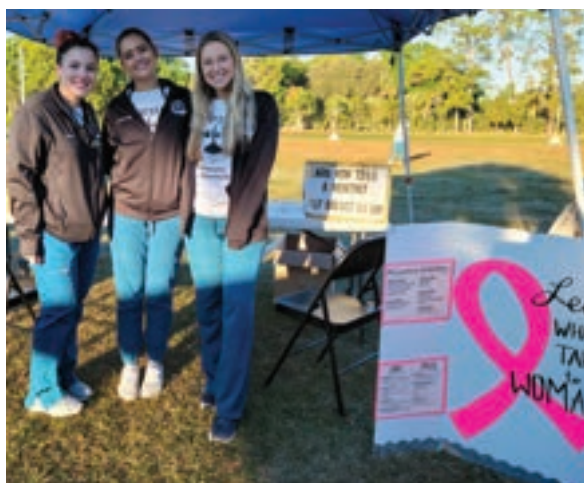
providing glucose screenings, blood pressure checks, and vision screenings.

Other patient education topics offered throughout the years have included sun safety, dental care, nutrition, and sexually transmitted infection prevention information. When the participants visit each table, they are entered into a drawing to win prizes, such as bicycles, computers, household items, toys, and other necessities.

Each year, the student director of external affairs and his or her classmates organize all aspects of the event beginning several months

*(continued on page 26)*





*CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:*

*PA and nursing students work together to screen for diabetes.*

*From left, Isabel Francisco-Ramirez, B.S., nursing student, and Audriana Adams, first-year PA student, prepare to raffle bicycles.*

*From left, first-year PA students Jenna Guerin, B.S.; Alexa Hryniewicki, B.S.; and Olivia Pellissier, B.S., educate participants on how to perform a self-breast exam.*

*PA students perform blood pressure screenings.*





Project SEED group photo

in advance. This involves fund-raising, purchasing supplies and giveaways, arranging for each station of the health event to be prepped and manned by students, and designing the event T-shirts to be worn that day.

This is quite a feat, since these students also have a heavy burden of PA school curriculum to manage. Additionally, the director must assemble a team of students to work with after only knowing each student for a few months. The PA students also embrace dozens of NSU nursing students to participate in the event, making it an ideal interprofessional opportunity.

Kevin Hunter, M.Ed., former NSU campus director, would connect the student director with the church to begin organizing the events. “I witnessed these young PA chairs develop and implement ‘out-of-the-classroom’ organization skills to complete Project SEED,” he recalled. “The organizational skills learned through Project SEED, coupled with the academic knowledge taught in the classroom, makes these Project SEED chairs

the most accomplished graduates of the PA program.”

Stephanie Anderson, M.D., J.D., a faculty member who has attended every Project SEED event since its inception, has seen the event grow. “In the beginning, students would get a few gently used bikes from thrift stores and raffle them to appreciative adults,” she explained. “As the years progressed, they applied for, and were awarded, grants that helped pay for dozens of new bicycles to auction for even the youngest members of the families.”

Another memorable highlight was when the NSU Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine students from the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus joined the efforts, which demonstrated the commitment of these future physician assistants to the M.D. collaborative teams.

Audriana Adams, B.S., a first-year PA student who chaired the event, found organizing the event to be a great reminder of why she chose the profession. “As future physician assistants, we must recognize our duty to educate

and care for those who may lack the resources and knowledge to live a healthy, sustainable lifestyle,” she said. “We are committed to filling the gaps in our health care system by meeting our community members where they are and by listening to their ideas and opinions on how we can continue to support them. Project SEED is one way we continue to provide necessary resources for our community.”

I am amazed by what the students accomplish each year, despite challenges such as dealing with weather and language barriers; hauling tables, chairs, and tents; and having difficulty finding funds. We have many students who we interview during the application process, and the continued success of this event is the determining factor that helps them decide to become part of the NSU family. It truly represents and embodies our program’s mission to serve rural and underserved communities. □

*Charlene Couillard is the program director in the Department of Physician Assistant—Fort Myers.*



# Sexually Speaking

## PCHCS PROFESSOR LANDS WEEKLY TV SHOW

Lia Jiannine, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Health and Human Performance Exercise and Sport Science program, landed her own TV show called *SEX TALK with Dr. Lia* on the South Florida PBS Health Channel, which can be seen on channels WPBT2 and WXEL.

Jiannine began her academic studies in public health before transitioning to exercise and sport science. Her Ph.D. focused on the merging of public health and exercise physiology, and she gained a deeper understanding of sexual health while writing her dissertation “Sex-Positive Curricula: An Investigation of the Relationship Between Physical Fitness, Self-Concept, and Sexual Functioning.”

She was initially asked by PBS to film one episode of *Smartlife*, the Health Channel’s flagship show that features experts who discuss a variety of topics. It is a daily, fast-paced, and entertaining two-hour program that offers reliable and accurate health and wellness information. PBS invited Jiannine back to film five more episodes and then offered her a show of her own.

Each 30-minute episode of *SEX TALK* features short videos that dispel sex myths, examine the science of sex, and highlight different aspects of sexual health. Additionally, callers are given the opportunity to email or call in questions, which Jiannine answers on-air. Discussed topics have included Parkinson’s disease and sex, transitioning to a woman, benefits/drawbacks of circumcision, mismatched libidos, and treatments for erectile dysfunction. The program provides healthy guidelines for sexual behavior in an environment for self-fulfillment and healthy sexual expression.

“The benefits of sex are not discussed as often as the potential risks despite the plethora of research on the relationship between sexual function and positive health,” Jiannine explained. “Continuing to ignore the complexity of human sexual relations may alienate young adults, placing their health at great risk. However, if the benefits of sex and sexual pleasure are discussed, they may penetrate the longstanding barrier between adolescents and adults in discussions of sexuality.”



Jiannine, who consistently brings her exercise and sport science knowledge to the show and addresses exercise and physical fitness in every episode, tries to use sexual health as a motivational tool for exercise. “The emphasis of the relationship between physical fitness and sexual health might encourage people, especially those with sexual dysfunctions, to exercise for improvements in sexual arousal, sex drive, and sexual satisfaction, even if they were not persuaded by the currently established benefits of physical activity,” she said.

She is also concerned about the relationship between inactivity and sexual problems. “Sexual dysfunctions have a negative impact on an increasing number of individuals due to the rise of obesity and the lowered rates of physical activity,” Jiannine stated. “Lifestyle risk factors for erectile dysfunction are similar to the risk factors for life-threatening conditions, such as heart disease and stroke. As a result, sexual dysfunctions may be instrumental in the early detection of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.”

*Sex Talk with Dr. Lia* is featured on the PBS Health Channel on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:00 and 10:00 p.m., on WPBT2 on Wednesdays at 11:00 p.m., and WXEL on Sundays at 11:00 p.m. For additional information, visit [allhealthtv.com/television/#watch%20eo](http://allhealthtv.com/television/#watch%20eo). □



# Cognitive Changes

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEARING LOSS AND  
COGNITION IN ADULTS

BY KARAH GOTTSCHALK, AU.D., PH.D.



If you were asked to think about ways hearing loss may impact you, what comes to mind? Typical thoughts often stray to communication difficulties, such as not hearing someone during conversations or confusing what was said.

One can see examples of this in social media and in comics, where the wife is telling the husband something, and the husband responds with something completely different. Hearing loss does indeed impact communication—it is often the chief complaint of audiology patients—but there are other far-reaching effects.

Research trends over the past few decades have suggested that hearing loss can negatively impact an individual's quality of life, increase depression and anxiety, cause social withdrawal, and even lead to fatigue. Compellingly, newer research suggests that a negative relationship exists between hearing loss and cognitive functioning.

### HEARING LOSS DUE TO AGING

Hearing loss and cognitive changes due to the normal aging process can occur as early as the third or fourth decade of life. When comparing adults of the same age (some as young as 50 years) who had normal hearing and those with hearing loss, scientists have revealed that those with hearing loss experience nonnormative cognitive changes, or changes that are not due to the normal aging process. Individuals with hearing loss have lower cognitive functioning, higher incidence of all-cause dementia, and higher rates of cognitive decline than their peers without hearing loss.

In fact, as an individual's hearing loss increases, it is common to see even further cognitive decline. Although research has documented this relationship, there are still many unknowns that exist that hinder the full understanding of the complexity of the intersection. It is unknown if communication strategies, hearing aids, or even cochlear implants could assist in mitigating, or preventing, the negative impact hearing loss has on cognitive functioning.

### NOTICING COGNITIVE CHANGES

As audiologists, we spend a significant amount of face-to-face time with our patients. These interactions often center around communication, communication difficulties, and hearing loss, which allows for audiologists to play a crucial role in assisting physicians in the early diagnosis of nonnormative cognitive changes.

At the NSU Audiology Clinic, we complete cognitive screenings depending on a patient's response to questions or even their behavior during the appointment. While audiology focuses on communication and hearing difficulties, all health care professionals can complete screenings for hearing and cognitive issues.

Early diagnosis of cognitive changes and hearing loss often leads to better outcomes for patients and their families. A sensitive and specific screening can be as simple as asking individuals if they feel like they have hearing issues or even issues with memory or attentional tasks, or having them complete a hearing screening or pen-and-paper cognitive screening. If a health care professional does not feel comfortable completing screenings, there are training courses and other resources offered so that one may provide these services in his or her office.

### UP FOR DISCUSSION

While the relationship between hearing loss and cognition is not fully understood, research supports the idea that hearing loss negatively impacts overall cognitive function. As such, it would be advantageous for all health care professionals to discuss hearing care with their patients.

This can include protecting and monitoring hearing through audiologic evaluations or hearing screenings, wearing noise protection in the presence of loud noises, managing health issues such as diabetes and hypertension, and being mindful when using headphones and listening to music. □

*Karah Gottschalk is an assistant professor in the Department of Audiology—Fort Lauderdale.*



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SUPPORTING AUTISTIC PEOPLE  
AND THOSE WHO SERVE THEM

BY CAROLE ZANGARI, PH.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL





*Top left: NSU CARD staff members receive training on issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation from Dani Dominguez, M.Ed., equity and inclusion specialist from the YES Institute.*

*Top right: High school student Jose Roman, UM-NSU CARD constituent, receives the Outstanding Volunteer Award from Jennifer (Taylor) Feinstein, M.S.W., case manager.*

*Left: Luis Grana, M.S., satellite director, left, and Carole Zangari accept an award in recognition of 20 years of CARD at NSU.*

What do the following three situations have in common?

- Chase<sup>1</sup> and Isabel knew their third child was different from the first two but were a bit shocked when a childcare worker suggested that he should get evaluated for autism. A web search for “signs of autism” yielded more than 96 million results. Where to begin?
- When Mrs. Ben Joseph picked up her autistic daughter on the first day of school, she was prepared for a lot of things. Hearing the teacher say, “I don’t think this is going to work out” wasn’t one of them.
- Miguel is an excellent coder who gets so absorbed in his work that he sometimes forgets to eat. While his employers appreciate the quality of his work and have recognized him for exceptionally high productivity, Miguel is at risk of losing his job, because he is perceived as unfriendly, overly blunt, and resistant to feedback.

They all received support from autism professionals at Nova Southeastern University (NSU).

In the mid-1990s, Florida embarked on an ambitious journey that blended blue-sky thinking with practical realities. What would happen if all Floridians affected by autism had access to experts no matter where they lived? What would it look like if that support were available without a lengthy waiting period and at no charge? Since that time, Florida has been the nation’s only state with a university-based network of support through the Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD).

For 22 years, NSU has played an important role in this network. Our mission? To enhance the lives of individuals we serve by helping them become valued members of their communities. Together with our partners at the University of Miami (UM), the UM-NSU CARD program offers free support across community settings, including homes, childcare programs, schools, businesses, agencies, and organizations. UM-NSU CARD serves almost 14,000 families in Southeast Florida, with the NSU satellite supporting those in Broward County.

Community, a core value at NSU, is central to the mission of CARD. From our autistic neighbors and their families to schools, businesses, and community organizations, UM-NSU CARD provides support to those in need of guidance, resources, and information. On the following pages are some of their stories.

*(continued on page 32)*

## Dealing with an Initial Diagnosis

When Chase and Isabel's youngest child was first diagnosed with autism, they were overwhelmed. Recommendations from their neurologist conflicted with advice from school professionals and were at odds with what they learned from autistic self-advocates.

When they registered with UM-NSU CARD, they were assigned to a case manager who helped them navigate this new landscape and make thoughtful decisions that fit their family values. CARD also helped them identify service providers, such as speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists, who were covered on the family's insurance plan.

Chase connected with other fathers in the Dad's Group, and Isabel began attending a support group for families of children with behavior challenges. She also encouraged her own parents to join the Grupo de Apoyo Para los Abuelos to better understand autism and get support in developing a meaningful relationship with their grandson.

## Empowering Parents

Elliot Michaelson was terrified when his son Cayden stopped eating. No amount of negotiating, bribing, or disciplining made a difference, and hospitalization was on the horizon. UM-NSU CARD connected Michaelson with professionals who worked directly with Cayden and guided his family on what to do at home. A month later, an elated Michaelson reported that his son had just eaten a grilled cheese sandwich and was trying new foods almost every day.

Orit's dreams for her autistic daughter—having friends and doing well in school—were no different than the aspirations for her neurotypical children. But she was at a loss as to how to help her little girl communicate and learn to read and write. By participating in groups such as Language Links, Relating2Reading, and What's the Story with Lori, Orit has made significant progress on those goals.

## School Success

Rodrigo's family felt lost with all the paperwork and meetings that were part of his Individualized Educational Plan. Through a parent training series offered in English and Spanish, the Martinez family was able to better understand the process, engage with the school more actively, and become empowered advocates for their son. Now, they're helping other families do the same.

When Broward County Public Schools determined that the paraprofessionals who work with autistic students would benefit from additional training, UM-NSU CARD was able to respond by funding a nationally recognized autism expert to provide that support. In addition to training, the participants were given access to new materials to use with their students and obtain guidance in dealing with specific challenges they faced. School personnel routinely reach out to UM-NSU CARD for training in many areas and to attain one-to-one technical assistance to address individual areas of concern.

## Beyond the School Years

After four years of studying, taking exams, and writing papers, Marcelo was incredibly proud to walk across the stage as a college graduate. Based on his high GPA, he received plenty of job interviews. But he had difficulty connecting with the interviewers and didn't get a single job offer. Through participation in UM-NSU CARD programs, such as the Job Seekers preemployment boot camp and the Job Club support group, Marcelo was able to strengthen the areas that will help him keep the job he loves.

## Accessing Needed Materials

"He's starting to read!" Anthony's parents were thrilled with his progress but felt embarrassed and guilty that they were unable to afford the iPad and literacy apps that were recommended by professionals. Through the Robin Parker Memorial Technology Fund, they were able to obtain these resources. Now, Anthony is not just a reader, but is starting to write, too.

## Living Their Best Lives

Mrs. Monahan was overjoyed at the news of a family wedding in New York and welcomed the chance to celebrate with the family. The problem? Matthew, her 21-year-old, autistic son, who struggled with any change in the daily routine, had never been on an airplane or stayed in a hotel. Her case manager helped them develop a plan, prepare for the trip, and practice the skills Matthew would need to travel safely. The trip to New York City was such a success that the family felt confident in planning an out-of-town vacation—something they hadn't done in more than two decades.

Tiana's autism hasn't held her back from living a rich and active life. But now that she's a young adult, she'd like to develop a romantic relationship and find a



“special someone.” Our Dating Skills Training Series and Women on the Spectrum support group will help Tiana achieve her goals.

### Moving Toward a More Inclusive Society

The Rabinowitz family loves the arts and enjoys visiting museums and attending performances. It broke their hearts to leave their oldest son, who has dual diagnoses of autism and Angelman syndrome, at home, but difficulties in dealing with bright lights, loud environments, and new experiences made things so difficult that they were asked to leave venues on more than one occasion. Through the autism-friendly initiative with Young at Art and sensory-friendly performances at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, they were able to reengage with the arts community and include the entire family. The Rabinowitzs were especially excited to encounter autistic volunteers and employees at those organizations, both of which gave them hope for their son’s future.

### Safety Matters

Betsy and Mike got the call that many parents fear. Their son Ben had an encounter with the police when

he was acting suspiciously outside of a convenience store during school hours. In 2021, UM-NSU CARD trained hundreds of law enforcement personnel, including more than 200 school resource officers, how to recognize autism and interact with autistic people in safe and effective ways. Ben’s case manager also helped the family select a GPS locating device that he now wears so they can locate him if he elopes again in the future.

### Addressing Inequity

The Augustin family proudly welcomed its first child into the world. As little Samuel grew, he didn’t seem to be developing like his cousins. But when his parents raised their concerns with health care providers, they were repeatedly brushed off. It wasn’t until he entered kindergarten that their concerns were addressed. Samuel was evaluated by an interdisciplinary team and given a diagnosis of autism four years after his parents first asked for help. In 2021, UM-NSU CARD launched the Autism Multicultural Collective, a collaboration between community agencies that seeks to address issues of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in relationship to autism. □



Supporting Broward County Schools at the Educating All Students with Excellence (EASE) Conference.

### CONNECT WITH CARD

These stories highlight only a small portion of the mission-driven work we do every day at UM-NSU CARD. If you have a connection to autism or just want to get involved, we invite you to reach out to us for conversation, support, and collaboration.

For more information on UM-NSU CARD, including a calendar of events, visit the main website at [card.miami.edu](http://card.miami.edu). To become a client, complete this brief online form ([bit.ly/3loUV4c](http://bit.ly/3loUV4c)), call us at (954) 262-7771, or email us at [CARD@nova.edu](mailto:CARD@nova.edu). To request training or public education for your class, business, or other organization, visit [bit.ly/3loVVVT](http://bit.ly/3loVVVT). □

*Carole Zangari is the NSU CARD satellite executive director and a professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology—Fort Lauderdale.*

<sup>1</sup>Fictitious names and composite narratives are used to protect the identities of individuals, schools, and organizations.



## COLLATERAL DAMAGE

**HAVE WE RECOGNIZED AND IDENTIFIED THE FULL IMPACT OF COVID-19?**



BY ROBERT C. GROSZ, ED.D., ACSM

Roughly, the years 0–18 are when the development of socialization skills is, arguably, as important as the development of the intellect.

Roughly, the years 18–60 are when vocational, professional, and family responsibilities occupy the lion's share of our existence.

Roughly, the years 60+ are when retirement means relaxation is replacing toil, or the easy chair is replacing the deadline to get it done.

The common thread among these periods in our lives is the need and desire to be interacting with others. In other words, cultivating friendships, cultivating coworkers and collaborators, cultivating those with common interests and desires, and recultivating family.

When COVID-19 came along, we immediately began marshaling our energy, techniques, and focus on dealing with an entity we could barely see. It was something we could barely measure, except by the results of its existence, meaning the assorted physical illnesses, such as respiratory problems, energy levels, and fevers.

We even assigned ancillary, domino effects of its impact on events



such as economic breakdown, political contention, and education upheaval.

Because of the influences of history, desire for votes, specific financial interests, political expediencies, and public pressures, the efforts to deal with the physical-medical aspects of the COVID-19 virus have been a top priority. This, of course, is understandable. Health comes first.

Unfortunately, in this struggle over control of the pandemic, there seems to be some collateral damage evolving. It is almost like a silent predator. More and more people, and not necessarily direct victims of COVID-19, are succumbing to an equally devastating illness—depression, comorbid anxiety, and the often-accompanying suicidal ideation.

As suggested earlier, 18 and under are the years when socialization skills are developing. Roughly 60+ are the years when socialization is necessary. Unfortunately, it appears that dealing with these issues has not been a priority.

The result is that, because instinctive and driven needs to engage in human interaction are being diminished and overshadowed by the above-mentioned concerns, we may be falling into an abyss of silent self-destruction. Depression is rising, and anxiety over these changing feelings is mounting. So, the feeling of

losing control is creating a merry-go-round of futility. All of this may be evolving into a real and bigger concern that is being overlooked—suicidal ideation.

Shouldn't we be putting equal efforts, energies, and creative thinking—already earmarked for business, political, and physical-medical needs—into looking to preserve our basic emotional-medical needs, like socialization? The depression resulting from social isolation does not recognize skin color, religious conviction, geographic locale, or bank account.

We don't want children growing up in social isolation that may become a shortcut to depression.

We don't want adults living with loneliness and falling into depression.

We don't want the elderly feeling the desire or need to give up because of inability to cope with depression.

We don't want suicidal ideation to become the ubiquitous coping mechanism resulting from social isolation and depression. In identifying the full impact of COVID-19 on our society, we don't want to overlook something because it is less tangible than dollars, political power, or physical symptoms.

We must ask ourselves, "Have we recognized and identified the full impact of COVID-19?" □

*Robert Grosz is the professor emeritus in the Department of Physician Assistant—Fort Lauderdale.*

**More and more people, and not necessarily direct victims of COVID-19, are succumbing to an equally devastating illness—depression, comorbid anxiety, and the often-accompanying suicidal ideation.**



## Full-Circle Experience

*Hisghman (front right) instructs Cody Emmerman, B.S., on intubation techniques.*

### ALUMNI ARE ENHANCING THE AA PROGRAM

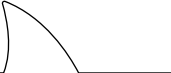


BY KALEY HISGHMAN, M.H.SC., CAA

On a clear morning in Tampa Bay, I walk through the front doors of Nova Southeastern University (NSU). On my way to prepare the simulation lab for our anesthesiologist assistant (AA) students, I pause for a moment in admiration. The sunlight streams in through floor-to-ceiling windows, showcasing spectacular, panoramic water views.

I cannot help but smile as I reflect on how much progress this program has made since I began as a student in its classrooms in 2011. Recalling the original campus at its East Tampa location, it seems a stark contrast from the newly erected and strikingly modern facility in Clearwater. While it may not have been as visually stunning, the original building housed a simulation operating room (OR) that was progressive for its time and impressive enough to convince me to transplant my life far from my hometown.





The growth of the NSU Anesthesiologist Assistant program over the past decade has led to significant upgrades, including two new OR lab simulators with incredibly realistic enhancements and cutting-edge ultrasound and regional anesthesia equipment, as well as a specialized regional expert on staff, which truly sets this NSU program apart in the educational community. However, many of the key components that made the program successful since its inception remain the same, such as a well-rounded, but intensive curriculum, low student-to-faculty member ratios coupled with dedicated availability of professors, and high-quality clinical sites.

**It is of supreme importance to help students develop the poise and level-headedness to perform in a high-pressure environment so they are prepared for these situations that are typical and inevitable in our field.**

It has been my dream since graduating from NSU in 2013 to one day come back to the program that helped shape my future. After practicing as a certified anesthesiologist assistant (CAA) for seven years and being a clinical preceptor for AA students for six of those, I was finally given the opportunity to become an assistant professor. I brought with me a uniquely personal perspective as a prior NSU student, as well as a history of devoting much of my time in clinical practice to the hands-on education of students coming after me.

Becoming an NSU faculty member brought my journey full circle. I use my experiences both as a previous student and a currently practicing CAA to guide me to do my best for the CAAs of tomorrow. I still remember the topics I wished would have been covered in greater depth when I was in school or approached through a different process, and I try to bring this insight to my lectures and lab simulations.

I also keep track of the knowledge and skills I see students struggle with in the hospital setting, and I focus more intently on these areas in the lab. I was fortunate enough to have another NSU alumna, Elizabeth Carter, M.H.Sc., CAA, professor, join the faculty when I did. We share many similar teaching strategies and challenge each other to keep improving. Together, we integrate our past experiences as students and preceptors to implement positive change for the next generation of our profession.

One of the contributions I am particularly proud of is a manual I developed for students who are beginning their first-year clinical rotations. It depicts the expectations for both the student and the clinical site and outlines numerous helpful tips that can be easily and quickly referred to. I still remember my first time performing an anesthesia preoperative evaluation and giving a hand-off report. My preceptor did not have to tell me it was deficient from the standard; I was immediately aware.

To prevent my students from struggling with such tasks in the same way, I have them practice these types of communication weekly in the lab setting. This helps them conduct themselves more naturally, which in turn bolsters their confidence for when they enter the hospital setting and the stakes are higher.

It is of supreme importance to help students develop the poise and level-headedness to perform in a high-pressure environment so they are prepared for these situations that are typical and inevitable in our field. Carter and I are devoted to providing a hands-on training “boot camp” to cover all the nuances of the OR environment immediately before students head to their first clinical rotation.

This allows for pertinent skills to be fresh in their minds when they enter a real OR. Everything I teach my students is inspired by the insights I have gained from years of personal experience and dedication to my profession and is reflective of the standards I hold students to as a preceptor at my own clinical site.

As a professor, I see many of my colleagues in the Tampa Bay area—a majority of whom graduated from the former NSU Tampa Campus—taking active roles in the education of our students. This initiative of

# FACULTY Perspectives

paying it forward is crucial to our profession's continued success, and I love to see other CAAs share my passion for this duty. They want to offer their unique perspectives to our students by attending labs and giving guest lectures.

It is invaluable for students to see their current and future preceptors taking an active interest and participating in their education. It is likewise vital for preceptors to be invested in the program that built them and to give back the same effort and care that was provided to them when they were in school.

I have always viewed my position in NSU's AA program as both an honor and a privilege. Being able to take the knowledge and skills I have obtained from this exceptional program and utilize them to provide a comprehensive learning experience through my daily teaching to the next generation is the most rewarding experience.

Just as I initially chose NSU for its cutting-edge technology and position at the forefront of providing superior educational opportunities, that is why I continue to be involved with the university more

than a decade later. Our goal as faculty members is to prepare our students for success in the best way we can. We strive to hold each other to the highest standards and to pursue continued improvement.

To this end, we rely heavily on our students for feedback, just as they rely on us to prepare them for the professional realm of anesthesia. This is yet another way I consider it essential to take the full-circle approach to education; there should be continuous give and take. As teachers in the constantly evolving world of medicine, we must commit ourselves to lifelong learning and advancement.

To remain the same is to do a disservice to ourselves, our students, and our profession. We must always remember that change is not a bad thing and that it is necessary for growth and progress. By always asking ourselves, "How can we make this better?" we pave before us the path to success—a path that should have no finish line. □

*Kaley Hisghman is an assistant professor in the Department of Anesthesia—Tampa Bay.*



*NSU Tampa Bay Regional Campus*





# Successful Strategies

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

BY ROBIN GALLEY, D.P.T., PT, OCS, CLWT; MEGAN KIM, D.P.T., PT, ATC, LAT; AND KIMBERLY B. SMITH, D.P.T., PT

Throughout the past two years, there has been a revolving door of conflicts and resolutions stemming from the reverberating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. What initially was believed to be a brief interruption to daily life has had far-reaching implications on the delivery of education and student life.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) programs at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie and Tampa Bay Regional campuses were tasked with transitioning lectures and assessments to an online environment like all programs. Fortunately, we collaborated and relied on Tampa Bay's hybrid design for guidance on maintaining student engagement and faculty effectiveness.

Although navigating virtual platforms for didactic material proved successful, we were still left with the

dilemma that all D.P.T. programs nationwide faced. With the instability and uncertainty of health care environments, how would we facilitate clinical education experiences? Moreover, how would we ensure our students were prepared for the clinic?

Full-time clinical education experiences are required by the Committee on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) and are essential for student development and career preparation. Per CAPTE standards, it is the responsibility of D.P.T. programs to only graduate students who have achieved satisfactory performance of an entry-level clinician at the conclusion of a minimum of 30 full-time weeks of clinical education experiences. These experiences must be facilitated by licensed physical therapists (PTs) in a



*Third-year Tampa Bay D.P.T. student Taylor Windle, left, works with a patient volunteer on campus during a weekend institute patient-experience lab in preparation for the clinic.*

variety of clinical settings, with schedules reflecting at least 35 hours a week.

Students from the 2020 cohorts were actively completing the first few weeks of their final clinical experience when the pandemic began its initial surge across the world. Five students who had just departed for an international clinical education experience in Italy were among the first to be recalled and quarantined due to the outbreak abroad.

Suddenly, the impact within the United States became palpable, as businesses closed and health care facilities shuttered nonessential staff members and observers. Many sites were beginning to terminate the clinical experiences early, and NSU leadership quickly made the decision to remove all remaining students from its clinical sites.

CAPTE guidance at the beginning of the pandemic allotted a reduction from 30 to 28

weeks to compensate for restricted student access to sites, but maintained the criteria that entry-level performance was required for graduation. Fortunately, both NSU programs achieved this updated minimum based on the program's curriculum design and proactive planning, which allowed all students to graduate in May 2020. This was not the case for other D.P.T. programs, as many delayed conferring degrees due to the inability to satisfy the clinical education requirements despite the grace period.

In stark contrast was the trend among other health care programs that awarded degrees early so new graduates could bolster the depleted workforce. Although professions such as nurses, perfusionists, and physicians are essential to managing the complex care of critically ill patients, it was contested if reducing programs by weeks or months was adequate preparation for the hospital front lines. While PTs are also essential to management and recovery from COVID, CAPTE left no question to the competency of new graduates given the minimal leeway of clinical education requirements.

After successfully graduating the students from the original "COVID Cohort," the program's focus quickly shifted to the impact on placements for the class of 2021, once it became evident COVID-19 was here to stay. It became readily apparent that many clinical sites would not be prepared to accept students by August 2020. The program committed to maintaining an unmodified calendar



and began the process of replacing student experiences after nearly 50 percent of assignments were canceled or postponed.

Prior to the pandemic, there were already emerging challenges to soliciting student placements for multiple reasons. Reimbursement reform and health care policies began to limit site availability, as companies shifted to contracted staff and limited full-time physical therapists. The South Atlantic region is also the area of greatest saturation, featuring 56 D.P.T. programs, with Florida alone producing 828 graduates from its 15 programs during the 2020–2021 academic year.

A new set of obstacles was ignited by the pandemic. Employee furloughs exacerbated this shortage of qualified clinical instructors. Social-distancing mandates limited occupancy where patients and PTs would typically congregate. Smaller clinical spaces were challenged to accommodate students without imposing on patient safety.

Patients isolated in favor of telehealth as an alternative to accessing care. With reduced in-person caseloads, it created conflicts for students to obtain qualifying, full-time clinical education weeks. Sites required students to be properly equipped with adequate supplies, such as masks and face shields. In addition, the heightened health screening process necessitated students to miss clinic time for testing and quarantining due to potential or actual illness.

The success of PT clinical education relies heavily on the



*Class of 2021 D.P.T. alumna Carly Jones poses in personal protective equipment during her acute-care clinical education experience at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.*

external stakeholders. Forging relationships with our clinical affiliates proved crucial during this chaotic time. National-level companies, such as CORA Physical Therapy, Upstream Rehabilitation, and Select Medical, remained steadfast in offering student opportunities in clinical spaces that could accommodate extra people, while still following local guidelines. Many inpatient facilities stepped up to the call for help when other experiences fell through.

AdventHealth, Baptist Health South Florida, Broward Health, CHRISTUS St. Vincent, Cleveland Clinic Florida, Encompass Health, Jackson Memorial, Naples Community Hospital, and Tampa

General Hospital are among the sites that welcomed the opportunity to prepare students for the reality of clinical practice in unprecedented conditions.

Thanks to the resilient efforts of our faculty and staff members, students, and clinical partners, we were able to successfully navigate the obstacles to ensure the 2021 and 2022 cohorts met the clinical education requirements to graduate on time.

As we enter a new academic year, the ongoing effects of the pandemic will continue to impact a fourth D.P.T. “COVID Cohort” in 2023. Because of what many call the “new normal,” these changes have altered normal operations for clinical education indefinitely. Preparation for clinical experiences often includes more extensive onboarding requirements, attestation of communicable disease risk, and, in some cases, N95 mask fit testing.

The pandemic’s evolution has made clear that our students cannot become competent health care providers unless given the opportunity to develop in challenging situations. We have reinforced resiliency and collaboration as professional behaviors that mold the future of the physical therapy profession. Although the masks and face shields will fade, we know these valuable lessons will last our students a lifetime. □

*Robin Galley is the director of clinical education and an associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy—Tampa Bay. Megan Kim is the assistant director of clinical education and an assistant professor and Kimberly B. Smith is an assistant professor, both in the Department of Physical Therapy—Fort Lauderdale.*



## COVID Conundrum

HOW TECHNOLOGY INFLUENCED THE ORLANDO  
PA PROGRAM DURING THE PANDEMIC

BY JONATHAN CAPLAN, D.M.SC., M.H.A., PA-C, AND STACY LACCK, M.S., PA-C



When the COVID-19 pandemic began and campuses shut down, in-person delivery of education was halted. However, the Orlando Physician Assistant (PA) program used this opportunity to leverage technology in numerous ways to maintain a high level of education for our PA students.

All program facets were affected, from didactic through clinical and even administrative. Therefore, we had to find new ways to navigate the lockdowns. Ultimately, we found various programs that helped maintain NSU's high-quality education during the pandemic.

### **MICROSOFT TEAMS**

To assist our faculty and staff members, we set up Microsoft Teams, a secure environment a group of individuals can use to share information and maintain communication in a cloud-based system. It can be used on or off campus and is only accessible to the people invited to the group; therefore, access is controlled.

By setting it up in a meaningful way, it allowed access to faculty sign ups and schedules, fostering communication among faculty and staff members. The program also used it as a repository of information that was secure and allowed the team remote access.

### **BLENDFLEX**

Once campuses were allowed to open with COVID-19 protocols in place, the program introduced BlendFlex to students. This allowed faculty members to come to campus to deliver their lectures via Zoom, but also allowed a handful of students to come to campus and be in front of a professor. The Student Government Association president for the Orlando PA class shared a Google document with classmates and had sign ups to adhere to the COVID-19 capacity rules in the classroom.

Some students learn better face-to-face than remotely; therefore, this technology expanded our teaching capabilities to benefit students. By logging into Zoom and then utilizing the in-room audiovisual equipment, faculty members were still able to deliver high-quality education to students in a method that best suited each student.

### **POLL EVERYWHERE**

Poll Everywhere is an audience-response system that can be embedded into PowerPoint. This allows the lecturer to include questions in various formats the students can answer via web browser or their phone. Questions can be delivered in multiple choice, true/false, short answer, Likert-scale graphs, and even competition style like Kahoot!

The audience responses are displayed within the PowerPoint and can be presented in a learning (teacher-navigated) or test style. This is a great tool for audience participation and engagement. This technology helped foster interaction remotely when face-to-face communications were an impossibility. It can be used either online, hybrid, or during live lectures.

### **SHADOW HEALTH**

The clinical-year students were hit the hardest at the onset of the pandemic, as many hospitals and clinics shut their doors to clinical students. This forced the program to think outside the box to deliver a quality clinical experience to students. After reviewing many simulated clinical experiences, the clinical simulation software Shadow Health was chosen.

This immersive simulation program allowed the clinical-year students to ask questions to a virtual patient, perform a simulated physical exam, order testing, interpret results, and deliver a diagnosis and patient plan. The scenarios were built by Shadow Health and, once completed, faculty members were able to receive a detailed breakdown of their scores and where they may have deficiencies. While this software is not intended to completely replace clinical training, it served as a bridge until the hospitals and clinics accepted clinical students again.

The past two years have presented numerous challenges for PA education delivery. By utilizing the technology that was available, NSU's PA Orlando program was able to deliver a high-quality academic and clinical experience to students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although students and faculty members have returned to campus and clinical sites are now open, we are incorporating what was learned during the pandemic to further improve the delivery of education to our students. □

## Audiology Assistance

NSU ALUMNUS SERVES REMOTE POPULATIONS IN ALASKA

BY GEOFFREY WAITE, AU.D.



After I graduated in 2013, I worked in St. Petersburg, Florida, as a diagnostic audiologist before following my passion to work with underserved populations. I found a unique opportunity to provide services for the Norton Sound region in Alaska, in the port town of Nome, as one of two audiologists servicing 15 remote rural communities with complex diagnostic auditory and vestibular cases.

I accepted a position with the Norton Sound Health Corporation as a clinical audiologist in 2015, eventually becoming senior staff audiologist for the hospital, with a recent promotion to director of the audiology department. Recruitment of audiologists has always been a challenge in Alaska.

During the past six years, Norton Sound has recruited five audiologists through direct hire and through our student intern and extern program. There is a great need for audiologists, as

demand continues to be high and will continue to be high for years to come.

Currently, there are 40 audiologists in Alaska. In the Norton Sound region, there are now 4 audiologists servicing the regional hub or port town of Nome and the 15 smaller native communities. Each community has a population of about 100 to 500 individuals and is only accessible from Nome via small single- or twin-engine planes called “bush planes.”

We provide services to these communities via telemedicine and mobile clinics. Each community has a small clinic that is typically staffed with a local health aide and a mid-level provider.

The health aides request asynchronous consultations to the audiology department for simple and complex otologic diseases, postsurgical management, and complaints of hearing loss. Our audiologists interpret audiologic results, provide diagnosis and recommendations when appropriate, and forward cases to physicians within our hospital network or one of several ear, nose, and throat groups we work with for otologic treatment.

Teleaudiology services are also provided via video teleconference appointments in which health aides are guided by the audiologist to perform tasks such as video otoscopy, simple hearing aid

maintenance (e.g., cleaning hearing aid tubes and microphone filter changes), and assisting with hearing aid programming when needed.

The audiology team travels to one of the communities once or twice a month to provide a mobile audiology clinic, during which time we provide a full range of services, including basic audiometric evaluations, amplification services, simple vestibular screenings, and newborn hearing screening follow-ups. If services cannot be provided through one of these methods, the patient will travel to Nome to be seen in our full-service facility.

Norton Sound Health Corporation is a tribally owned organization that receives funding from the federal government, the native tribal organizations, and other sources. We are considered an Indian Health facility, so we receive federal contracts from insurance companies and Indian Health to provide services for the Alaska native population.

The hospital has about 800 employees and is considered a critical access facility. In the native population, there is a very high prevalence of middle-ear disease, with a history of otologic surgery.

Much of our caseload is management of postsurgical ears. More than 50 percent of the sustenance for most of the

population comes from subsistence, including hunting. This gives rise to a large prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss. A combination of these two factors necessitates that we provide a robust amplification program that provides a full range of options, including conventional hearing aids, CROS hearing aid devices, bone conduction devices and implants, and cochlear implants.

In my free time, I am either out in nature or rebuilding my jeep. The winters are harsh, but the summers are beautiful. Fishing and berry picking are a great pastime if I am not exploring the tundra in my jeep or ATV. Nome is not on a road system and is accessible only by direct flight from Anchorage on a jet, limiting family vacations and adding a premium to produce and other exotic foods.

I am learning to fly a single-engine plane and enjoy taking the plane out with friends and family to warm up in one of many remote hot springs around the region. The air is clean and the crime rate is low, so I feel confident in sending

my six-year-old outside to play without concerns for his safety.

Like most of rural Alaska, people of the Norton Sound region are community oriented and live a simple life. Everyone is very friendly, always willing to lend a helping hand. The culture encourages people to be very

quick in their responses and to be generous. If you are considering a position in Alaska, be prepared to work and play hard, be creative, and be open to new experiences. □

*Geoffrey Waite is a 2013 NSU alumnus of the Department of Audiology—Fort Lauderdale.*



*Above: Geoffrey Waite takes a springtime hike on the tundra behind his house.*







## Pillars of Empowerment

BY TAMBI BRAUN, SLP.D., CCC/SLP, AND RACHEL M. WILLIAMS, PH.D., CCC-SLP

During the pandemic, many small business owners faced numerous challenges to remain open and survive financially. Several Black women business owners knew these challenges before 2020. Four Black speech-language pathologists, who are alumnae of the Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences, shared their perspectives and advice about business ownership, success, and community-driven businesses.



**ARRAINE MCWHINNEY**, M.S., CCC-SLP  
Founder of True Voice, LLC

“I am passionate about guiding families, educating them, and equipping them with the tools they need to positively shift their mindset and achieve success. Try to not do everything yourself. I learned early on that I cannot handle everything myself. I know there are so many mediums out there, like social media, and so many ways to get your business in front of people. That’s why it is okay to offload some of those responsibilities to other experts. Building my business was not easy. Thankfully, it started before the pandemic. When the pandemic hit, I had a good foundation. I had my ‘why’ and I had my purpose. The ‘why’ sometimes changes based on the growth I make as an individual or as a clinician, but the root of it stays the same. There is also much support out there through government and city agencies for Black businesses—you just need to know how to find it. Financial support, additional credentials, certifications as a minority business enterprise—those things are out there, and they are helpful. Primarily though, just start. It does not have to be perfect.”



**HASINA ECHOLES**, M.S., CCC-SLP

Founder of Global Speech and Rehab Services

“One of the biggest pieces of advice I would give is to celebrate who you are and where you come from, regardless of where that is. Work with people who want to work with you. I’m pretty sure there have been clients who didn’t want to work with us because of this, but I choose to embrace the positive. When I first started, I was not sure where I fit in. When I realized I did not have to try to fit into other spaces with other groups of people, that is when I really started to thrive. I used to try to squeeze in a place where I may not have fit in well. I think that is a pitfall. The most comfortable space to exist is where you are wanted and valued.”



**CASSANDRA FORD**, M.S., CCC-SLP

Owner of Blythewood Speech Therapy, LLC

“My first boss was a Black business owner, and that really encouraged me and made me feel my goal was attainable. It may feel while you are in graduate school or before graduate school that it is not possible, but it is. There is a need for Black businesses. I really enjoy connecting with families, both as a speech-language pathologist and as a character event business owner, as both give me the opportunity to make a difference. If you have an idea, research it, go for it, and try to connect with someone in that field so you can get mentoring.”

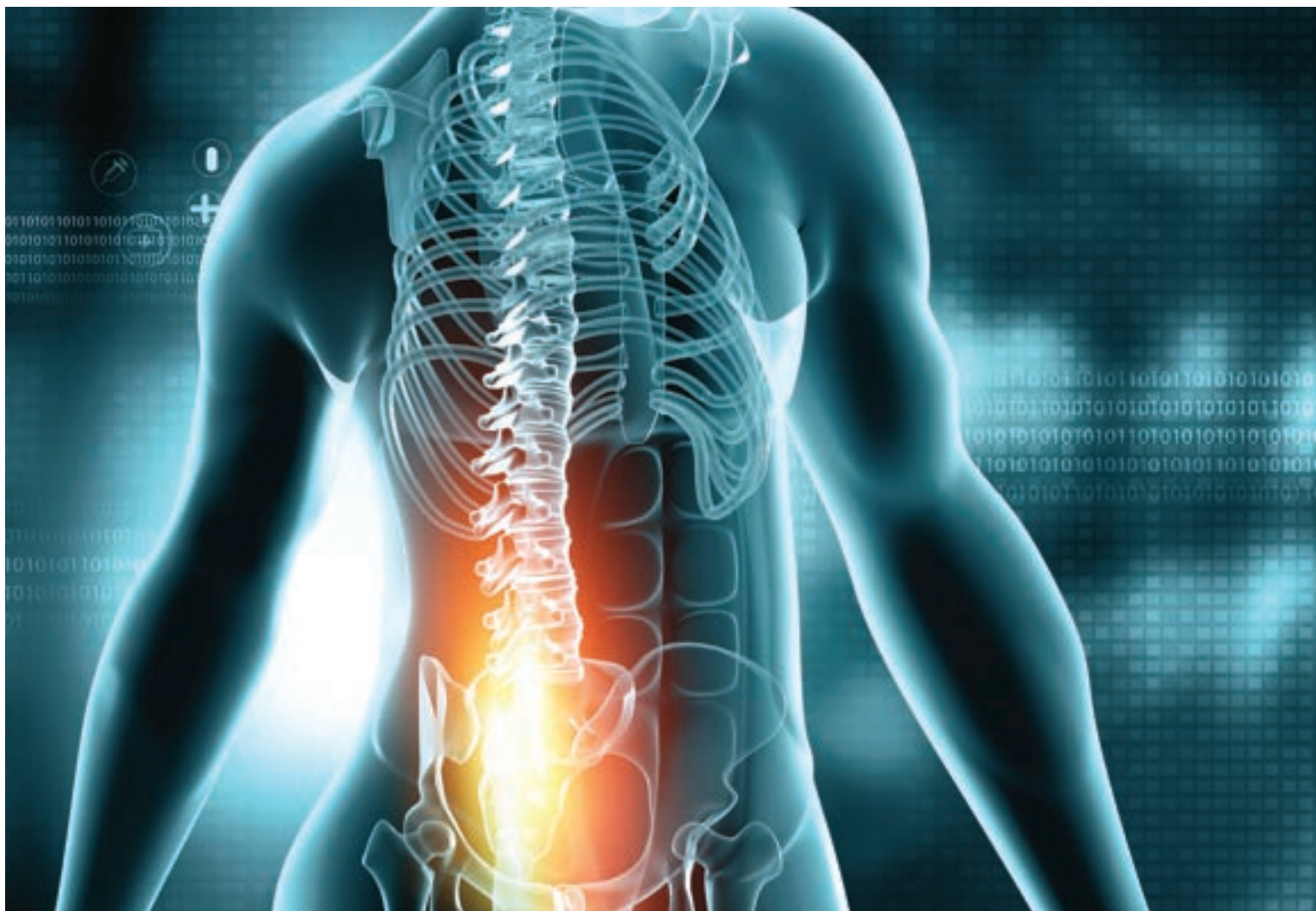


**CALONDA HENRY**, M.S., CCC-SLP

Founder and Clinical Director of Broad Horizons Speech Therapy

“The biggest thing is being comfortable in your training. I had an excellent level of training and preparedness for the speech-language pathology field, so I felt I was more than well prepared to be a practicing clinician. I think it is more about being comfortable in your skill set and being resilient to adapt whatever goals you have set for three years. Mentors are also important. My first supervisor sent me an email when she was getting ready to retire. She acknowledged my work ethic and clinical abilities and said I could go on to do amazing things. She reminded me to always follow my dreams, no matter how big or scary they are. I still have that email in my office, and I look at it on the days when I feel frustrated. Networking is incredible, because the power of networking with your colleagues, your professors, and other business owners is invaluable. I was able to grow my business in a global pandemic, and within six months, I had a working therapy clinic. I now have employees and just added occupational therapy services to my school contracting.” □

*Tambi Braun is an associate professor and Rachel M. Williams is an ASHA Fellow, doctorate director, and associate professor. They are both in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology—Fort Lauderdale.*



## Hands-On Once More

### JACKSONVILLE PA STUDENTS ASSIST WITH SPORTS PHYSICALS

BY NICOLE MCGLINCHY, B.S.

Each year, the Nova Southeastern University Jacksonville Physician Assistant (PA) program is presented with the opportunity to be involved with the Jacksonville, Florida, community at The Center for Health and Sports Medicine.

Ross Osborn, M.D., FAAFP, is a former medical director of the Jacksonville Physician Assistant program and currently serves as a preceptor. Osborn is the founder of The Center for Health and Sports Medicine.

Students participate in hands-on clinical experience with the staff members by aiding in conducting annual sports physicals for middle school and high school students. Routine sports physicals evaluate students' health and clear them to safely participate in their chosen activity or sport.

Sports physicals ensure the health and safety of the student-athlete yearly before each season. Sports physicals may be required each year by the state, or by the school or institution, before participating.



## The opportunity to apply the knowledge and practice techniques gained throughout the didactic year enhanced and enriched our overall PA school experience.

Our class was able to participate in this experience with proper precautions in place, even with the unprecedented events of COVID-19. A handful of volunteers from our class were able to participate in three events during the spring 2021 semester.

Students were involved with checking patients in, measuring height and weight, performing vitals checks and vision screenings, taking athletes through basic ranges of motions, and conducting patient interviews with Osborn's medical staff. The opportunity to apply the knowledge and practice techniques gained throughout the didactic year enhanced and enriched our overall PA school experience.

"I loved having the opportunity to go into the community and help with the sports physicals for the high schools in the area," said class of 2022 student Amanda Shoemaker, B.S., the Tom Lemley Student Society (TLSS) class president. "It was a great way to practice some of the skills we have learned on real

patients. It was also a great experience to work with Osborn and the other providers at the clinic and be able to learn from them directly."

According to class of 2022 student Lauren Bacon, B.A.S., "Osborn and his staff provided an excellent experience for several PA students to perform sports physicals. This was our first hands-on learning encounter due to COVID-19 restrictions," she said. "I learned to work with high school students and perform blood pressure checks, musculoskeletal movements, vision exams, and aid the physician and physician assistant with the physical exam."

We are so thankful to gain rich knowledge and to better ourselves as future clinicians. It means even more to us that we are able to be involved with our Jacksonville community while doing so. □

*Nicole McGlinchy is a class of 2022 physician assistant student in the Department of Physician Assistant—Jacksonville.*



*PA students from left: Celina Clifton, B.S.; Trey Sommers, B.S.; Alexia Yavalar, B.S.; Lauren Bacon, B.A.S.; Amanda Shoemaker, B.S.; Diana Morris, B.S., TLSS vice president; Bree Roth, B.S.; and Nicole McGlinchy, B.S.*



# COVID-19 and Alcohol

## A PERFECT STORM AMONG U.S. WOMEN

BY MOYA ALFONSO, PH.D., M.S.P.H.

On November 3, 2021, I delivered an invited grand rounds seminar at Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. I came to Nova Southeastern University from the Children's Home Society of Florida, where I obtained experience in child welfare and trauma-informed care and as a former tenured associate professor at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, where I served as a research adviser for the Center for Addiction Recovery.

I have been an active member of the recovery community for more than a decade, seeing firsthand the suffering and resilience of those who live with chronic

mental illness and/or alcohol-use disorders. My interest in adverse childhood experiences (ACES)/trauma and addiction and recovery and lived experience served as the foundation for my virtual grand rounds seminar titled "COVID-19 and Alcohol: A Perfect Storm Among Women in the U.S."

COVID-19 meets the criteria for being considered a shared trauma that will likely cause long-lasting effects on our health and well-being. The impact will vary because individuals differ in health, genetics, neurodevelopment, resilience, and other protective factors. Already, reports of anxiety and depression among

individuals in the United States have increased, mostly resulting from isolation, boredom, and the stress of the pandemic.

Those with preexisting psychiatric disorders have reported worsening symptoms. Relapse rates among those who have substance-use disorders have increased as well. Although it is too early to discern long-term outcomes of the pandemic, preliminary research suggests that female caregivers are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those with children in the home who have a history of ACES.

ACES place individuals at risk throughout their lifetimes for mental illness, substance-use disorders, and chronic diseases (e.g., obesity). The caregiver's trauma history can affect early childhood development, including biological outcomes such as the release of cortisol, development of a core sense of self, and strained attachment between caregiver and child.

Child health outcomes, including mental health, tend to be worse among those with highly distressed caregivers, often resulting from deficits in child-parent closeness and increased conflict. Since the pandemic began, caregiver stress, school closures, media hype, and fear have lowered caregivers' levels of tolerance and long-term thinking, which has increased negative caregiver behaviors, among others.

Along with the social isolation and caregiver strain from job loss, lack of childcare, and school closure, reports of child abuse and neglect have increased in the United States. School closures meant some students lost access to trauma-informed care and support schools traditionally provide. To make matters worse, there is treatment overload, as those who provide mental health services and child welfare services are overwhelmed with need.

Alcohol beverage sales in the United States increased by 55 percent immediately after stay-at-home policies were implemented in 2020. This increase was greatest among female caregivers, especially Black and non-Hispanic white women. The increased risk among women should not surprise us. During the past decade, alcohol manufacturers have used "niche marketing" to increase alcohol consumption among women.

With the introduction of Skinnygirl spirits in 2011, alcohol consumption (especially wine) increased 388 percent among U.S. women. Thanks to brilliant advertising, women now believe that alcohol consumption meets their needs for friendship, relief from

stressors including parenting, and empowerment. Unfortunately, it also increases their odds of negative health outcomes (e.g., breast cancer, addiction) and, for some, results in less-than-optimal parenting.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 1 in 10 U.S. women reported roughly a 40 percent increase in alcohol-related problems. Overall, excessive alcohol consumption is serving as a maladaptive coping behavior, especially among female caregivers with multiple vulnerabilities (e.g., trauma history, history of experiencing racism).

**Alcohol beverage sales in the United States increased by 55 percent immediately after stay-at-home policies were implemented in 2020. This increase was greatest among female caregivers, especially Black and non-Hispanic white women.**

The pandemic, for better or worse, is now a part of our shared history—the effects of which will pass through the generations unless we intervene. Public health monitoring of alcohol consumption during the pandemic due to potential long-term negative outcomes is warranted for female caregivers in the United States. To stop the intergenerational transmission of trauma and related outcomes, we need to examine root causes, such as poverty and racism, and use a socioecological approach to ameliorate the factors that place trauma survivors at risk of negative health outcomes associated with excessive alcohol use.

There is an immediate need for a trauma-informed approach at every level of the socioecological model, along with community-engaged interventions that provide female caregivers with the hope and skills they need to use positive coping methods (e.g., physical activity, meditation, healthy eating, rest, hobbies they enjoy) instead of alcohol to cope with caregiver stress moving forward.

If you or a loved one are struggling with excessive alcohol use, please reach out for help by visiting [samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](https://samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline). □

*Moya Alfonso is the director of doctoral programs in the Department of Health Science—Fort Lauderdale.*





As I embark on a new chapter of my NSU career, I wanted to take the time to express my appreciation to my colleagues in the health professions community.

It has been a sincerely humbling experience to have the privilege to serve two great institutions of higher education—Southeastern University of the Health Sciences and Nova Southeastern University—during the past 37 years. I owe a debt of gratitude to many of my colleagues for their help in assisting me throughout this incredibly fulfilling journey.

I officially stepped down as chancellor of the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Health Professions Division (HPD) on January 3, 2022. However, I will continue to work to achieve the university's goal of preeminence in my new role as chancellor emeritus. I also intend to work in the area of development to raise funds to enhance existing, as well as new, programs as an element of NSU President George L. Hanbury's Vision 2025.

There are too many people to name, but I must acknowledge and express my enduring gratitude to my mentor, the late Dr. Morton Terry, who was the founder of Southeastern University of the Health Sciences and the NSU Health Professions Division. His vision provided me with a guiding light to fulfill my responsibilities with fairness and integrity in my role as HPD chancellor.

One of the proudest moments of my career was playing a role in the merger between Southeastern University and Nova University in 1994, which created a truly great and diverse institution of higher education—Nova Southeastern University. In the years following the historic merger, I also had the great honor of helping to establish additional health professions colleges at NSU.

I want to thank all my colleagues and the administration at NSU for their support, teamwork, and dedication to INSU. That support, as well as the unselfish sharing of their abundant wisdom, made coming to campus every day a joy as we worked to improve and build upon what had already been created.

I look forward to continuing to work with many of you to guarantee NSU's preeminence as we create a lasting legacy as one of the greatest universities in the United States.

I thank you all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Frederick Lippman".

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.  
Chancellor Emeritus, Health Professions Division

**One of the proudest moments of my career was playing a role in the merger between Southeastern University and Nova University in 1994, which created a truly great and diverse institution of higher education—Nova Southeastern University.**

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