



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



John G. Rangos, Sr.
School of Health Sciences

MISSION

Educating an ethical, evidence-based healthcare workforce to engage and serve diverse local and global communities to advance whole-person care.

VISION

We will be leaders in educational innovation, interprofessional practice, research, and community engagement.



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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I am thrilled to present the latest edition of the John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences (RSHS) Annual Report. The Rangos School remains at the forefront of delivering exceptional education in health sciences, health administration, and public health. Our mission to prepare the next generation of health care professionals is stronger than ever, as we equip them with the skills, knowledge, and compassion to transform the health and well-being of individuals in diverse communities both locally and globally.

As Dean, I extend my deepest gratitude to our extraordinary faculty and staff. Their unwavering dedication, tireless efforts, and passionate commitment to our students and mission are the driving forces behind our continued success. Thanks to their exceptional contributions, the RSHS has once again achieved remarkable milestones. Our faculty's research and scholarly accomplishments this past year have been truly outstanding. We are also delighted to welcome Dr. Alia M. Pustorino-Clevenger as Director of the Compass Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Program and Dr. Kelley Henderson as the new Department Chair of Athletic Training. Additionally, our study abroad programs in Rome (PT), Belize (SLP), and Cuba (HAPH) have enriched our students' educational experiences, offering them invaluable global perspectives.

At the heart of RSHS is our commitment to an individualized and comprehensive student experience. Through dedicated mentoring, immersive clinical education, and personalized support from our faculty, student success coaches, and staff, we ensure that every student is equipped for success and professional readiness.

Looking ahead, I am filled with excitement and confidence in our bright future. This year, we will start implementing the 2024-2027 RSHS Strategic Plan, a dynamic roadmap that will guide us in achieving even greater heights. Our ongoing dedication to fostering a culture of diversity, collaboration, and inclusion will continue to be a cornerstone of our efforts. We are also proud to continue our strategic partnership with Franklin Covey, which has significantly enriched our faculty and staff professional development and strengthened our academic communities.

In this issue, you will find updates on the RSHS Strategic Plan with key highlights from each department on groundbreaking research and scholarly achievements from our faculty. We are also proud to share the inspiring success stories of our students and alumni, who continue to make impactful contributions to the health professions.

It is truly an honor to serve as the Dean of the RSHS and to work alongside such a talented and dedicated community. Together, we will continue to elevate the Rangos School as a premier institution in health sciences, and I look forward to the exciting journey ahead with all of you.

Sincerely,

Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D., MHA
Dean, The John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences

MEET THE DEANS



Dr. Amy Mattila

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Associate Professor

Department Chair, Occupational Therapy

In my first year as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, we have accomplished so much together! My immediate task as I transitioned into this work was to update our Strategic Plan, which launched in Fall 2024 and will guide us through 2027. Highlights of this update include greater outreach to alumni and constituents of the school, increased focus on wellness initiatives for faculty, staff, and students, and expanding the RSHS portfolio through various programs that will be accessible to our clinical community. A huge win this year for RSHS was the approval and launch of the COMPASS Inclusive Higher Education Program, starting in Fall 2024.

In addition, we saw sustained success across all programs in terms of maintaining accreditation, increasing access to community partners and clinical sites, and our strong records in excellent pass rates/graduation outcomes.

Goals for the next academic year include implementing of the Strategic Plan, bringing programs such as Mental Health First Aid and ongoing Franklin Covey partnerships to our Rangos community, and increasing alumni engagement across all programs.



Dr. Heather Leavy Rusiewicz

Associate Dean for Research

Associate Professor

Department Chair, Speech-Language Pathology

The faculty and students of the RSHS are widely respected and recognized for their scholarship and leadership. In this new role as Associate Dean for Research, I could not be more thrilled to walk alongside colleagues who are truly leading the way in shaping scientific inquiry and theory as well as current, best practices within an interprofessional context for those we serve in their communities and beyond.

In the new Strategic Plan, as scholars, we aim to “encourage, support, and celebrate the current scholarly work of faculty and students while creating and advocating for the resources needed for the future development of impactful research that promotes scientific inquiry, the health and wellness of individuals across the lifespan, best practices of interprofessional education and practice, and community-based application of scholarship regionally, nationally, and globally.”

In tandem with the newly formed Rangos Research Advancement and Communication (RAAC) Group, we are actively working to create new opportunities, supports, funding streams, and recognition of our faculty and student researchers. The horizon is brighter than ever for our Rangos researchers in this Distinctly Duquesne foundation!



Dr. Michelle McCann

Assistant Dean of Community Engaged Learning and Service (CELS)

Assistant Professor/Doctoral Capstone Coordinator, Occupational Therapy

Collectively, we have worked toward recognizing and elevating the work that our faculty, staff, and students do which embodies the dedication to excellence in community-engaged learning and service. Through careful updating of our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, Rangos is committed to creating shared pathways of mutual learning and service with key community partners both internal and external to the University. We have facilitated new partnerships which inspire us to use our resources to alleviate the unmet needs of marginalized populations in our own communities.

This year, a new learning series, RSHS CELS Community Connections was initiated to foster the sharing of expertise related to scholarship, service learning, and sustainable outreach. This learning platform also enables Rangos to reinforce the value of mentorship and interdisciplinary collaboration in promoting civic-minded practice scholars. In addition, we collaborated with The Crossroads Foundation to host the first annual Allied Health Summer Day Camp at Rangos. We hope to inspire future generations of students from diverse backgrounds to see their potential and the impact they can have in community too!



2024-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for the RSHS is a roadmap for excellence in healthcare education and community engagement. By focusing on innovation, research, and diversity, RSHS is committed to equipping students, faculty, and partners with the tools needed to shape the future of healthcare. This plan not only reflects RSHS's dedication to its mission and vision but also its ambition to foster positive change within Duquesne University and beyond.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for the John G. Rangos Sr. School of Health Sciences (RSHS) outlines a comprehensive vision for advancing healthcare education, research, and community engagement. This plan is designed to position RSHS as a leader in preparing a diverse and ethical healthcare workforce, fostering innovative learning opportunities, and promoting social justice and equity. Through strategic partnerships, cutting-edge simulation training, and a commitment to interprofessional education, RSHS aims to enhance student success, support faculty development, and expand its impact locally and globally.

MISSION: Educating an ethical, evidence-based healthcare workforce to engage and serve diverse local and global communities to advance whole-person care.

VISION: We will be leaders in educational innovation, interprofessional practice, research, and community engagement.

Goals and Key Strategic Initiatives:

1. Increase Community-Engaged Learning and Scholarship

- Strengthen partnerships with local, national, and global institutions.
- Promote and support community-engaged learning and service efforts.
- Enhance leadership and training opportunities for faculty and students in community engagement.

2. Expand Innovative Learning Opportunities

- Develop a comprehensive simulation curriculum.
- Integrate simulation activities like standardized patients and virtual simulators.
- Foster interdepartmental collaboration in simulation-based education.

3. Optimize and Expand Educational Programs

- Assess current programs for potential growth and sustainability.
- Develop new majors, certificates, and global outreach initiatives.
- Strengthen interdisciplinary learning and early clinical exposure.

4. Advance Research and Scholarship

- Enhance support for faculty and student research efforts.
- Increase visibility and communication of research activities.
- Improve funding opportunities and expand student research engagement.

5. Broaden Wellness and Professional Development

- Establish wellness programs for faculty, staff, and students.
- Expand alumni engagement and professional development opportunities.
- Support student success through targeted programming.

6. Enhance Interprofessional Education (IPE)

- Expand IPE offerings across courses and departments.
- Foster collaborations beyond IPE to enhance clinical and research opportunities.
- Integrate IPE into the broader curriculum to support teamwork and communication skills.

7. Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

- Build a diverse leadership team and enhance communication around DEI efforts.
- Support recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and students.
- Expand global engagement and support international students.

8. Expand Experiential Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen partnerships with clinical and community organizations for student placements.
- Support training and professional development for clinical educators.
- Leverage technology to enhance clinical education and simulation.



ATHLETIC TRAINING

HIGHLIGHTS

The AT Program will graduate its final cohort from the BS in Athletic Training Program in May. This year will mark the 31st and final cohort graduating from this program.

The final two graduates from the BSAT program have secured athletic training graduate assistantships and placement in the highly competitive and acclaimed post-professional Master's degree in Athletic Training program at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.

Starting in June 2024, the AT Program will enroll its first cohort in the Master of Science in Athletic Training Program.

Dr. Erica Beidler has been named to the Brain Injury Advisory Board for the PA Board of Health.

Dr. Sarah Manspeaker has been named the 2024 Emerging Interprofessional National Academies of Practice Fellow of the Year.

We are continuing to maintain agreements with the Technological University of the Shannon (formerly Athlone Institute of Technology) and Dublin City University, whereby we are providing clinical education experiences for athletic rehabilitation therapy students from Ireland and study abroad opportunities for our athletic training students.

Our faculty are entrenched in professional service opportunities at the state, regional and national levels. Involvement by our faculty includes but is not limited to serving as a program site visitor (CAATE), overseeing and reviewing continuing education programming (BOC, PATS), and reviewing presentation proposals for both the National Athletic Trainers' Association and the American Society of Biomechanics.

Senior AT students completed clinical rotations with the Pittsburgh Pirates and Pittsburgh Steelers this year.

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Agar K, DeMedal S, Delmonte A, Bell L, Fisher K, **Beidler E**. Efficacy of helmet use on head injury reduction in snow sports: A critically-appraised topic. *International Journal of Athletic Therapy and Training*. 2023;28:173-178.

Beidler E, Kelshaw PM, Wallace J, Larson MJ, Munce TA, Donahue CC, Bowman TG, Pappadis MR, Decker MN, Walton SR, Didehbani N, Cifu DX, Resch JE. Racial identity and concussion diagnosis and recovery trajectories in collegiate athletes: A LIMBIC MATARS investigation. *Brain Injury*. Published online September 10, 2023. doi: 10.1080/02699052.2023.2253528

Brickson S, Carcia CR, Reeder MT, **Scibek JS**. Evaluation and management of common cycling injuries. In: Physical Therapist Management of Individuals Who Cycle, Surf, and Rock Climb. Simoneau G, ed. *Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy, APTA*; 2023;33(2):1-64.

Hankemeier DA, **Manspeaker SA**, Kirby J, Feld SD. Clinical practice patterns of interprofessional collaboration: considerations for athletic training education. *Athletic Training Education Journal*.2023;18(3):134-142.

Hankemeier DA, **Manspeaker SA**, Feld SD, Kirby J. Implementing interprofessional education into clinical experiences: athletic training faculty perceptions. *Athletic Training Education Journal*.2023; 18(1):41-50.

Hosokawa Y, O'Connor S, Tashima C, Otomo M, Schmitt A, **Beidler E**. Question format matters: Do athletes really know the signs and symptoms of a sport-related concussion? *Journal of Athletic Training*. 2023;58(6):573-578.

Kelshaw PM, **Beidler E**, Decker M, Bowman TG, Pappadis M, Robles R, Walton SR, Didehbani N, Cifu DX, Resch JE. Lost in translation: The association of international status and native language on concussion in collegiate athletes in the United States. *Brain Injury*. Published online February 12, 2024. doi:10.1080/02699052.2024.2309265

Manspeaker SA, Delulius ED, Delehanty AD, McCann M, Zimmerman DE, O'Neil C, **Shaffer J**, Crytzer TM, Loughran MC. Impact of a Grand Rounds Interprofessional Workshop: student perceptions of interprofessional socialization and cultural humility. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*. 2023;21:1-9.

O'Connor S, Geaney D, Whyte E, Kontos AP, O'Halloran P, **Beidler E**. Perceptions of concussion and associated anxiety in Irish collegiate athletes. *Sports Health* 2023;15(2):199-209.

Pollard-Mcgrandy AM, Tracey AJ, Wallace J, Covassin T, **Beidler E**. Perceptions of personal control and treatment efficacy of sport-related concussion in collegiate athletes. *Brain Injury*. Published online December 18, 2023. doi: 10.1080/02699052.2023.2292998

Graduates from the program have a **99% overall passing rate** on the national Board of Certification examination.



AT faculty, students, and alumni provided medical services to athletes with intellectual disabilities at the Special Olympics of Pennsylvania Winter Games, with Dr. Sarah Manspeaker, AT'01, serving as medical director.



Dr. Sarah Manspeaker presented "Investigating Interprofessional Socialization and Cultural Humility among Healthcare Students" at the Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions Annual Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL, October 2023.

HEALTH, EXERCISE & APPLIED SCIENCE

HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Health Sciences Program has become the 3rd largest program in the School after having completed four full recruitment cycles.

The Health Sciences Program recently restructured its program offerings to include pre-professional pathways (i.e. Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant Studies, Medicine, Occupational Therapy) and concentrations in Health, Exercise Science, and Strength & Conditioning

Health Sciences offered a study abroad opportunity to students in May. The program was directed by Dr. Adrian Wright-FitzGerald. The group traveled to Peru to examine the health care system, public health interventions to promote health, and social determinants of health specific to food systems and nutrition.

HS faculty worked with other campus partners and the American College of Sports Medicine to have Duquesne registered in the Exercise is Medicine – On Campus program. Their efforts resulted in Duquesne University being identified as a Gold Campus. This program promotes the value of exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle and its role in managing injury and illness. Duquesne earned the Gold level designation for their efforts.

HS faculty guided 35 students through their Capstone projects in advance of graduation. Students completing capstone projects have partnered with a number of local agencies and community partners including Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh, 412 Food Rescues, Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank, MAYA and the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health.

Student capstone projects have addressed a range of topic areas including:

- Examining access to dental services in rural and urban centers
- Returning to form and function: Examining human movement
- Mobility, disability, and airline accessibility
- Integrating VO_2 , sweat hydration, and RER analysis in ultra-distance running performance
- Bilingual patient education resources before, during, and after lower extremity amputation
- Exploring the impact of social determinants of health on diabetes and obesity among urban and rural communities
- Exploring mental health within the physician assistant profession
- Optimizing cognitive health for hospitalized seniors: Strategies to prevent delirium and enhance cognitive and physical functioning



In June, Health Sciences students and faculty attended the National Athletic Trainers Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans. During the meeting, junior HS student, Allison Gass, presented research findings related to the timing of concussion occurrence, diagnosis, and recovery milestones in collegiate athletes.



Students put the metabolic testing equipment in our Exercise Physiology Laboratory to the test when assessing cardiorespiratory endurance as part of their experiential learning activities.



Health Sciences faculty member Bill Jones, MS, CSCS, represented the University at the American College of Sports Medicine Annual Meeting in Boston in May when Duquesne was recognized as an Exercise is Medicine Gold Campus.



SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Butler, L, **DiSanti, JS**, Sugimoto, D, Hines, DM, Del Bel, MJ, Oliver, GD. Apples to oranges: Inconsistencies in defining and classifying youth sport populations. *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine*, 33(1), 1-4.

DiSanti, JS, Post, E, Eason, C, Root, H, Abdenour, T. Athletic trainers' psychosocial experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative research study. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 2023;58(10):902-911.

Folts, M, Van der Mark, J, Tam, H, & **Mehls, K**. Differences in Muscle Activity Between the Front and Back Squat During a Ramping Three Repetition Maximum Testing Session. (Accepted for 2023)

Godfrey, K, **DiSanti, JS**, Valovich McLeod, TC (2023). Burnout in sport specializers vs. samplers: An evidence-to-practice review. *Clinical Practice in Athletic Training*, 6(1), 55-60.



Students and faculty volunteered to assist with medical services provided during the 2024 Boston Marathon.



In May, Dr. Adrian Wright-FitzGerald led a group of 10 students on a 3-week immersive study abroad experience to Peru, which included hiking to Machu Picchu.

HEALTH ADMINISTRATION & PUBLIC HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

Vision for future leaders: Informed by our advisory board members and community leaders, as well as best practices for community engagement, we are preparing the next generations of leaders able to take on challenges of today's world. With the help of Dr. Urmi Ashar, Director of Public Health programs, our students are learning and implementing the concepts of adaptive leadership. Dr. Urmi Ashar, who instructs the Leadership course in our MHA program, has attained Gallup Strengths Coach certification. This development enriches the learning experience by offering students a unique framework to identify and apply their strengths in the professional realm. Such an approach aligns with our mission to forge leaders who are skilled in theory and adept in self-awareness and practical application, poised to make a substantial impact in the healthcare field.

Pedagogy: On September 19, 2023, Dr. Urmi Ashar, Dr. Ariel Shensa and Dr. Joan Kiel presented a poster "Pedagogy and Generative AI", reflecting our focus on innovative pedagogy. Our Capstone and Internship opportunities, including our inaugural public health capstone course, conducted with organizations such as Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Allegheny County Health Department, CDC/NIOSH, Pittsburgh Business Group on Health, etc. provide leadership experiences to our students and help them obtain best possible jobs after graduation.

Curriculum: Capstone projects and Internships highlight community engagement and the needs of underserved populations. All Departmental programs have either an internship or a capstone requirement that allow students to apply themselves to the health administration and public health topics that they are passionate about in real world settings. Students are encouraged to engage in study abroad programs, including spending a semester at DU's Rome campus and engaging in Maymester offerings, such as Origin of Preventive Medicine in Peru.

HEALTH, EXERCISE & APPLIED SCIENCE (CONT.)



HAPH programs were built on the strong foundations of the Department of Health Management Systems that existed at Duquesne for over two decades. Departmental activities expanded in the past three years to encompass translational and international health work, developing and nurturing ties with academic institutions in over 10 countries. We identify academic, research, and clinical practice platforms that can translate our work to facilitate action and engage stakeholders to promote health and wellness. Principles of inclusivity, equity, and access to care guide the evolution of our department moving forward. The global recognition of HAPH is going strong with two scholars from Kazakhstan visiting our department and taking MHA level courses in the fall of 2023 and Memorandums of Understanding signed with institutions in China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, etc. The Department obtained 3-year accreditation from CAHME for the Online MHA program in February 2023 and our alumni are already making a difference locally and nationally.



INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH: KAZAKHSTAN

Bolashaq fellows. HAPH is proud to partner with the Bolashak Program to bring professionals and scholars from Kazakhstan to Duquesne for innovative education opportunities. The Bolashaq International Scholarship is the flagship scholarship program of the government of Kazakhstan and is designed to train the country's future leaders. In January 2024, professors Farida Iskakova and Arailym Beisbekova finished their Bolashaq Fellowships at Duquesne, taking MHA level courses, observing teaching, and conducting population based research. Dr. Iskakova's research work focused on TB management, while Dr. Beisbekova focused on nutritional deficiencies in Central Asia.



INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH: CHINA

In December 2023, Dr. Faina Linkov joined DCHI delegation to teach and establish new collaborations in two Universities in China, including Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (meeting with Dr. Hailei Zhao, MD, PhD, MPA, Dean of School of Public Health pictured) and Xuzhou Medical University in Xuzhou, China. Dr. Linkov's lectures focused on scientific productivity, academic leadership, and epidemiology.



SPOTLIGHT ON RANGOS

HEALTH, EXERCISE & APPLIED SCIENCE FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Urmi Ashar, in collaboration with School of Nursing faculty Dr. Cara Morrill-Stoklosa and Christine D'Antonio, along with student partners Madisyn Neudorfer from Public Health and Maura O'Neill from Nursing, were honored with the prestigious 2023 John G. Rangos, Sr. Prize. This accolade is a testament to the cross-disciplinary collaboration at Duquesne University, spotlighting our dedication to curricular innovation and our commitment to preparing students for successful, forward-thinking careers.

Dr. Elvin Khanjahani's research on disparity and food insecurity has been featured in multiple research articles

Dr. Joan Kiel's book Healthcare Information Management Systems will soon be translated into Korean.

New Maymester offering has been developed with Drs. Faina Linkov and Gerald Boodoo, focusing on exploring public health preventive strategies in Cuba

Dr. Linkov renewed an IPA with the local office of CDC/NIOSH on the collaboration in the area of Personal Protective Equipment Equity

Dr. Shensa and her colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh obtained an NIH grant titled "Nicotine and Tobacco Misinformation on Youth-Oriented Social Media Platforms"



ALUM SPOTLIGHT



Michael Wilsack, MHA '22 recalls how his concentration courses in Population Sciences taught by Dr. Faina Linkov changed the way he was thinking about the COVID pandemic and other public health issues he was encountering in his work and daily life. He credits the Population Science concentration for obtaining his current job as the Area Vice President of Sales for New England at Singulab. His role involves synergistically with his team to promote precision medicine, seamless EHR integration, antibiotic stewardship, and pharmacogenomics in long-term care facilities and assisted living facilities. In this position, he helps providers, pharmacists, and C-Suite executives optimize, innovate, and empower precision medicine programs in the senior living environment.



Christopher Hancher, HA '23 is a systems Analyst with the highly prestigious IT Rotation (ITR) program at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center. For young professionals looking for an IT career in a rewarding industry, UPMC offers the ITR program: a two-year, salaried accelerated learning program that includes four six-month rotations. Chris credits experiences at the HAPH department, specifically internship support from Dr. Joan Kiel in getting his current position.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: LAIBA MIRZA

Laiba Mirza is an undergraduate public health/pre-med student in the Department of Health Administration and Public Health. In the summer of 2023 she attended a highly competitive *Frontiers in Alzheimer's and Aging Research* course under the direction of Gerald Schatten, PhD. This course mentors promising junior and senior undergraduates from predominately underrepresented communities in sophisticated aging research and regenerative medicine technologies and encourage and support them as they embark on graduate studies in MSTEM fields. Laiba recalls how the first days of the course have been an eye-opening experience for her that solidified her desire to apply for medical school after graduating from the Public Health Program at Duquesne.

HAPH coordinated Duquesne's first Maymester in Cuba, titled *Global Public Health: Immersion in Cuba*. Many high-income countries, especially USA, could learn a lot from Cuba's model. Country's healthcare system is universally accessible with each community having access to family doctors living in the same neighborhood. To improve effectiveness and efficiency, Cuba focuses heavily on early prevention, reducing the needs for curative treatments. The program was packed with visits to primary care clinics, medical schools, hospitals, etc. Maymester visit was enriched by having Dr. Jim Withers, founder of Street Medicine specialty in Pittsburgh, as a part of this program.



HIGHLIGHTS

Graduation Rates: The three-year graduation rate is 100% for the MSOT program and 98% for the OTD program. OTD students who did not complete the degree successfully earned the MSOT and met requirements for the NBCOT exam.

Certification Examination: A seven-year review shows an 83% first-time pass rate for MSOT and 90% for OTD graduates—both above the national average. Overall, 100% of graduates passed the NBCOT exam.

Employment: Nearly 100% of alumni reported securing their first job within six months of graduation, primarily in adult acute care, pediatric outpatient and school-based settings, skilled nursing, and travel therapy.

Publications: In the 2023–2024 academic year, OT faculty and students published 9 peer-reviewed articles in top journals, including the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*.

Conference Presentations: During 2023–2024, faculty, students, and alumni delivered over 43 presentations at conferences such as the AOTA Annual Conference, ACRM, and APTA's Combined Sections Meeting.

Interprofessional Education: All OT students take part in the Duquesne Grand Rounds IPE Workshop, a unique opportunity to learn alongside peers from various health fields, engaging with real patients and their families.

Assistive Technology Minor: Launched in 2019, the AT Minor has been completed by over 20 OT students. Alumni report using design-thinking, problem-solving, and software skills from the minor in their clinical practice.



FACTS, FIGURES AND ACCOLADES

Duquesne University was one of the first programs in the nation to offer the freshman-entry MSOT degree (1994) and has received maximum accreditation and re-accreditation for both our MSOT and OTD program (established in 2016) from the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) since its inception.

Duquesne University remains the only dually, fully-accredited program in Western Pennsylvania to offer both the entry-level masters and entry-level doctorate degrees in occupational therapy.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

DEEPLY COMMITTED TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This academic year, the Department of Occupational Therapy has forged ahead with several new initiatives, including a specific focus to develop and implement continued education and professional development for current students and faculty, graduates and community partners. Organized by Dr. **Michelle McCann**, OTD, OTR/L, Clinical Associate Professor, Doctoral Capstone Coordinator and newly appointed RSHS Assistant Dean for Community Engaged Learning and Service, the following events were held in the Fall 2023 semester by the occupational therapy department:

- *3D Print Event: 3D Printing for Occupational Therapists*, Thursday, September 28, 2023
- *Using Smart Technology to Support Productive and Independent Living Across the Lifespan and Those with Chronic Conditions* – October 25, 2023
- *Project Paws: Exploring Animal-Assisted Interventions within Occupational Therapy Practice and Beyond* – November 9, 2023
- *Legal Solutions for Substituted Decision Making: Guardianships, Powers of Attorney and Statutory Remedies* – November 30, 2023

In Spring of 2024, events include:

- *College is an Option*, March 14, 2024
- *Interprofessional Responsibilities for Recognizing and Reporting Elder Abuse*, April 30, 2024
- *Occupational Therapy's Distinct Value in Mental Health Program Development and Intervention*, May 14, 2024



GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

In collaboration with Dr. Alia Pustorino-Clevenger, Director of Duquesne University's Center for Community Engaged Teaching and Research's Extracurricular Community Engagement, Associate Professor Dr. **Meghan Blaskowitz** secured funding in 2020 for a 5-year external grant from the US Department of Education to help support the Compass Program, a transition and postsecondary program for Duquesne University students with intellectual disabilities.

Dr. **Elena Donoso Brown**, Associate Professor, in collaboration with Dr. Sarah Wallace, PhD, CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow, professor and program director of the master's program in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Pittsburgh, and Ms. Rebecca Blemler, OTR/L, (Occupational Therapy Team Lead at Encompass Health Sewickley) was awarded a Therapy Grant from Encompass Health to identify key predictors to self-reported home program adherence by individuals after acquired brain injury and explore the role of caregivers in the implementation of these programs post-discharge.

Dr. **Michelle McCann** has received two mini-grants from Duquesne University's Center for Community Engaged Teaching and Research (CTER) which helped to support the launching of the "Dessert and Dialogue" continued education series in the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters.

The occupational therapy programs offered at Duquesne University are currently ranked #29 by the US News and World Report on "Best Health Schools", which is the highest ranked program in Duquesne University.

DISTINGUISHED FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- In the past two years, we have had two occupational therapy faculty, Professor Dr. **Jeryl Benson**, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA (in 2023) and Clinical Associate Professor and Program Director, Dr. **Elizabeth Deluliis**, OTD, OTR/L, FNAP, FAOTA (in 2024) receive the distinct honor of induction in the Roster of Fellows within the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) which recognizes occupational therapists who have made significant contribution to the profession.
- Dr. **Michelle McCann**, OTD, OTR/L was recognized by the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) with the 2023 Master Clinician of the Year Award, which recognizes an occupational therapist in the State of Pennsylvania who has consistently provided high quality occupational therapy services and who has shared their knowledge and advanced practice skills.
- Dr. **Elizabeth Deluliis**, OTD, OTR/L, was also recognized by the POTA with the 2023 Award of OT Recognition, which recognizes occupational therapy practitioner in the State of Pennsylvania whose knowledge and expertise have made significant contribution to the profession.
- Dr. **Erica Glaneman**, OTD Class of 2023 received the POTA 2023 OTA Student Award of Recognition, which recognizes one occupational therapy student in the State of Pennsylvania who has demonstrated leadership and excellence in academic or clinical performance.
- Under the mentorship of Associate Professor Dr. **Richard Simpson**, PhD, **Hannah Clark**, current 4th year MSOT student, was selected as the first occupational therapy student to receive a 9-month fellowship from the Tikun Olam International Leadership Program which supports students who seek to apply technology and innovation faced by people with disabilities, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.
- Dr. **Elizabeth Deluliis**, OTD, OTR/L, FNAP was inducted as a Distinguished Practitioner Fellow into the National Academies of Practice (NAP) for Occupational Therapy in April 2023.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

HIGHLIGHTS

In May 2024, the Physical Therapy Department proudly hosted the second annual **World Summit for Physical Therapy** at the picturesque Rome Campus of Duquesne University. This prestigious event provided an exceptional platform for students to engage with and learn from leading experts in the field, hailing from diverse countries including Italy, Israel, China, Kenya, and the United States. Attendees were afforded the unique opportunity to gain insights into the latest advancements and innovative practices in physical therapy from a global perspective. The presence of Provost Dr. David Dausey further enriched the experience for all participants, as he actively engaged with students and contributed to the vibrant discussions throughout the summit. This event not only fostered valuable connections among students and professionals but also highlighted the department's commitment to providing a world-class education and an enriched learning environment.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- The program consistently boasts a **100% employment rate** for graduates and a high first-time pass rate on the National Board Examination, demonstrating academic excellence and student preparedness.
- Faculty and students in the program actively engage in research, contributing to advancements in areas such as rehabilitation technology, pediatric physical therapy, and sports injury prevention. Research is often presented at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.
- The program maintains full accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) and is frequently recognized as one of the top physical therapy programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.



FACULTY & STUDENT SUCCESS

- Dr. Dominic Violi joined as a core faculty member, focusing on Anatomy and Orthopedics.
- Dr. Anne Burrows began her term as President of the American Anatomy Association.
- Dr. RobRoy Martin was recognized for his scholarly contributions to hip preservation, authoring 5 of the top 100 most-cited articles on the topic.

97%
pass rate
on the national
licensing exam

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Launched the HEAL (Health Education Awareness and Longevity) program, providing students an interdisciplinary exploration of health principles, including a cultural immersion in Pioppi, Italy, the birthplace of the Mediterranean Diet.
- DPT students led educational sessions for local high school students in the newly renovated Human Cadaver Lab and designed a Memorial Garden outside Rangos Hall, funded by the Rangos Prize.
- 5th-year students Melanie Tommer and Melanie Schultz presented posters at the AACPDM annual meeting, an international pediatric conference held in Quebec City, Canada.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY



FACTS, FIGURES AND ACCOLADES

- The Speech-Language Pathology program at Duquesne University completed a highly successful re-accreditation process and is excited to announce **we are fully accredited until July 31, 2031!**
- As the first SLP program to offer a freshman-admit, accelerated path to a master's degree in SLP, we remain the top ranked program of its kind according to the 2024 US News and World Report. This is exciting given that the US News and World Report also ranked the profession of SLP as the **#3 health care profession** and **#10 job overall!**
- Our commitment to the integration of classroom, clinical, one-on-one, and community-based instruction continues to grow and results in graduates who are leaders in the field. We are proud of a consistent **100% employment rate** 6 months after graduation, a **100% first time pass rate** on the Praxis examination for 16 consecutive years, and a **100% on-time graduation rate** for the past three years.





RECOGNITIONS OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

This past year was a year of recognition! We are proud to spotlight the following faculty and students for their accomplishments.

Dr. David S. Ford – recipient of the 2024 RSHS Dean’s Award for Innovative Teaching and Pedagogy (individual)

Dr. Abigail Delahanty – recipient of the 2024 RSHS Dean’s Award for Innovative Teaching and Pedagogy (group)

Dr. Heather Rusiewicz – recipient of the 2024 RSHS Dean’s Award for Service to the Mission

Dr. Seth Tichenor – acceptance to the ASHA Grant Review and Reviewer Training program

Mrs. Brooke Baumann – awarded 2024 SPEAK OUT! Clinical Education Grant to support individuals with Parkinson’s Disease and the clinical education of students in this area

Ms. Michelle Catao – second year professional phase student – recipient of the 2024 Students Preparing for Academic-Research Careers (SPARC) Award Program with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association AND the 2024 Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions (ASAHP) Scholarship of Excellence. Michelle was also recognized as the recipient of the 2024 Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Meritorious Poster!

HIGHLIGHTS

Clinical Education: The DU Speech–Language–Hearing Clinic continues to be an anchor of excellence in clinical care and education in this region and beyond, with an average of 70 clients across the lifespan visiting the on–campus Clinic each week. Our extensive partnerships with individuals in the community across a variety of exceptional health care and educational partnerships, along with learning with state–of–the art technology such as simulations, videostroboscopy, and ultrasound biofeedback deepens student learning across the years of the program.

Study Abroad: For the second consecutive year, Dr. Abigail Delahanty led a SLP study abroad experience in the Punta Gorda region of Belize. This past year, seven students provided care during a summer camp to children with disabilities in addition to exploring the sites of Southern Belize. Additionally, Dr. Heather Rusiewicz traveled to Tanzania to explore future experiences for faculty and students in SLP and RSHS for clinical education, scholarship, and outreach.

Publications and Presentations: In this past 2023–2024 academic year, SLP faculty have published 14 publications in top–tier, peer–reviewed journals, completed over 35 presentations at regional, national and international conferences, and published 2 book chapters.

Grants: As of Fall 2024, all five tenured and tenure–track faculty members are completing grant funded research projects, with funding received from internal grants, external foundation grants, and external federal grants. Notably, each of these investigators strongly focuses on the involvement and mentorship of SLP students in these and other projects.

Commitment to the Community: Community engagement of students, faculty, and staff of the SLP department is fundamental to this program. A few highlights of the 2023–2024 year include student experiences during summer programming at Child’s Way, speech, language, hearing screenings in the region including the Duquesne University/ YMCA Day Care, hosting meetings of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Stuttering Association, tutoring provided by SLP students for refugees supported in connection with Jewish Family and Community Services, and many faculty–led educational events for professionals and families in the community.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

HIGHLIGHTS

Graduation Rates: The Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Duquesne University remains above the national average published by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA).

Certification Examination: 100% of graduates in 2024 passed the certification on their first attempt, which is higher than the national first time pass rate of 91%.

Employment: Our graduates have accepted their first job or were accepted into competitive residencies or fellowship programs within six months of graduation.

Publications: Over the past academic year (2023-2024), physician assistant faculty and students have published peer-reviewed publications in journals including the *Journal of Academy of Physician Assistants*, *Journal of Physician Assistant Education*, *Decisions in Dentistry*, and *Dimensions of Dental Hygiene*

Conference Presentations: Over the past academic year (2023-2024), physician assistant faculty have presented at the 2023 *Pennsylvania Pain and Addiction Summit*, *Substance Use Disorders Certificate Program*, and *Society of Pediatric Physician Assistants*.

Interprofessional Education: Designed to prepare collaborative-ready healthcare professionals, all physician assistant students participate in the Duquesne University Grand Rounds Interprofessional Workshop which offers a unique interprofessional education (IPE) learning opportunity each year for students to learn directly with, from and about other health professions (including athletic training, health administration, physical therapy, physician assistant, public health, and speech-language pathology, nursing, and pharmacy) as well as a real patient and family from the community. Additionally, all physician assistant students participated in the Duquesne University Substance Use Disorder Symposium with pharmacy students.



FACTS, FIGURES AND ACCOLADES

- Duquesne University remains a fully accredited program with the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA to be in September 2032.
- The *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked The Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Duquesne University in the top 50 Best Graduate Schools 2023-2024. The Physician Assistant Studies program climbed up 47 spots to #46 in the country.
- Duquesne PA program is ranked #1 on Intelligent.com as the Best Physician Assistant Degree Program in 2024.

DISTINGUISHED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- Professor Kristyn Lowery has been nominated for the New Faculty Award for Professional Excellence which recognizes a program faculty member with three or fewer years of services who has made noteworthy contribution to PA Education.
- Ms. Terri Critchfield received the 2023-2024 RSHS Dean's Staff Award for Excellence recognizing the profound impact she made on the RSHS community.

ALUMNI AND STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Eric Rousell, PA-C was a recipient of the Dukes from the Last Decade Award. Mr. Rousell has distinguished himself through outstanding professional achievements that reflect the highest standards of excellence. Since graduating from Duquesne University, he has consistently demonstrated exceptional competence and innovation in his field. His career trajectory is marked by significant contributions to their industry, evidenced by being an FMF Corpsman in the US Navy and co-founding an emergency medicine residency for physician assistants. Eric is a veteran of the U.S. Navy, served as a flight paramedic, and a Paramedic Crew Chief and is now an invaluable asset at the VA Medical Center in Philadelphia. Furthermore, Eric has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to Duquesne University. His ongoing involvement and support for alma mater are evident through developing a \$10,000 scholarship to PA students at Duquesne University who are in financial need.
- Hannah Everhart, PA-C was a recipient of the 2023 Association of Schools Advancing Health Professionals Scholarship of Excellence. The purpose of the scholarship program is to recognize outstanding students in the allied health professions who are achieving excellence in their academic programs and have significant potential to assume future leadership roles in health professions.
- Amaya Hamilton, PA-S is a 5th year PA student-athlete. She holds the Women's Basketball Program Record for most games played. She also received Co-Female Student-Athlete of the Year. In addition to participating and volunteering in numerous organizations both on campus and off during her time at Duquesne, including the A-10 Commission on Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Animal Friends, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, she also received the Unsung Hero Award. The Unsung Hero Award is voted on by student-athletes and presented to the student-athlete who positively influences a program through accomplishments that may not be measured in a record book, but instead recognize a positive attitude, selflessness and leadership. Amaya will be completing her last clinical rotation at the Steadman Clinic in Vail, Colorado.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences Allied Health Exploration Camp

During the Summer 2024 Semester, the John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences enjoyed interacting with high school students interested in potential allied healthcare careers during the first Allied Health Exploration Summer Camp at Duquesne University! During this one-day exposure, the RSHS Community Engaged Learning and Service Team aligned with The Crossroads Foundation of Pittsburgh to provide a variety of hands-on activities in six of our allied health programs to community youth interested in healthcare careers. Faculty and student leaders in athletic training, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant studies, public health, and speech-language pathology promoted the many career opportunities available in each career pathway, and more importantly, how these disciplines collaborate interprofessionally for ensuring client-centered care and building healthy communities. Along the way, this mutually beneficial program laid the foundation for future community-engaged programming as well. Special thanks to faculty, students, staff, and our community partner, The Crossroads Foundation, for making this such a meaningful event!



RESEARCH SHOWCASE



Abigail (Abby) Delehanty, Ph.D.,
CCC-SLP

Abigail (Abby) Delehanty, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

*Assistant Professor, Assistant Department Chair,
Language Disorders & Autism Clinic
Department of Speech-Language Pathology*

Dr. Delehanty is an American Speech-Language-Hearing Association certified speech-language pathologist (SLP) who is dedicated to serving children and adolescents with communication disorders and those on the autism spectrum. Since joining the faculty in 2019, Dr. Delehanty has established a productive clinical research program that addresses important questions relevant to advancing assessment and intervention strategies for these populations.

With a **New Century Scholars Grant** from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation, Dr. Delehanty is conducting a new developmental research study that investigates social communication, language development, and speech motor control in toddlers on the autism spectrum. Developmental delays in these areas have cascading impacts on literacy, learning, and participation in people living with autism; however, observational measures of speech motor control for very young children are currently unavailable. Two Duquesne University SLP students are serving as trained scorers of a novel, play-based, assessment of speech, arm, and hand control and will contribute to the presentation and publication of the results. The research team is hopeful that findings will increase opportunities to access targeted interventions that will **promote well-being and meaningful participation** in people living with autism.

Dr. Delehanty's work enriches health sciences education and demonstrates **a strong connection to the University's mission**. She deeply values academic teaching, clinical teaching (at DU and abroad!), and mentoring in clinical research. Students have presented at local, regional, and national conferences, received awards for their contributions, and co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals. Check out a brand new publication in *Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences & Disorders* by Dr. Delehanty, Mrs. Lori Marra, and three students from DU SLP!

<https://doi.org/10.614/03/2689-6443.1329>



From left to right: Michelle Catão, Marisa Ricciardi, and Kelsey O'Connor presenting their research at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Annual Convention in New Orleans, LA. Their work was recently published in a peer-reviewed journal.

ALUMNI SHOWCASE

Athletic Training Alumni in Pittsburgh's Big Leagues

Three Duquesne alumni—Todd Tomczyk, Gabe Amponsah, and Brandon Mazza are making significant impacts as athletic trainers for Pittsburgh's professional sports teams. Tomczyk, who oversees the Pirates' sports medicine program, emphasizes the importance of preparation during high-pressure playoff moments. Amponsah, now the head athletic trainer for the Steelers, describes the intensity of the NFL season and the crucial role of managing player expectations. Mazza, assistant athletic trainer for the Penguins, highlights the unique bond with players, particularly during the high-stakes NHL playoffs.

Each of them credits Duquesne's top-ranked athletic training program for laying the foundation of their careers. Tomczyk reflects, "Duquesne set the foundation for my curiosity and learning about sports medicine." Amponsah adds, "The program is top-notch, with hands-on training and amazing internships." Mazza also appreciates the comprehensive education, particularly the full-year cadaver training, which provided unparalleled preparation.

Their roles are demanding but fulfilling, driven by a shared commitment to helping athletes reach their peak performance. Amponsah sums it up: "We work at the intersection of medicine and professional sports, learning and growing every day."

This story highlights the Duquesne difference, showcasing how the university's rigorous training and strong community have equipped these alumni to excel on the national stage.



Tom Tomczyk



Gabe Amponsah (left)



Brandon Mazza



Health Sciences Graduate Reaches Bigger Goals at Medical School

Peri Dimitriou, a recent graduate from Duquesne University's Health Sciences program, exemplifies the balance between academic rigor and personal passions. Alongside her studies, she is an accomplished ballroom dancer who has competed on the national stage. Peri's leadership as co-chair of the Miss Duquesne Pageant resulted in over \$19,000 being raised for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Reflecting on her time at Duquesne, she says, "Duquesne provided me with a community that feels like home, where my growth was nurtured." Recognized as the 2024 Outstanding Student of the Health Sciences program, Peri is now embarking on her journey to medical school. She credits Duquesne for her preparedness, saying, "The strong alumni network and the support I've received here have given me the confidence to pursue my dreams." Her story is a testament to the opportunities and support Duquesne offers its students, fostering both personal and professional growth.







duq.edu/healthsciences

302 School of Health Sciences Building
600 Forbes Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

rshs@duq.edu
412.396.6652

 /DuquesneRangos

 /duqhealthsci