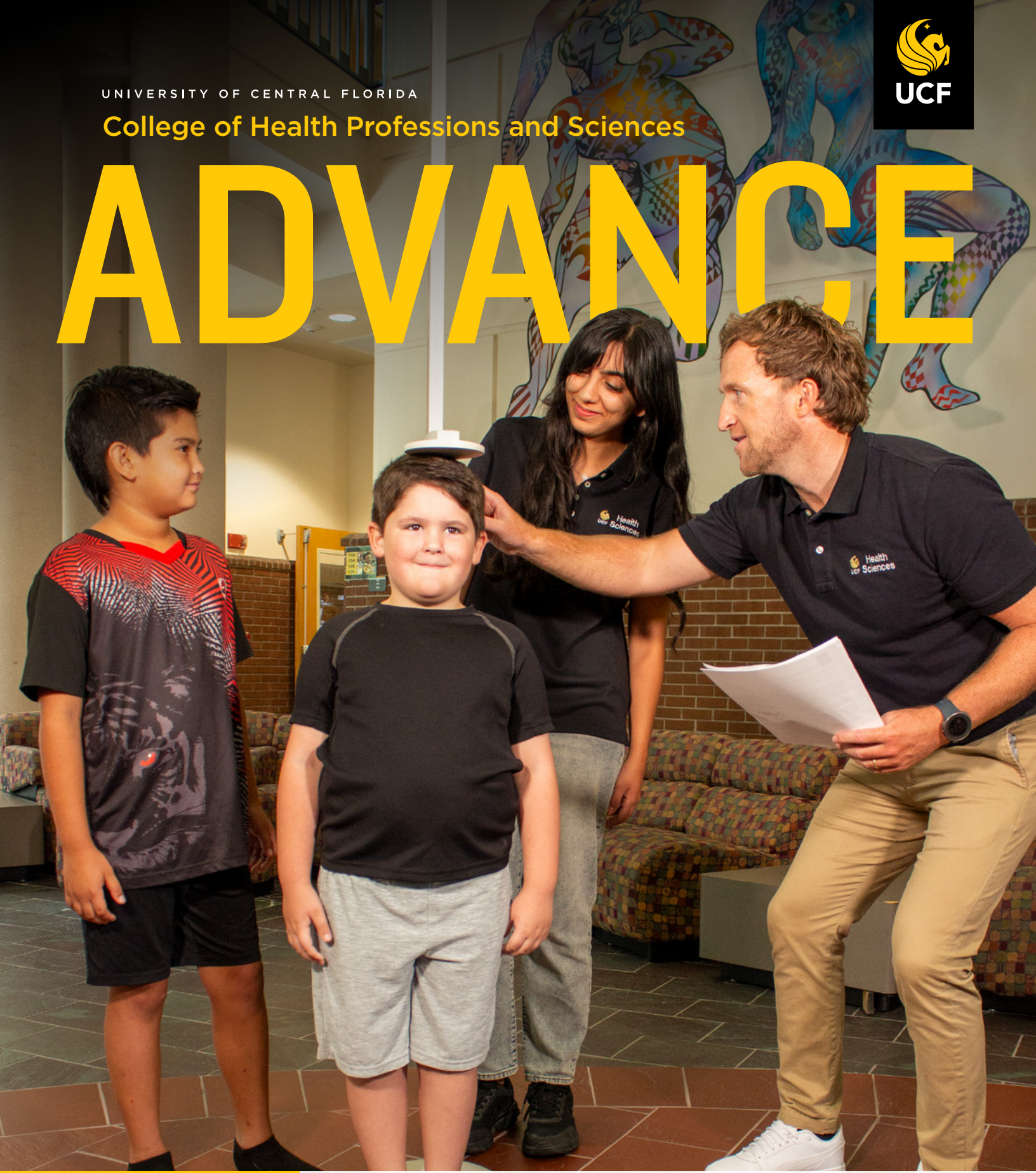
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

College of Health Professions and Sciences

ADVANCE



2022-2023 ANNUAL PUBLICATION

TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE. IMPROVING LIVES.

ESTABLISHED 2018

Dear Friends,

I'm pleased to share this edition of ADVANCE, our annual publication for fiscal year 2022-2023.

The end of this fiscal year marks a major milestone for us; it's been five years since we became the College of Health Professions and Sciences! The college was established on July 1, 2018, as part of an academic reorganization at UCF designed to align health-related programs to become more impactful.

And what a journey the last five years have been! We've strengthened our academic offerings, bolstered our research, served hundreds of families through our clinics, and created new community programs and partnerships. I'm proud to share that in 2023, we expect to confer our 10,000th degree

Some of our highlights include:

Student Success

- The Athletic Training Program has evolved from a bachelor's program to MAT, a new PhD in kinesiology has graduated its first cohort, and a social work and the law certificate is now available. In Fall 2023, we will launch a clinical exercise physiology track in our kinesiology master's degree program.

- Before graduating, 100% of our students complete at least one High Impact Practice – giving students a competitive edge and the chance to translate course work to the real world. We've increased internship sites, expanded study abroad programs and added a slew of specialized classes – like Introduction to Pharmaceuticals and Clinical Documentation for Health Professionals. Additionally, a Community Health Ambassadors program is giving students the chance to collaborate with local community health organizations.

- We opened a Rehabilitation Innovation Center, a first-of-its kind space that integrates research, teaching, and clinical service. The technologies housed there – which include a hologram machine, an immersive simulation suite and a smart apartment – are changing how we teach and train our students.

Research

- Our externally-funded research activity continues to surge upwards – reaching more than $6.6 million in grant dollars awarded last fiscal year – more than double what we achieved in our first year as a college.

- Our Institute of Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science was established, providing specialized laboratories and advanced equipment for faculty and students to advance research in the fields of exercise physiology and rehabilitation science. The Institute's annual conference draws hundreds of scientists and practitioners each year.

Community

- We're in our third year of delivering iREAD, an intensive summer reading program designed to help children with reading challenges, and a judo program in health sciences is working to better support children with autism and their families.

- We opened a Physical Therapy Clinic to serve the community and our student-athletes, and recently expanded PT services to a third location inside the Communication Disorders Clinic, to help treat our senior population and further integrate our clinical care services.

As we look to the future, we share a vision for a stronger and healthier community. And our focus is to continue to help students develop high-demand skills that prepare them to be innovative thinkers, researchers and compassionate care providers.

Together, we're transforming healthcare and improving lives. I'm grateful to each of you for being a part of this journey. I can't wait to see what's ahead.

Charge On!

Christopher Ingersoll

Christopher D. Ingersoll
Founding Dean
College of Health
Professions and Sciences

IN FOCUS

GRAND OPENING DAY

This spring saw the grand opening of the Rehabilitation Innovation Center, an immersive, first-of-its-kind facility for healthcare education and treatment. The event featured two ribbon cuttings: a morning celebration with faculty and staff, and an evening event with community partners. Guests enjoyed a closeup look at the high-tech tools being used to train the next generation of healthcare providers and the work underway to find new solutions to address the healthcare challenges of tomorrow.

Publication Credits

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ON THE COVER: Health Sciences Assistant Professor Keith Brazendale (pictured on right) studies childhood obesity prevention and treatment, specifically focusing on obesogenic behaviors such as physical activity, sleep and sedentary behavior in and out of school time. Brazendale developed and published a research hypothesis – the ‘Structured Days Hypothesis’ – to explain the etiology of children’s accelerated weight gain during summer months.

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BY THE NUMBERS

Total students enrolled at CHPS

6,953

5,989 **UNDERGRADUATE**

964 **GRADUATE**

10%

Percent of UCF students who are pursuing a degree from CHPS

Degrees awarded in 2022-23

1,919

100%

Percent of students who engaged in a high impact experience (research, internship, study abroad, service learning, and more)

2022-2023 Degree Programs

Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Communication Sciences and Disorders B.A.
- Communication Sciences and Disorders B.S.
- Communication Sciences and Disorders M.A.

Health Sciences
- Health Sciences B.S. – Health Promotion Track
- Health Sciences B.S. – Pre-Clinical Track

Kinesiology
- Kinesiology B.S. – Exercise and Sport Physiology Track
- Kinesiology B.S. – Strength and Conditioning Track
- Kinesiology M.S.
- Kinesiology Ph.D.

Social Work
- Social Work BSW
- Social Work MSW
- Social Work Track, Public Affairs Ph.D.

Athletic Training
- Athletic Training MAT

Physical Therapy
- Physical Therapy DPT

NEW DEAN'S ADVOCACY BOARD LAUNCHED

A new Dean's Advocacy Board will help expand the College of Health Professions and Science's partnerships and cultivate additional strategic connections in the Central Florida community and beyond. The five-member founding board is comprised of alumni, distinguished academicians and business and community leaders.

"This is a group of accomplished professionals and visionaries and I'm very grateful they are sharing their time and talents with us," says founding Dean Chris Ingersoll. "Their support and assistance will be essential as we continue to elevate our national reputation and find innovative ways to grow and strengthen our academic programs, clinical services, research and student success initiatives."

In addition to assisting in securing financial support, the board will explore ways to maximize volunteer involvement and participate in the college's ongoing strategic planning. The Advocacy Board meets quarterly, and members will serve three-year terms. Plans are in place to grow the board to at least 12 members.

Manish Hirapara '98
Hirapara is the CEO of PeakActivity, a technology and digital consultancy that helps enterprises achieve long-term, scalable growth. Hirapara previously oversaw e-commerce strategy and implementation for a large global online retailer. He is a board member with UCF Alumni and holds a BSBA in management from UCF.

Ana M. León
Ana León is a professor emerita with the School of Social Work at the College of Health Professions and Sciences. She retired from UCF in 2021 after more than 27 years as an administrator and educator. A nationally recognized expert on child mental health, León holds a Ph.D. from New York University and is a licensed clinical social worker.

Tom Messina '84
Messina was most recently CEO of Focus Forward Skilled Care which provides individualized, in-home care for medically fragile infants and children throughout the Central Florida region. He previously served for more than 20 years at UCF, first as the executive director of the UCF Alumni Association and later as associate vice president of Alumni Affairs. He holds a BSBA in management from UCF.

Rob Nemes '89
Nemes serves as the head of corporate accounts for EMD Serono, a biopharmaceutical company that specializes in therapies for infertility, multiple sclerosis and cancer. His career also includes more than 25 years in the pharmaceutical industry, including executive roles with Syneos Health and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Nemes has bachelor's degrees in psychology and business administration from UCF.

Rob Truckenmiller '00, '05MBA
Truckenmiller currently serves as vice president and head of U.S. market access for GSK, a global biopharmaceutical company that makes vaccines and specialty medicines to prevent and treat disease. He has 20 years of experience in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry including leadership positions at EMD Serono, UCB and Johnson & Johnson. Truckenmiller received his bachelor's in marketing and his MBA from UCF.

NEW LEADERS

Joel Cramer
Senior Associate Dean

William Hanney
Chair, Division of Physical Therapy

Ann Eddins
Director and Professor, School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Heather Lovett
Director of Communications and Marketing

Antonio Yancey
Director of Finance and Budget

Reappointments

Jeffrey Stout
Pegasus professor and director, School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences

NEW FACULTY AND STAFF

- **Latifa Abdelli, Lecturer**
- **Crisel Borges, Academic Advisor**
- **Lima Caban, Academic Advisor**
- **Cheryl Cavaliere, Lecturer**
- **Jennifer Collins, Autism Disorders Specialist**
- **Joel Cramer, Professor**
- **Korey Creary, Academic Advisor**
- **Kelly David, Instructor**
- **Jill Davis, Instructor**
- **Elizabeth Delahunty, Office Support Assistant**
- **Zack Dunaway, Human Resource Coordinator**
- **Sarah Fretti, Assistant Professor**
- **Nina Garcia, Academic Advisor**
- **Grace Gonzalez De Jesus, Academic Advisor**
- **Shante Jeune, Assistant Professor**
- **Tronaye Jones, Budget Analyst**
- **Lana Kiswani, Admissions Specialist**
- **Christina Kuchman, Instructor**
- **Yen-Han Lee, Assistant Professor**
- **Celeste Lequay, Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialist**
- **Kelsey Limonta, Academic Advisor**
- **Aleri Lopez Vega, Administrative Assistant**
- **Shuang Lu, Assistant Professor**
- **Jaclyn Lucey, Instructor**
- **Lasha Markham, Communications Specialist**
- **Kennedi Martin, Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialist**
- **Milene Martinez, Administrative Coordinator**
- **Kendall McCormick, Admissions Specialist**
- **Anna Milbert, Training Specialist**
- **Natalie Morales, Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialist**
- **Jason Navarro, Budget Analyst**
- **Gina Neuhofer, Training Specialist**
- **A'Naja Newsome, Lecturer**
- **Jonathan Ortiz, Academic Advisor**
- **Ana Rivera, Lecturer**
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- **Joy Scheidell, Assistant Professor**
- **Alexander Scheiner, Office Support Assistant**
- **Ashley Turner, Human Resources Partner**
- **Rhonda Uzodinma, Administrative Assistant**
- **Pam Kenne Wagner, Project Coordinator**
- **Catharine Warren, Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialist**
- **Angela Ziegler, Instructor**

Using Smart Home Technology

for Innovative Solutions in Assistive Healthcare

A new "Smart Apartment" equipped with assistive technology is helping individuals with disabilities gain greater independence while preparing students for future roles in rehabilitative care. The room in UCF's Rehabilitation Innovation Center mimics a residential living space and is equipped with a hospital bed, Hoyer lift, television, Nest thermostat, fan, lamp, and window shutters — all of which are bound to smart home technology like Amazon's Echo Dot and Echo Show. The items operate in response to Alexa commands, which the patient can make by either their voice or by tracking their eyes on a specially designed device.

After seeing similar rooms at facilities like the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center, the idea was brought to UCF's College of Health Professions and Sciences by Carolyn Buchanan, an instructor in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD). She is also the regional coordinator of the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Atlantic Region Demonstration Center, which partners with UCF to make the space available to patients in the community.

The Smart Apartment serves as a training center for patients who have disabilities (e.g., quadriplegic, speaking impairments, etc.) to learn how to use the technology before installing it in their own homes. The patients are instructed by CHPS graduate students who work under the guidance of faculty. Students receive valuable hands-on learning experience and clinical service hours that are required for the completion of their degree.

"By using the technology, we're exploring different avenues to help support the patient, who may otherwise rely heavily on caregivers, to achieve independence," says Clinical Instructor Kelly David, who supervises while students train patients on the technology. For example, some patients who have speaking impairments can use a digital accessibility device, like an eye-tracking-enabled iPad, that monitors a user's eye gaze on the screen to make a pre-programmed selection using Alexa.

A patient can complete a wide range of tasks including using a Hoyer lift, which can transfer the patient from their bed into a wheelchair without the help of a caregiver. Depending on their motor capability, the patient can either speak, use eye gaze, activate a selection button, or "switch" wired to their communication device to command Alexa to "Lift the Hoyer into the bed" and follow through with continued steps of mobilizing the patient into their preferred position.

Currently serving as a "testbed," the Smart Apartment's future expansion will include incorporating other UCF disciplines to help improve patients' access to quality healthcare by identifying solutions to counter technological gaps. For example, Buchanan has worked with UCF's Maker Space to create inexpensive 3D prints of selection switches, which can then be wired by engineering students to connect to digital accessibility devices. The switch increases accessibility to the technology by adding another way for patients to interact with their environments. The Smart Apartment exemplifies how a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare can connect patients to innovative digital tools that may otherwise be inaccessible.

The Smart Apartment is available to patients by scheduling free appointments through the FAAST Center. The Center also provides guidance on the financial and other resources available to provide the smart technology best suited for the patients' needs.

New Immersive Simulation Suite Will Teach UCF Students, Help Patients

A new immersive, mixed reality room is being used for both student learning and patient care. The Blended Learning Interactive Simulation Suite, or BLISS, uses 270-degree, floor-to-ceiling touchscreen walls that display curated video and audio, providing an immersive view of any event, location or experience — either real or created. The technology was funded by a philanthropic gift from the Paul B. Hunter and Constance D. Hunter Charitable Foundation.

Acquired to better prepare students for the frontline roles they'll encounter as healthcare practitioners, the technology serves as a unique and hands-on learning tool.

"It allows us to create environments that have a higher level of realism," says Bari Hoffman, associate dean of clinical affairs for the College of Health Professions and Sciences. "We want students to be used to the sights, sounds, stressors and energy associated with hospitals, clinics and other locations where they will be providing treatment."

BLISS is unique in that the user is fully immersed in the room with no headsets or tethers. Plans are in place to add smells and a floor that can vibrate and rumble, bringing another dimension to the experience.
The suite joins a host of other digital health technology tools already housed in the Rehabilitation Innovation Center, including a hologram machine, a maker space with a 3D printer used to adjust toys and household items for patients with rehabilitative needs, and a "Smart Home" room designed to train clinicians, patients and caregivers how to adapt a home for safety and better navigation. BLISS can be used to demonstrate a medical procedure, recreate an emergency or incident, or display anatomical models in greater detail. Students can be transported virtually to any environment in the world, enabling them to respond to treatment scenarios or practice skills in a more realistic environment. Faculty can lecture, demonstrate techniques and then engage students in applying their knowledge through exercises and skills stations.

For example, students studying to become speech language pathologists can examine anatomical models using touchscreen technology to rotate, zoom in and view inside the jaw, neck and throat. Skills stations for pre-med students in health sciences can take place in a mock hospital room where they can learn to navigate and gain information through patient charts and medical equipment. And students studying athletic training can practice first aid skills in a crowded football stadium with the roar of the crowd and the presence of anxious teammates, coaches and fans looking on.

"We can give students access to locations and experiences that might not be possible in person due to cost or geography considerations," says Hoffman. "We can provide the backdrop for any clinical or non-clinical setting. It can be a patient's home, the inside of an ambulance or a medical clinic … and it could also be a roadside traffic crash, a crowded airport terminal or an entertainment venue. The backdrop, combined with the use of our manikins and other high tech, hands-on equipment in the center, is what makes this truly unique."

Faculty are developing new scenes and scenarios for students, as well as tailoring existing healthcare lessons developed by hospitals and universities in the United Kingdom which are using the same system there.

Associate Professor Jennifer Tucker teaches coursework on neurological physical therapy in which students study the evaluation and treatment of patients with movement problems due to disease or injury of the nervous system. Her students will examine patient cases involving stroke, conduct a comprehensive assessment and develop short and long-term recovery treatment protocols. Their classroom will be in BLISS, giving them an up-close look at the course content.

"The space just lends itself to a higher level of student engagement," says Tucker, who has already taken students in for any early look and a basic skills exercise. "It felt very real, very quickly for them and I could see how the environment required them to actively think on their feet and react and respond to what's happening around them."

Research on the use of simulation in healthcare education supports that the more "real" the simulation, the more engaged students become, and the better learning outcomes they have. Having hands on and immersive experiences helps close the gap between the classroom and the real-world experience that students will encounter as health care practitioners.

In addition to serving as a learning lab and classroom for students, BLISS serves as a therapy tool for patients served by the college's community clinics, including the Communication Disorders Clinic. Clinicians there assist patients who have communication and hearing challenges and they'll incorporate the tech in therapy sessions.

For example, a patient struggling with stuttering could undergo therapy at a simulated movie theater ticket counter, or a patient being treated at the Aphasia House might practice interacting with the cashier immersed in a grocery store setting.

The space can be transformed into a dentist's office, barber's shop or noisy shopping center to help children with autism adjust and manage heightened sensory reactions. Children with mobility impairments in the Go Baby Go! program can test drive their specially retrofitted cars against the backdrop of a simulated racetrack.

BLISS is also a site for the clinic's summer programs for children with reading challenges. Youth in the camp can see their storybooks come to life and interact with the words and the characters.

"The possibilities are endless," says Hoffman who is working across UCF's Academic Health Sciences Center to help make the technology accessible for faculty and students across all health-related disciplines to practice team-based care. "The only limitation is your imagination."

2022-2023 RESEARCH IMPACT

Total FUNDED research dollars

$6,667,771

5%

Increase in total funded research dollars over Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Total PROPOSED research funding

$17,336,184

111%

Increase in total funded research dollars since Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the first year CHPS was a college

IN FOCUS

2023 IEPRS CONFERENCE

The Institute for Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science held its third annual conference on Jan. 27 and 28 at FAIRWINDS Alumni Center on UCF's campus in Orlando, bringing together researchers, clinicians, students and athletes to exchange ideas and advance the fields of exercise and rehabilitation science.

At the 2023 event, participants heard from experts who delivered the latest on topics related to pain science, performance science in Major League Baseball, fitness and physical activity after stroke, cognition for sport performance, the importance of nutrition during rehabilitation, and more.

UCF Researcher Provides Resources for Professionals to Aid Young Children with Developmental Disabilities

Jacqueline Towson, a dually certified professional in speech-language pathology and early childhood special education, uses her unique perspective to enhance training and support for professionals who work with children who have special needs.

Through her research and contracts with the Florida Department of Health, Division of Children's Medical Services, Jacqueline Towson is informing best practices around training teachers, speech-language pathologists, and other clinical service providers to best meet the language and literacy needs of young children with special needs. She is uniquely qualified to do this work thanks to her background in special education and her experience and training as a speech-language pathologist.

Towson's focus on training tools and assessment of the efficacy of these tools, allows her to extend her impact exponentially through other educators and clinicians.

For nearly 15 years before coming to UCF, Towson served in the Georgia and Texas public school systems as a speech-language pathologist and an early childhood special education teacher; and later, as an administrator of those programs.

As rewarding as that work was to her, she wanted to extend her impact to more children, beyond her school district.

Her passion has always been to improve access and equality to early language and literacy skills for young children through speech-language pathology and early intervention services, Towson says. She believes in implementing evidence-based practices within the systems that already exist.

"Early language and literacy are the gateways to everything for children," Towson says.

She was recently appointed the principal investigator on the statewide, Technical Assistance and Training Support (TATS) program. It supports programs serving prekindergarten children with disabilities by providing technical assistance and training.

Towson helps lead a team of professionals committed to providing resources on best practices for teachers and the therapists who work with children ages 3-5 receiving services in exceptional education. TATS is based at UCF, with staff providing technical assistance and training in six regions throughout the state.

Utilizing her strength and prior experiences with assessment, Towson was awarded a contract with the Early Steps program, building a professional learning system to support statewide implementation of the Child Outcomes Survey (COS). This system will help early intervention service providers to use the tool with fidelity to better assess program outcomes. The COS is an established tool that looks at things like cognition, adaptive skills, social skills and more upon entry and exit from early childhood special education programs. Towson hopes to establish continuity from the Early Steps program into pre-school age programs for kids with special needs. She is enlisting the help of students on this contract, including doctoral students, master's students and undergraduates.

Towson says the most efficient systems are built when working alongside stakeholders in real-time, rather than the traditional launch, assess, and regroup way of working. She says taking stakeholder input as they are building the professional learning system allows everyone to more quickly see if it is working as intended.

Through her research, Towson has shared best practices for early learning acquisition through more than 55 national and international refereed conference presentations since 2013, and more than 20 publications during her time at UCF.

One of Towson's biggest professional motivators is knowing there are children and families out there who are going without services due to a shortage of personnel available to help them.

Toward that end, she recently was the co-PI on a $1.25 million personnel preparation grant from the United States Department of Education that allows graduate students to earn a certificate that prepares them to work with children with high-intensity needs who require specialized intervention in language and literacy.

"I want to teach other people how to teach, and that's exactly what I'm doing through all my roles-whether that's teaching in a classroom, working with TATS or helping to develop and improve the tools that we use to assess outcomes," says Towson.

UCF Team Awarded $2.3M Grant for Innovative Intervention to Prevent Falls

Falls — and the fear of falling — are the leading cause of injury, disability and hospitalization among racially diverse, low-income older adults, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To help address this critical issue and reduce disparities, a team of University of Central Florida researchers is partnering with the City of Orlando on a $2.3 million project funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The project seeks to address the public health problem and prevent falls with the optimization of technology that is low-cost and portable.

Innovative Approach

With the new funding, Ladda Thiamwong, an associate professor at the College of Nursing and the project's principal investigator, will work with an intradisciplinary team of experts to roll out a large-scale pilot in low-income, senior communities in Central Florida of a fall assessment intervention they've developed and tested.

"The primary goal is to prevent falls," Thiamwong says. "With this real-world testing, we hope to be able to prove it works and is sustainable in order to scale up and prevent falls in more communities."

The researchers' Physio-Feedback and Exercise, or PEER, intervention program was successfully tested as part of an NIH-funded two-year technology study. Their work has also been published in Research in Gerontological Nursing. The researchers showed that their intervention, which uses technology to help reduce people's fear of falling and improve their balance, was feasible, safe, and improved balance, muscle strength and fall risk.

The technology resembles a small scale and links to a computer. It can be easily transported to rural or low-income communities to provide immediate physio-feedback. The immediate part is important, Thiamwong says. "Older adults trust the results more when it is immediate," she says. "It begins a conversation and empowers them to do something about it, and with the technology able to show improvement over time, it is also encouraging."

Perception versus Reality

For more than half of older adults, their perception of their fall risk and actual physical fall risk are not aligned, Thiamwong says. She says a fear of falling is just as risky as poor balance as it may limit their physical activity.

To address this, the researchers' intervention includes a fall risk appraisal matrix that categorizes participants into quadrants looking at both their fear and balance. The objective is to bring all participants to low fear and normal balance by the end of the eight-week intervention. The program includes cognitive reframing to reduce fear and both a group- and home-based exercise program led by a trained peer coach to improve balance.

"Social support from peers is important to build connections and hopefully continue to keep the physical activity going even after the intervention," Thiamwong says.

Critical Collaboration

The researchers say collaboration with an interdisciplinary team is critical to address older adults falling and other healthcare challenges.

Thiamwong began her collaborations with the one of the project's co-investigators, College of Health Professions and Sciences Pegasus Professor Jeffrey Stout, after seeing some of his publications on aging research shortly after she joined UCF.

Stout, who is director of the college's School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences, says the collaborations have developed into a research partnership that has been very successful.

"There is a great potential for collaboration between programs and faculty expertise in different colleges at UCF," Stout says. "Interdisciplinary collaboration is important because it allows different fields to share knowledge and ideas, which can lead to new breakthroughs."

One of the ways UCF fosters interdisciplinary collaboration is through research clusters, such as the Disability, Aging and Technology cluster that Thiamwong and project co-investigator Joon-Hyuk Park, an assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, are a part of. The team has been successful in conducting NIH- and UCF-funded studies.

"The cluster is an excellent facilitator to promote interdisciplinary research," Park says. "The most challenging questions we, as researchers and scientists, seek to address these days can't be tackled from one discipline, especially when it comes to human science to understand human behavior and study instrumentations. We need expertise from various fields."

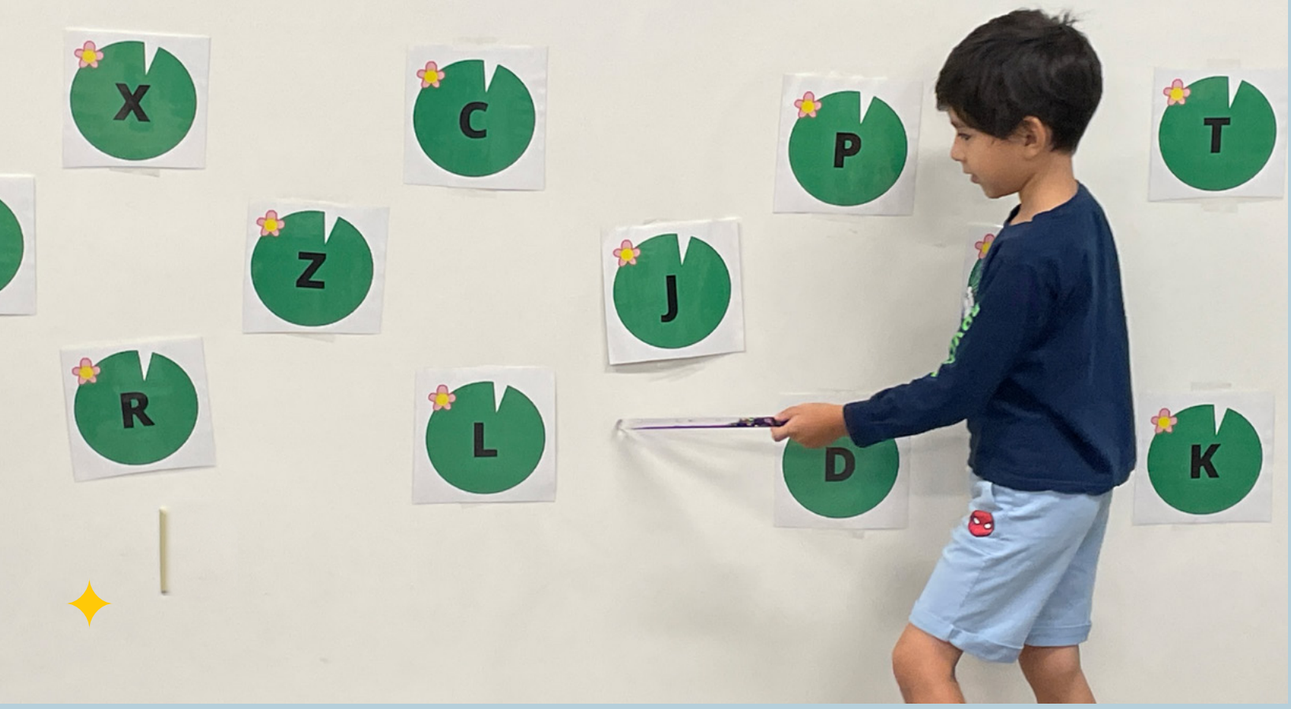
Nichole Lighthall, an assistant professor of psychology and project co-investigator, says that many factors influence older adults' fall risk, including physical health, socioeconomic status, as well as psychological motivations and feelings.

"In addition, if you want to launch a fall-risk intervention that involves technology, you have to consider factors like older adults' ability to use the technology and cost effectiveness," she says.

"It's easy to see how problems like this require a team of experts that understand each factor and know how to conduct science across traditional disciplinary boundaries," she says. "It's a truly excellent team and an important problem we are trying to solve."

CHPS Supports Autism Community With Resources, Research

Faculty conduct cutting-edge research on autism spectrum disorder, discovering innovative ways to better support this community. Through free camps and programs, Central Florida families can benefit from their work.



One Saturday morning at UCF, a shy, young girl began to learn the basics of judo practice — the proper stance, movements, how to hold opponents and how to safely fall to the mat.

She was starting the 15-week UCF Judo Program, run by Associate Professor Jeanette Garcia of the College of Health Professions and Sciences. The program isn't an ordinary judo lesson; it is specifically for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. Garcia and her team of 20 undergraduate health sciences students research how movement interventions like judo can help improve physical activity, sleep quality, social skills, self-confidence and academic performance in kids with ASD, which affects about one in 36 children nationally, according to a new report released from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) just ahead of Autism Awareness Month, which occurs in April.

According to the CDC, autism is a developmental disorder that can result in a variety of symptoms, such as challenges with social communication and interaction skills, leading to impaired speech and language development. Some with ASD also may have sensory issues. For this young girl, judo brought her out of her shell. "Even after the program, she continued to take lessons and earned a yellow belt. She ended up coming back to present with me at a conference about the benefits of judo," Garcia says. "She had no issues demonstrating judo at the conference, and even went on to take the lead in her school play."

Garcia's research is showing that kids with ASD enjoy structured formats, like judo and martial arts. Structure can help ease social anxiety, which often affects this population.

"Prior research [on interventions for kids with ASD] didn't examine whether kids enjoyed the program," Garcia says. "That's important to me because if they like it, it'll be sustainable."

The research is looking at benefits to parents of children with ASD, too, including changes in their sleep quality and stress levels, says Garcia. Family members often participate with their kids in the judo lessons.

The UCF Judo Program is in its fourth semester thanks to grant funding and continuous interest from the community. It is just one of many ways the university supports the ASD community through resources and research. Thanks to state legislative funding, individuals with ASD, their families and educators in the seven Central Florida counties surrounding UCF have access to a vast array of resources. Beginning in 1999, the UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), located in Central Florida Research Park, hosts family education seminars, assists parents in the educational planning of their child, offers communication-development programs for toddlers and preschoolers, trains teachers in best practices to educate ASD students and much more.

"We serve the entire lifespan from the time a person is diagnosed with ASD," says Teresa Daly, director of CARD.

More than 20,200 families are registered with CARD, which brings its services to the community in schools, scout troop meetings, daycares, community agencies and others.

"CARD is not a place where you bring people for services," Daly says. "We go out into the community to provide our services in the natural environment each case calls for."

Routinely, CARD develops new programs to serve the ASD community in all stages of life. Programs help young children with reading, math, behavior and social skills; teens with learning how to drive; and adults with living independently, attending college, and even in meeting others in the local ASD community with game nights and dinner outings.

The Spring 2023 graduates of the UCF Judo Program spent 15 weeks learning the basics of this martial art, which requires physical coordination, discipline and balance. The program is part of a research study that explores the physical and psychosocial health benefits of judo practice on youth with special needs.

Daly says CARD is expanding its capabilities to serve the growing Hispanic population in Central Florida, with four bilingual clinicians already on staff.

An additional perk families receive from CARD is they are first in line to participate in numerous research programs at the university that call for participation from those with ASD. Daly stays in close contact with UCF researchers from the College of Health Professions and Sciences, the College of Community Innovation and Education, and the College of Medicine to help them recruit participants for their studies. Garcia's judo program is one of them.

Another study is Camp iREAD, a summer program for kids with ASD who have a reading skill level from pre-kindergarten to third grade. Led by Carrie Loughran '99 '08MA, an instructor in and graduate from the communication sciences and disorders program, and Nancy McIntyre, assistant professor of communication sciences and disorders, Camp iREAD examines how hands-on, interactive activities while reading improves comprehension.

"We're hoping our program shows that when you make content from a book real and something you can physically engage with, it becomes meaningful and you can better comprehend the concepts you're reading," Loughran says. In just its second iteration, Camp iREAD will take place this summer along with an additional pilot program that can bring Camp iREAD to the next level. Using the College of Health Professions and Science's new Blended Learning Interactive Simulation Suite (BLISS), a mixed reality space with 270-degree, floor-to-ceiling touchscreen walls, children will be immersed in virtual books, allowing them to interact with the words, characters and pictures, and giving them new means to engage with and comprehend what they are reading.

Loughran and McIntyre will study how immersive technology, such as what's at BLISS, improves reading comprehension in children with ASD, and graduate students' readiness to educate this population of students.

Similarly, McIntyre is analyzing data to understand how a bout of physical activity may enhance reading comprehension in children with ASD. Thanks to an internal grant, Garcia and McIntyre observed that 45 minutes of judo prior to reading may improve focus and attention during the reading lesson. They are in early stages of analyzing their results, and if found to be successful, they intend to seek a larger grant to continue studying the connection between physical activity and reading in ASD children, says Garcia.

Physical activity and learning are strongly linked in the ASD community, researchers are finding, and the Early Communication and Play (ECAP) Lab and UCF Go Baby Go! are expanding that understanding, too.

Popular toys and even books for children often are designed for neurotypical, able-bodied kids, leaving out those with different abilities. Thanks to the ECAP Lab and Go Baby Go! kids of all abilities have a chance to play and, as a result, learn.

Go Baby Go! for instance modifies ride-on toy cars for toddlers, giving those with limited mobility new means to play and interact with their environment, which often results in more communication and expression. This and other adaptive toys offered through these research programs help kids, including those with autism, learn through play and engage with their communities.

Participating families say opportunities like this are difficult to come by.

"It can be particularly challenging for our families because their children not only have autism, but oftentimes other complex medical conditions," says Clinical Associate Professor of Physical Therapy Jennifer Tucker, the director of Go Baby Go!

Approximately 40% of the children the ECAP Lab and Go Baby Go! serve are diagnosed with ASD. Together, they are studying how their interventions improve communication, mobility and participation. They accept new participants on an ongoing basis.

The work doesn't stop there. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) Center at UCF connects Floridians with disabilities, including those with autism, with assistive technologies and related services to increase their independence. The Center pairs children and adults with the right devices, like specially designed communication apps, cognitive aides and adapted computer equipment, and helps families and service-providers learn how to support their use by individuals with disabilities in everyday environments.

At the College of Medicine, researchers are studying ASD on a molecular level, Daly says, and the Toni Jennings Exceptional Education Institute in the College of Community Innovation and Education spearheads initiatives to prepare and retain teachers to serve students with special needs.

"Receiving an ASD diagnosis can be overwhelming," Daly says. "We are here to help families get the resources and care they need at a time when we know their minds may be in a million different directions."

Communication Sciences and Disorders students collaborate with CARD and the behavioral pediatrics team from Nemours Children's Health to provide free screenings for autism for families of young children. Students were able to sit in on screenings and followed up with language assessments, while CARD provided evaluation and therapy resources.

CARD staff teamed up with Special Olympics to set up a sensory support room for athletes participating in the Florida Games.

CARD partnered with Loyal Source to offer summer employment internships for teens with autism spectrum disorder. Students participated in a week long experience in a corporate setting where they learned resume building techniques as well as other career and life skills.

When Interprofessional "Play" Becomes Progress

Speech-language pathologist Julie Feuerstein and physical therapist Jennifer Tucker share a passion for improving clinical care and the quality of care for children with complex communication and motor needs. Feuerstein leads the Early Communication and Play (ECAP) Lab and Tucker the Innovative Mobility Initiative (IMOVE) Lab – both designed to address access, engagement and communication among special populations.

It was a natural fit when the two assistant professors from the College of Health Professions and Sciences joined forces to create unique, community-based enriched play experiences for infants and toddlers with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Rett syndrome and other complex medical conditions. Feuerstein and Tucker use communication and mobility supports to offer inclusive playdates that include art, music, movement and sensory exploration at local parks, playgrounds, a local family-run farm and inside UCF's Rehabilitation Innovation Center.

The program is made possible through a philanthropic gift from the Bailes Family Foundation. The program team also recently received funding from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation to further their research into the interplay of communication and motor skills and uncover new interventions.

"We know that children's development doesn't unfold in silos," says Feuerstein. "Their motor communication, social emotional and cognitive skills are integrated such that development in one area influences development in other areas. Our philosophical approach is that we need to treat the whole child."

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attacks and stroke, is the leading cause of death in the U.S. But it doesn't have to be. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), an estimated 80% of cardiovascular disease is preventable.

However, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to prevention. According to the CDC, healthcare disparities, including geography, race and ethnicity and other social determinants of health, can limit some people's chances to be healthy.

To improve the heart health for people living in low-income or rural communities where there is a higher prevalence of heart disease and higher death rates compared to people living in urban settings, healthcare workers need to "meet patients where they are at," says Desiree Díaz, a global simulation expert and associate professor at the College of Nursing.

"For example, if I tell someone that they need to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, but they are unable to go to the market and are eating in a soup kitchen, I'm not helping them improve their health," she says.

Associate Professor Desiree Diaz

That's why she is part of a team of UCF researchers leading a new two-year, nearly $500,000 project funded by the Health Resources & Services Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Health, to do just that. They aim to educate the next generation of nurses, nurse practitioners and social workers to ultimately improve the heart health of individuals living in medically underserved communities.

"It's getting back to the heart of the nursing profession," Díaz says. "Nursing was founded on this concept of promoting human health for the individual in the setting they live in. For providers to do that, they need to practice health advocacy."

And it's not just nursing, says project member Reshawna Chapple, an associate professor in the School of Social Work in the College of Health Professions and Sciences.

"Social work students are also taught the importance of meeting their clients and patients where they are," says Chapple. "This 'person in the environment perspective' is important to help with better outcomes and build connection to the community."

The team has developed and is implementing four "cases" using high-fidelity, or extremely realistic, simulation scenarios to foster inter- and intradisciplinary care within public health nursing to medically underserved communities with a high risk of cardiovascular disease.

Students work together in their respective healthcare roles to care for and promote public health to the patients in these cases, which range from a community blood pressure clinic to an acute care setting in an emergency room to a mental health assessment at a chronic health visit. The patients will vary, including all types of races and ethnicities depending upon risk factors and disparities.

To make these scenarios as realistic as possible, Díaz isn't relying on the manikins typically associated with simulation learning. She's using "standardized patients" — real people who are trained to portray the role of patients or family members in a consistent, standardized manner. "This allows the learners to communicate with humans, and that human emotion and experience is really important," she says.

Technology, though, still plays a role. There are blood pressure cuffs that can be simulated to alter the blood pressure and telehealth robots for undergraduate nursing students to consult with nurse practitioner students — a practice that is common in rural communities.

Collaboration across teams is key, Díaz says. "Everyone on the healthcare team plays a part in promoting better health and reducing disparities," she says. Chapple agrees. "When social workers, nurses and other healthcare professionals work together, they can combine their knowledge to focus on the patient care from various perspectives," Chapple says.

Nursing students will learn and practice techniques in assessing a patient's health literacy, and in communicating with patients from a different background or culture to best educate each individual patient and promote better health.

The students will also demonstrate skills in acute recognition of a stroke, where a rapid response is critical to better outcomes. Social work students will work with nursing students on resource utilization and how to best access resources in the community to improve public health. The social work graduate students will conduct a biopsychosocial assessment on the patient and gain an understanding of various social worker roles and skills needed in a healthcare setting.

The research seeks to establish and validate simulation scenarios to promote public health nursing with inter- and intradisciplinary education and expose students to public health nursing — a field where more nurses and providers are needed.

Whether the students pursue a career path in public health nursing or not, Díaz says that the education gained from the scenarios will apply in any field.

"Our goal is to create well-rounded healthcare providers," Díaz says. "We all have to promote human health on all levels, no matter where we are."

Associate Professor Reshawna Chapple

How UCF's Aphasia House Helps Patients Like ✦ Kyle Burke ✦

It's a Thursday morning in late April and the sound of excited voices and laughter are emanating from the large kitchen at the Aphasia House. Gathered inside are a small army of graduate students, clad in matching black polos embroidered with the name of their program: Communication Sciences and Disorders. They are all studying to become speech-language pathologists.

It's graduation day. But not for the students.

It's a commencement ceremony for their patients. In this case, four adults with aphasia — a communication disorder that can occur suddenly following a stroke or head injury but may also develop slowly from a brain tumor or a progressive neurological disease. June is Aphasia Awareness Month.

One of these four patients is Kyle Burke, a constantly smiling 25-year-old who seemingly knows everyone in the room.

He arrives at the ceremony in an orange Clemson University T-shirt. In May 2020, he was enrolled as a student and celebrating the completion of final exams and making the dean's list when the pandemic brought him back home. It was there that a skateboarding accident would leave him with a traumatic brain injury and an inability to speak, write or understand language.

His family found the Aphasia House at UCF — one of just a few of its kind in the country and known for its intensive and highly-personalized treatment.

"Kyle's a young guy and I just thought, 'what a perfect environment,' " recounts his mother, Deborah Burke, in an early interview. "This is what he needs. He needs to be out with a bunch of people in a college environment. And he was excited."

In October of 2021, Burke began his first delivery of the six-week program at UCF.

On April 21, 2023, he's completed the program for what marks his eighth and final time.

Thriving Through Therapy

"Kyle came to us with severe expressive and receptive language deficits making understanding what people said to him in speech and in writing severely impaired, as well as being severely impaired in his ability to express himself," says Angela Ziegler, an instructor in communication sciences and disorders and licensed clinical aphasia educator. "He initially didn't know many of the errors he made while trying to communicate because he couldn't hear his own errors." Burke's treatment plan called for working on expressive and receptive language, making sure he could accurately understand what people say to him and easily formulate into words what he wants to say to others. His program consisted of individual therapy administered four hours a day, four days a week for six weeks. His therapists: a team of trained student clinicians —aspiring speech language pathologists, operating under the close supervision of a faculty clinician and themselves approaching graduation from UCF.

Communication sciences and disorders graduate student Nathalie Espinal '21 served as Burke's clinician in the summer of 2022 and then again in the fall. She focused heavily on conversation-based therapy treatments.

"Originally, he didn't know any of his clinicians' names," Espinal says. "He would recognize us, of course, and we had a relationship, but he had trouble with that recall. By the second semester, he knew all the names and was able to get our attention and engage in more verbal conversation."

By design, therapy was conducted in settings Burke would expect to be in naturally, like cooking, playing games and socializing with peers. Espinal coached Burke in Response Elaboration Training, or RET, a therapy technique that allows a patient to make a simple statement, and with a therapist's assistance, expand on the original statement into something much richer and deeper.

"We did a lot of therapy in open areas interacting with other people," Espinal says. "He would have a conversation and say a few words that were maybe not grammatically correct, but we would build on that sentence and add more details to it."

Progress was steady, says Espinal, who personally worked with Burke up to seven hours a week over a 12-week period and drew from common interests in therapy sessions. Conversations covered movies, music and pop culture. Espinal also helped Burke improve his ability to use his phone to communicate with his friends.

"Initially, I worked with him on some ways to help him with texting some friends," says Espinal. "He was using Snapchat a lot. We worked on spelling for texts and building his vocabulary on certain topics and areas of interest."

"It genuinely felt like it was becoming a friendship," Espinal says. "He was so adamant about working. He would ask about my life and my family, and we definitely bonded a lot."

A Graduation Speech

The tradition at Aphasia House graduation is for the students to make speeches, sharing reflections on the progress of their clients and personal words of hope and encouragement.

On his graduation day, Burke also made a speech. He is the only one in his cohort of four to do so.

Since arriving, he has changed out of his Clemson T-shirt into a black polo shirt — the same one worn by student clinicians. It's a graduation gift and a souvenir of his time at the Aphasia House.

His parents look on. The room is silent.

"Hi, I am Kyle. I have a brain injury. And I'm....I'm.... phasia. I went to Clemson University, and I am from Greer, South Carolina."

His speech is slow and deliberate. He uses his finger as a guide along the words of the paper.

"I love that Clemson won a bunch of football ACC championships."

The room erupts in laughter.

He goes on to discuss his time at the Aphasia House. At times pausing. Sometimes reversing words. But the communication is clear.

"In the hospital, I cannot really speak or understand anything. Now I am...can talk and understanding the news, sports and TVs. I can read and understand song lyrics."

"The students and I play mini basketball together. Watching movies...reading...talking and listening to songs is fun. Also, we had community outings such as bowling."

He carefully acknowledges his parents, the students, their supervisors and — ever playful — his dog.

"Thank you for everyone helped me."

Burke's graduation speech is four minutes long.

Moving Forward

Research has shown that people with aphasia have higher rates of recovery when therapy is intensive, and at the Aphasia House, therapy spaces are designed to evoke a sense of home and belonging. The rooms are themed to help remind patients of favorite things: a garden room, a music room, a game room, and a garage room. Patients, students and faculty gather together in a working kitchen and a cozy living room.

"Our personal hope for Kyle is that he finds his way in this world that allows him to live well following a TBI and aphasia in whatever manner 'living well' feels for him," Ziegler says.

Burke has set his sights on one day returning to school and driving a car.

"I want him to feel independent and successful," Espinal says. "It's so clear that he's willing to put in so much work to get there. It's only a matter of time before that ends up happening for him."

Communication Disorders Clinic and Physical Therapy Program Team Up to Offer Enhanced Services

The College of Health Professions and Sciences' Rehabilitation and Wellness Services is integrating clinical care services and now offers outpatient physical therapy at the Communication Disorders Clinic. The expansion provides a single, convenient location near UCF's main campus for those patients in need of both speech and language therapy and physical therapy.

The integrated services began in Summer 2023 and will initially focus on patients who are seniors. This is the third UCF location at which the local community can receive physical therapy from faculty clinicians. The Physical Therapy Clinic on the main campus has two clinical sites, one focusing on orthopedics and sports injuries, and a second open only to UCF student athletes.

"Integrating services is another key milestone for our clinical enterprise," says Bari Hoffman, associate dean for clinical affairs. "Our vision is to continue to leverage the specialized expertise of our faculty to deliver high-quality care to our community in a patient-centric model."

Lauren Bislick, an assistant professor of communication sciences and disorders and interim director of the Aphasia House, and Nicole Dawson, an associate professor who specializes in geriatric physical therapy, work closely with older adults and particularly with patients who have had strokes and other types of acquired brain injury. "Recovery for so many of our patients is multi-faceted," says Bislick. "It often involves extensive therapy which takes place over an extended period of time, and it must address their speech and language loss, as well as impairments to their mobility."

The collaboration to offer speech therapy and physical therapy at the same location is especially convenient for patients who travel to different locations and visit multiple providers to receive rehabilitative services. The new practice model at UCF enables patients to make successive appointments for both services, if preferred.

"We want to make it as easy as possible for patients to access the personalized and concentrated care they need to get their lives back on track," says Dawson, whose research centers around identifying predictors of falls in older adults and developing non-pharmacological interventions that aid in successful aging. "Regaining strength, movement and mobility following a stroke or brain injury are all essential to daily living and critical to preventing additional injury."

The Aphasia House at UCF, which is offered through the Communication Disorders Clinic, treats patients with acquired brain injuries who travel from across the country to participate in the multi-week speech therapy program that's delivered in a residential-style setting and designed to immerse clients in activities that model daily living. Those patients can now be offered the opportunity to receive additional physical therapy services during their stay.

Physical therapy care is provided by licensed physical therapists who are clinical experts and faculty members with the UCF Division of Physical Therapy. Sessions for clients of the Communication Disorders Clinic will be held at the Rehabilitation Innovation Center which is adjacent to the clinic and located in Research Park, close to the UCF main campus.

Succeeding Differently: Parents, Experts and a Celebrity Discuss Neurodiversity

Comedian Howie Mandel, who has ADHD and OCD, won't forget the moment his diagnosis was publicly shared.

"I was on the Howard Stern Show about 20 years ago," Mandel recalls. "I told him, because we're friends, what I was dealing with and I thought we were in a commercial break and we weren't, and it kind of went out, and I thought, oh my gosh, now the world knows that I'm not mentally healthy," says Mandel.

Mandel believed his career to be over, but instead found himself immediately embraced by similar sufferers thankful to him for elevating the public perception of mental health. "I started getting this huge influx of mail and I realized that I'm not alone," says Mandel. "This is an issue that a lot of people deal with."

Mandel was one of five panelists who shared their lived experiences at a discussion held at the College of Health Professions and Sciences' Rehabilitation Innovation Center. The session, Neurodiversity: Strategies for Transitioning from Childhood to Adulthood, was attended by students enrolled in healthcare programs across the university.

Mandel joined the group by "beaming in" from Los Angeles via hologram machine, a state-of-the-art simulation tool which enables a speaker to appear life-sized and in real-time from anywhere in the world. The technology, which was first introduced in entertainment venues, has expanded into healthcare education at UCF and is used to broaden the variety of patients and experts students learn from.

Also joining Mandel as panelists were Clinical Associate Professor Jennifer Tucker and Associate Professor and Division Chair William Hanney of the Division of Physical Therapy, Associate Director Brian Stevenson and Simulation Technician Michael Dosczekalski with the Veterans Health Administration's SimLEARN and Clayton Stocker '17DPT, a neurological physical therapist at Orlando Health.

Each of the panelists discussed their personal experience with how differences in individual learning, processing and functioning can affect children and extend across their lifespan. They emphasized the importance of managing symptoms, understanding the challenges and benefits of neurodiversity, and how differences are found across the workforce and in highly successful people.

Neurodiversity, which is driven by both genetic and environmental factors, can result in variations in the human brain and cognition and impact sociability, learning, attention, mood and lead to other conditions like ADHD, OCD and dyslexia. Research shows an estimated 15-20% of the world's population exhibits some form of neurodivergence.

"Neurodiversity is a newer term that we are using in society to describe the variability or diversity that occurs across neurological systems," explains Tucker. "Historically, we tend to use language that this is the box for how you intend to learn. If you fit in this box, then you are typical. If you are outside this box, then you are anything but the typical learner. Now we are beginning to embrace this concept of neurodiversity — that there are several variations in how individuals learn, how they can process and how they function in society. And that, in many diagnoses, there's a lot of strengths associated with those different learning styles," says Tucker.

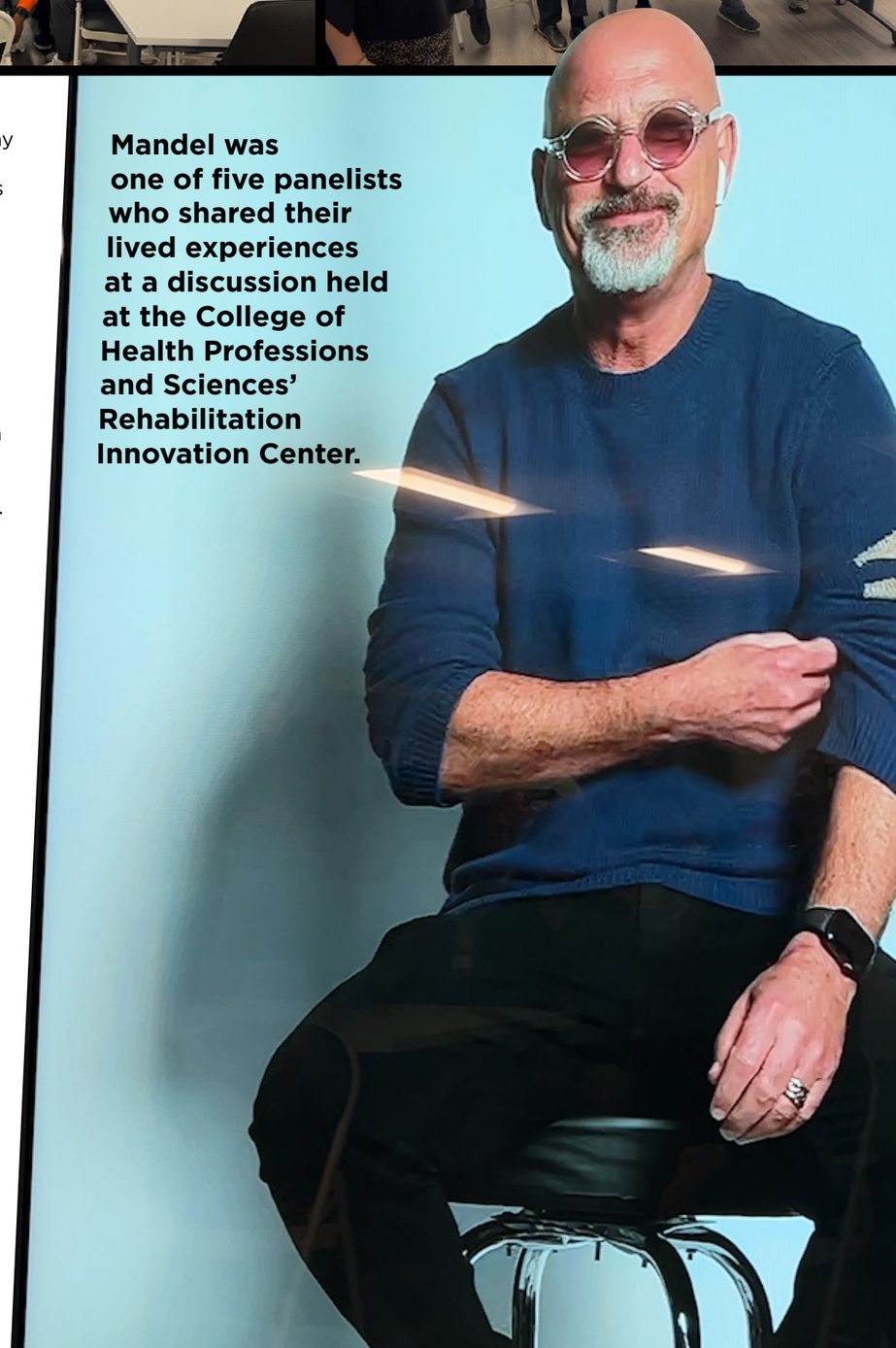
The host of America's Got Talent and Deal or No Deal, Mandel says what he has found most helpful is sharing. "You don't know who will give you help or be supportive," he says. "[People] need to take care of their mental health like they take care of their dental health," says Mandel. "If I show you an x-ray, you can see whether there's a fracture in a bone and they'll pay for you and support you to get that fixed. But there isn't an x-ray where you can show that I can't concentrate."

"The more we make mental health part of our normal discussion and out in the open that helps people at least go and seek health help," says Mandel. "I suffered much more than I'm suffering today for over 40 years because I was forced to, because I was afraid to go get help."

Hanney shared how he helped his son navigate schoolwork when he was diagnosed with ADHD in third grade. He found that the learning strategies that worked for him as a child were not working for his son and initially struggled to appreciate and understand the challenges his son faced.

Hanney recalls the moment when it clicked for him. "[My son is] trying to do math and he couldn't do it. It wasn't because he didn't want to do it. He couldn't do it. It was like a light switch for me because I started to understand his challenges."

Together, they're finding new ways to navigate the learning differences and becoming stronger through it. "So many individuals that manage their neurodiversity have gone on to be successful in their lives, have learned to manage their symptoms and, in some cases, capitalize on the unique strengths that neurodiversity may offer," says Hanney.



Mandel was one of five panelists who shared their lived experiences at a discussion held at the College of Health Professions and Sciences' Rehabilitation Innovation Center.

IN THE COMMUNITY

A READING BOOST

More than 50 youth spent their summer working to improve their reading skills with iREAD, an intensive reading program led by faculty literacy experts and graduate students in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders. The program combines small group instruction with multi-sensory, physically engaging activities. This marked the third year for this unique program, designed to aid students in K-12 develop reading, spelling and writing while avoiding the summer learning slump. In Florida, only 25% of third graders are reading proficiently by the end of the school year.

TRAINING FIRST RESPONDERS

Staff with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), along with young adults with autism and their families, held a training session with the Groveland Police Department on how to approach autistic individuals who are in distress. The City of Groveland presented CARD staff member Jennifer Cicia (center) with a proclamation recognizing Autism Awareness and Acceptance month.

HEALTHY AGING

The FAAST Center and the Communication Disorders Clinic collaborated with local community providers and the Division of Physical Therapy to host the first-ever Healthy Aging Fair at the Rehabilitation Innovation Center. Attendees participated in hearing screenings, explored new assistive technology and learned more about the resources available for safer aging.

ARTISTRY AT WORK

Each spring, UCF brings its best and brightest artists to Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts for a large-scale celebration of creativity. This year, UCF Celebrates the Arts featured appearances by programs and performers from CHPS, including works by young artists from the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, faculty sharing injury prevention tips in the hologram machine and a ballet performance by social work student Sabrina Landa.

UCF Nutrition Educator Helps Improve Health at KNIGHTS Clinic

Patients at a free College of Medicine clinic for Orlando's disadvantaged are getting nutritional counseling, thanks to the expertise of registered dietitian/nutritionist Steven Burroughs, a faculty member in UCF's College of Health Professions and Sciences.

Burroughs leads nutritional patient education consultations at the student-run KNIGHTS Clinic at Orlando's Grace Medical Home. The clinic is staffed by UCF medical and social work students, UF pharmacy students, UCF faculty and volunteer community physicians and is funded by a grant from the Diebel Legacy Fund at the Central Florida Foundation.

His message to patients and medical learners is simple: small lifestyle changes can improve lives. "Good nutrition is really important for disease prevention," said Burroughs. "We all eat and all make decisions, some of them good and some bad." He and the students ask patients in their care questions about diet, exercise and stressors as part of their appointments.

"We give them the education and tools that they need in terms of diet modification or changes in their lifestyle so that hopefully they don't need a lot of medication or expensive procedures," said Burroughs. "I remember motivating a patient, I asked if she had grandchildren and if she could make small changes she'd be able to live a longer healthier life. As I said those words, she started to cry and said that's all she needed to hear to make changes to reduce her risk of cardiovascular disease."

Burroughs' friendly, straight-forward approach is why patients respond to his advice, whether for managing diabetes, weight loss or other chronic conditions that require dietary monitoring.

Second-year medical student Chelsea Wu said working with Burroughs has been eye-opening.

UCF medical students say Burroughs' engaging and respectful approach has taught them how to listen and advise patients on nutritional issues. "He is so knowledgeable. He is respectful and treats patients with dignity, which is very inspiring," she said.

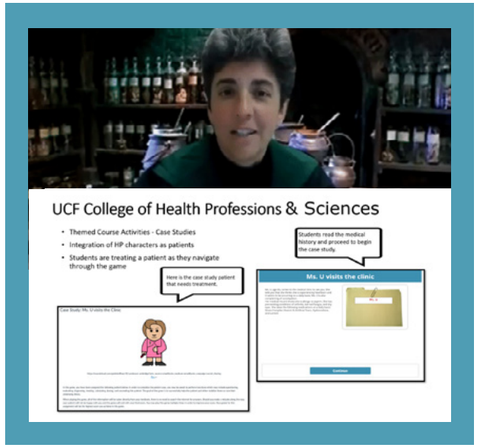
"It's the small things that add up," added second-year medical student Christopher Schilson, who has been working with Burroughs for nearly a year. "Patients don't know that just walking 30 minutes a day can meet a weekly exercise goal, or just cutting out sugar from coffee can help."

After patients leave the clinic, students keep in touch with them between visits to help them stay motivated and track their progress.

KNIGHTS Clinic sees about 70 patients on an ongoing basis for their primary care under the supervision of medical school faculty and local physicians. With its night hours, the clinic helps Grace Medical ease its backload of patients while helping healthcare students learn interdisciplinary clinical care and teamwork.

UCF Faculty Combines Harry Potter with Pharmacology Course to Improve Student Outcomes

When health sciences lecturer Martha Garcia-Stout designed her online Introduction to Pharmacology course (HSC 3147), she wanted to make the "very traditional and kind of dry" course interesting and engaging for students. So, about three years ago she worked with the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) to conjure up a solution — infusing her and students' love of the Harry Potter series into her course. It was a natural fit between the two topics. She recently upped her game by adding elements of gamification into her class and the results are proving that students have also leveled up.



Incorporating interactive games in the course has proven to enhance academic success; the number of students who earned an "A" in the class improved by almost 200% in the past three years, and there has been a 73% decline in the number of non-pass students (students who earn a "D" or an "F" in the class).

Working with Ashley Salter, an instructional designer for CDL, she integrated thematic gaming around Harry Potter references to engage students. For example, case studies feature characters — which were designed by Joseph Fauvel, team lead for CDL's Graphics Team — inspired by Harry Potter. Students navigate pharmacology questions posed in a particular character-patient case and they recommend an appropriate resolution for the patient while avoiding "dead ends" in the patient's care. The game calculates the percentage of questions answered correctly and how far into the adventure the student ventured before either completing the game or hitting a dead end.

"The Harry Potter theme, which students love, is incorporated into all elements of the course right down to the artistic bitmojis of famous Harry Potter characters afflicted with diseases and conditions suited to their character," says Gail Kauwell, director of the Department of Health Sciences. "These characters serve as the basis for the clever case study gamification approach that students find to be creative, interactive, engaging and fun."

Since launching the course, Garcia-Stout has connected with four faculty at other institutions who created similar themed courses. They, too, are seeing improvements in student engagement and performance. To help spread this practice to even more students, they will be presenting their approach at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy annual symposium in July. Their presentation, "Alohomora! Unlocking Longitudinal Theme-based Activities to Increase Student Engagement," aims to help other faculty infuse gamification activities into their class and assess student learning.

"When I found other faculty doing the same thing, I knew we were on to something," Garcia-Stout says. "Pharmacology can be a dry subject, and integrating these ideas makes it more interesting for students."

Garcia-Stout teaches 600-900 undergraduate students each academic year through this course. The class is a required course for all health sciences students, but students in other disciplines, such as kinesiology, nursing, biomedical sciences and psychology can select the course as an elective. "Overall, even students who are unfamiliar with Harry Potter love the case studies, and they ask for more every semester," she says.

Garcia-Stout says she hopes more faculty will consider integrating thematic gaming into their classes, whether virtually or in-person. "This gets the students involved to the point where they want to know 'What's next?' and want to continue to learn and do more in the class," she says.

UCF CLASS SPOTLIGHT

Macro Level Roles and Interventions in Social Work

Students gain hands-on experience while learning the importance of social work in supporting survivors of human trafficking.

Class name

SOW4343: Macro Level Roles and Interventions in Social Work

When is it offered?

Summer and fall

Prerequisites

SOW 3300 Practice I: Generalist Practice and SOW 3352 Practice II: Interpersonal Skills

From the Professor

There are 27.6 million victims worldwide at any given time. — U.S. Department of State

Why should a student take this class?

This class is all about action. The entire course centers around creating change at the macro level, whether it be at the organizational, community, or policy level. Students are often eager to get out in the "real world" and have an impact, especially after several semesters of learning to assess problems and apply theories to inform their practice. They get an opportunity to partner with a community group or organization and apply all the skills they've learned. This includes interpersonal skills, assessment skills and planning and implementing of interventions. They find it rewarding to see the impact their projects have.

What does the coursework entail?

This course has a service-learning designation and as such, a main component involves partnering with a community agency to develop and implement a macro-level intervention to support their needs. Students have worked with mental health organizations, high school sports teams, and advocacy groups, where they help to develop training programs, write grants, fundraise, and more.

What role do social workers play in helping survivors of human trafficking?

Social workers are involved in supporting survivors of human trafficking in a variety of ways. They are often in the frontlines providing advocacy for survivors interacting with systems such as healthcare and law enforcement. They are also involved in providing trauma-informed care, coordinating medical services, and helping survivors access resources to rebuild their lives. At a macro level, social workers work with communities to provide education, raise awareness and develop programming to both prevent human trafficking as well as build capacity for supporting survivors. More broadly, social workers are involved in policy advocacy to impact the systems that contribute to human trafficking.

What do you hope students will learn?

I hope students learn the importance of engaging in the advocacy process, regardless of their social work practice orientation (micro, mezzo, macro). All social workers are called to engage in advocacy and there are many big and small ways to make a difference.

From the Student

Daniel Tiongco, a senior studying social work

Why did you take this course?

We usually look at the micro side of social work — how does this impact the person? But in Dr. Beltran's class we were able to study the macro part of social work, where we understand that the community and society have a lasting impact on the individual's life. I was interested in seeing how social workers can impact an individual's life on a broader scale.

What did you like most about the course?

Our service project where we donated backpacks with supplies to survivors of human trafficking helped me see how we can make a difference firsthand. When they receive a backpack and our support they have hope to start school again a nd start their life toward the person they want to be, not just a victim of human trafficking, but a survivor.

What was the most challenging aspect?

Our service project was completed as a group so coordinating everyone's schedule may have been the most challenging aspect. Beyond that, understanding that as we learn, each social work student has their own application of the methods, so collaborating with everyone to meet the client's needs was the most important.

New Undergraduate Social Work and the Law Certificate Provides Insight into How Two Disciplines Support Mutual Goals

In the Fall 2022 semester, a new Social Work and the Law certificate began providing undergraduate students an understanding of the intersection between social work and the law in order to best serve their clients.

The certificate is designed to be helpful for students planning to attend law school, earn a master's in social work or serve in the court system assisting at-risk populations such as children in the welfare system, underrepresented individuals unaware of their rights or services available, older adults, and other groups impacted by the legal system. Social work and legal studies courses are offered through the College of Health Professions and Sciences and the College of Community Innovation and Education respectively.

"This certificate teaches students the importance of collaboration needed between attorneys, guardian ad litem, and social workers to provide a well-rounded approach to serving clients in the legal system," said Robin Kohn, bachelor of social work program director and senior instructor in the UCF School of Social Work.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

EXCELLENCE THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Health Sciences student Carina McClean helped establish the UCF chapter of the National Society of Black Women in Medicine to support Black women on campus who are pursuing careers in healthcare and other scientific disciplines. The UCF chapter is one of 10 collegiate sections around the nation that promote advancement through mentorship from medical graduate students and professionals.

"I would like to be a physician and would find joy in working toward closing healthcare disparities (e.g., racial inequity, uninsured, underinsured individuals, etc.)," says McClean, who served as the group's president last year. "I think that's really important. And I think a big part of that is demystifying medicine. For example, there are helpful programs that people potentially don't know about because sometimes they may be afraid to see physicians. I hope to educate the public and make it accessible to them."

A NEW CHAPTER

Students in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders launched the National Black Association for Speech-Language Hearing, a new student organization focused on meeting the needs of Black professionals, students and individuals that have communication disorders.

Graduate student Ashonti Pickney served as the first president of the group. "This chapter is important because I really wanted to build a community," Pickney says. "More importantly, I think that representation matters. Not only does seeing others that look like me help me grow, but it also allows me and the chapter to educate and bring awareness to our own community about communication disorders and differences."

GETTING AN INSIDE LOOK

Future speech-language pathologists (SLP) received an up-close look at the mechanics of a tracheostomy in this graduate class that focuses on upper airway disorders. SLPs routinely see tracheostomy patients for swallowing assessment and interventions, as well as determining candidacy for placement of a speaking valve on the tracheostomy tube. Hands-on practice with a tracheostomy simulator and with hands-on manipulation of a variety of tracheostomy tubes helps students build clinical skills and prepares them for the real-life patients they'll soon be providing care for in hospitals and healthcare facilities.

HANDS ON LEARNING

Health sciences student Kathryn Katz aspires to become a physician assistant and used her time at UCF to learn how to better assist the special populations she'll encounter as a healthcare professional. Katz interned at the Conductive Education Center of Orlando, or CECO, which provides educational and life-skills programs for individuals with neurological motor disabilities. She's one of 107 students in the health sciences major who participated in an internship for credit during the academic year. Health sciences students can select from 30 different community partners that offer a total of 50 internship opportunities with companies that range from healthcare providers to wellness nonprofits to community foundations.

FLAT OUT

Students in the Athletic Training Program had the unique opportunity to learn spine boarding on the ice at the Amway Arena in downtown Orlando this spring. The group learned spine stabilization skills from the Orlando Solar Bear's lead athletic trainer and several other UCF alumni.

LENDING A HEALTHY HAND

Now in its third year, the Community Health Ambassadors Program offers a unique opportunity for students to deliver creative health improvement projects to the community. This year, 74 students worked on teams and partnered with local organizations like the Florida Department of Health, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Harmony Healthcare Orlando.

EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

A new study abroad class in Summer 2022 took students to Barcelona, Spain, for an immersive educational experience. Students took the course Introduction to Human Disease, and in between classes enjoyed the local culture through walking tours, visits to famous sites, a tapas tasting, flamenco lessons, and more.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

More Than Fun and Games

This UCF alum fills the very real (and misunderstood) need for professional esports players to stay physically and mentally fit.

Elliot Smithson '13 wants to go to the gym near his office in Beverly Hills, California, but the squat rack will have to wait. Someone has a series of questions about Esports Health and Performance Institute (EHPI), the company he cofounded four years ago. The name of the company alone needs some explaining, so Smithson settles his well-conditioned self into a chair.

"People think of esports as strictly mental, which is far from the truth," says Smithson, who earned an athletic training degree from UCF. "Players at the highest level need speed, precision and endurance to stay sharp for hours and hours at a time."

Smithson knows what you might be thinking. "The stereotype is legit," he says. "Guys like to stay up until three in the morning, drinking Mountain Dew and eating chips. It's like any sport — you need to take care of yourself to stay on top."

Staying on top can mean a six- or seven-figure salary. Major sponsors like Honda, Rocket Mortgage and Lexus have expectations as high as the salaries they fuel. That's where EHPI's sister company, 1HP, comes in, with trainers, nutritionists, chiropractors, sleep experts and sports psychologists who specialize in the needs of esports players — not gamers.

"This is sports," Smithson says. "Poker and chess are games. There's no mechanical skill required to throw a card out or move a pawn. But in esports, it matters how quickly you move your arms and turn your wrists."

Smithson knows plenty about fitness. He always envisioned a career that would combine his interests in medicine, athletics and entertainment. As a teenager he considered using his martial arts background to be a stuntman.

For the next 10 years, Smithson learned about optimizing physical and mental performance while also narrowing his niche. At UCF, he stretched and treated players on the football, volleyball and cheerleading teams. He worked as an injury prevention specialist at Walt Disney World, where he kept dancers and stunt people limber. In grad school, he developed a training program to reduce repetitive-strain injuries among theater and music performers.

The big moment came late one night during his doctoral studies in physical therapy at the University of St. Augustine, when he clicked on a livestream of the Fortnite World Cup. Smithson noticed the players' intensity and almost spasmic mouse moves, recognizing the biomechanical demand on the arm structure. He heard of the $30 million prize money and thought, "There might be something missing here."

He did some research and got connected with Matt Hwu and Cait McGee, who had launched 1HP, a health and performance staffing agency for esports organizations. The trio co-founded EHPI to educate and train healthcare professionals to work with esports pros. It has already partnered with notable teams like 100 Thieves, Cloud 9 and Faze Clan.

"For some of these players, it's the first time they've ever used a barbell or done a squat. Then I'll hear them say 'Oh wow, I feel a lot snappier and less tired. I'm a better player.' The tide is changing. If you don't pay attention to fitness and nutrition, you will self-select yourself out of the career you dreamed about. It's that serious."

FROM HEALTH SCIENCES CLASSROOMS TO THE MISS UNIVERSE STAGE

UCF alumna and 2022 Miss Universe Jamaica title winner Toshami Calvin '19 is a model and advocate for children. A graduate of the pre-clinical track in the Department of Health Sciences, here she explains what inspires her to do more for others.

What was your experience like competing on an international stage at the 2023 Miss Universe pageant?

I was able to represent myself in a way that made me proud of my personal growth and development, while representing my country in a way that made Jamaicans around the globe proud. I was provided with a platform to showcase my passion for autism awareness and I used it to start conversations about children with disabilities and children on the autism spectrum. I also took full advantage of being in the same room with strong, smart and beautiful women from across the world. I learned about them, their countries and their cultures while sharing my own heritage. "I found similarities where least expected and created beautiful friendships."

In what ways have you positively used your platform as Miss Universe Jamaica?

I have used my platform to raise awareness for children with disabilities, more specifically, children with autism. I am actively working with the Jamaican Autism Support Association and the Jamaican Counsel for Individuals with Disabilities, and I am Gender Ambassador with the Bureau of Gender Affairs. Also, in August, I will be hosting my second annual "Every Mikkle Mek a Muckle" school supply/clothing drive in my home community of Bath, St. Thomas.

Before competing in the Miss Universe Jamaica pageant, you've had a desire to help others through your health sciences studies. How has that passion grown?

My little cousin, KiKi, has cerebral palsy and is immobile and non-verbal. While growing up, Kiki had a physical therapist who provided services at our home. I saw firsthand how much the physical therapy sessions helped her. Since then, I've wanted to pursue a career in physical therapy to help others in the same way KiKi's therapist helped her.

While enrolled at UCF, I became more interested in psychology, especially after my youngest cousin was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. I wanted to learn more about autism and work with children on the spectrum. I began working as a registered behavioral technician and fell in love with the applied behavioral analytics (ABA) field. I now plan to complete my master's degree in ABA to continue working with children on the spectrum and positively change as many lives as I can.

CLASS OF 2023 Graduation Spotlights

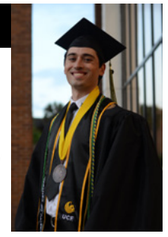
Seva Reilly

Hometown: Sanford, FL

Degree: Communication Sciences and Disorders (B.S)
Minor in Psychology
Certificates in Leadership Studies and Human Resources

"Post-graduation, I am continuing my work at the ASD Adult Achievement Center, a nonprofit that provides education and life skills classes for adults with autism spectrum disorder! I will be working as a job coach one-on-one with participants with a vocational rehabilitation plan as they seek integrated, competitive, and meaningful employment."

Joshua Conomea

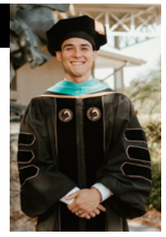


Hometown: Jacksonville, FL

Degree: Health Sciences

"After graduation, I will be attending Nova Southeastern University's College of Optometry (NSUCO) in Davie, Fla. I am excited about the challenges ahead and will not be going alone! My twin sister, Rachel Conomea, will also be going to NSUCO with me to earn the same doctorate, so we will be motivating and supporting each other throughout the four-year process."

Jeremy Fleischmann

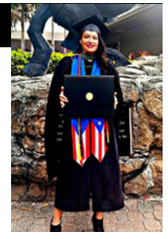


Hometown: Niceville, FL

Degree: Doctor of Physical Therapy

"My long-term career goals include opening my own private physical therapy practice, while also contributing to a faith-based medical missions organization. Ideally, my wife and I would like to participate in short/mid-term medical missions, providing not just physical, but spiritual healing to those in need."

Miriam Sanchez-Torres

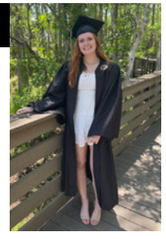


Hometown: Morovis, Puerto Rico

Degree: Master of Athletic Training (MAT)

"I am getting ready to begin my first official job as an athletic trainer in the U.S. with Amazon. I will be functioning as a part of the larger team onsite (including a wellness manager and injury prevention specialist). My duties will include helping to minimize the risk of injury through awareness, education and proactive engagement, developing a first aid care plan for employees recovering from an injury, and leading any emergency injury response at the site."

Abigail Eisner



Hometown: Daytona Beach, FL

Degree: Bachelor of Social Work

"After graduation, I am returning to work as a family services specialist. I work for a non-profit organization that works to provide opportunities for quality early learning, as well as strengthening families and our community. Community-based care organizations are vital to the healthy functioning of communities because they provide education and resources to those in need. In the Fall of 2023, I have plans to earn my Master of Social Work at UCF!"

Community Grants Received

- A grant provided to the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities from NEXT for Autism will deliver transitional programs that help young adults with autism spectrum disorder learn new life skills and adapt to independent living. The program includes instructional services, social events and a mentoring and coaching curriculum.

- The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism was also a sponsor of Camp iREAD. The camp focuses on preliteracy skills for Pre-K – 2nd graders with ASD. The camp, which is based on the science of reading, targets early reading and writing through multi-sensory and movement-based activities.

- Thanks to a grant from the Margaret McCartney & R. Parks Williams Foundation, the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) Center purchased OrCam MyEye PRO and OrCam MyReader devices, which assist people who are blind, visually impaired, or have reading difficulties. The grant will specifically assist children with several vision restrictions. The FAAST Center provides services to increase awareness, access and acquisition of assistive technology for all Floridians.

- The UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities provided eight teens with autism spectrum disorder an 18-week driver education program. The course included 15 hours of one-on-one driving lessons from a specialized instructor: a registered occupational therapist and driving rehabilitation professional, or OTR-DRP. Student drivers participated in classroom and video instruction, plus hands-on lessons around UCF's main campus. The program was provided through a grant from the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, in partnership with professional stock car driver Armani Williams, NASCAR's first driver openly diagnosed with autism.

- The Paul B. Hunter & Constance D. Hunter Charitable Foundation has provided funds for the purchase of high-quality manikins representing premature infants that will be used by faulty to train student clinicians to enter the NICU with confidence and competence. The teaching tools will help students understand the unique positioning needs of premature infants with regard to feeding and swallowing, latching, physical therapy intervention, stability of vital signs, and other important techniques.

- The Chesley G. Magruder Foundation provided a grant for the Empowered Futures Program, an initiative in FAAST/Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Lab designed to connect community members with assistive technologies for hearing, mobility and communication, provide new community programming and generate awareness about resources available.

- Orlando Health and Variety – The Children's Charity of Florida both made gifts to support UCF Go Baby Go! The program provides children in the community who have mobility limitations with modified, ride-on cars. Mobility has been demonstrated to positively affect a child's physical, cognitive and social development.

GRANTS RECEIVED

Orlando Health Funds Chair Yoga Therapy Program for People with Aphasia

The Aphasia House at the University of Central Florida was awarded a grant through the Orlando Health Community Grant program for more than $21,000 to aid people that have acquired brain injury (ABI) and their care partners through a specially adapted chair yoga program that incorporates aphasia-friendly language and physical modifications, making it accessible for those with communication and physical impairments.

This group-based yoga therapy combines breathwork, mindfulness, meditation, movement and community, and such practices have demonstrated the potential to increase resiliency and coping, reduce physiological and psychological consequences of ABI and improve quality of life. The program's first delivery took place in Summer 2023. It will also include a new online, on-demand video database to enable enrolled participants to practice yoga outside of scheduled sessions at their convenience.

Lauren Bislick, interim director of the Aphasia House and an assistant professor of communication sciences and disorders, says that of the yoga programs commercially available, only a few are adapted for those with physical impairments, and none were tailored to meet the specific communication needs of ABI survivors with aphasia. Bislick teamed up with Karen Cornelius, a yoga therapist with 14 years of experience working with patients with chronic conditions, and the two sought input from other stakeholders and researchers to develop the unique aphasia-friendly chair yoga program.

Orlando Magic Youth Foundation Awards UCF $50,000 to Support Local Young Readers

The Orlando Magic Youth Foundation gifted $50,000 to support CHPS' iREAD program, an intervention program for students who do not show reading proficiency. The funds will help bolster reading skills in schoolchildren who participate in iREAD (intensive Reading Enrichment for Academic Development).

The iREAD program, within the Communication Disorders Clinic, is a four-week course that addresses phonological and phonemic awareness, spelling, reading fluency and comprehension, written expression, and oral language skills.

The gift enabled the iREAD program to expand, increasing the number of participants for Summer 2023 from 26 to 51. It also allowed the program to be more accessible, with a move to the UCF Downtown campus in Orlando's urban core, block from the heart of the Holden/Parramore neighborhood.

The iREAD program is supported by 35 graduate student clinicians from education and communication sciences and disorders programs at UCF who help deliver services alongside faculty members as part of their graduate program.

ENDOWMENTS

The Dr. Kenyatta Rivers Memorial Scholarship became endowed, thanks to lead donors, Dr. Joe DiNapoli and Maurice Pearson along with many alumni, friends, and former colleagues.

Marshall S. Cohn along with Robert D. Winters created the Variety Children's Charity of Florida James Bohannon Memorial Endowed Scholarship.

Manish Hirapara created a new endowed fund, the Hirapara Enriching Audiology Resources (HEAR) at UCF to support the Listening Center.

UCF DAY OF GIVING APRIL 13, 2023

The number of faculty and staff making gifts increased by 72%

72%

110%

The number of total donors increased by 110%

Annual Gifts

420 Donors

$158,846

Student Scholarships

50 scholarships totaling

$62,500

HONORS AND ACCOLADES

FACULTY

Pegasus Professor

Associate Dean of Research and Professor Jennifer Kent-Walsh, Communication Sciences and Disorders

Reach for the Stars

University Award for Excellence in Mentoring Postdoctoral Scholars

Assistant Professor Bethany Backes, Social Work

Excellence in Research

Associate Professor and Division Chair David Fukuda, Kinesiology

Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

Assistant Professor Keith Brazendale, Health Sciences

Assistant Professor Asli Cennet Yalim, Social Work

Excellence in Graduate Teaching

Clinical Associate Professor Jennifer Tucker, Physical Therapy

2023 Research Incentive Awards

Research Incentive Awards recognize outstanding research, scholarly, or creative activity that advances the body of knowledge in a particular field, including interdisciplinary research and collaborations.

Associate Professor and Division Chair David Fukuda, Kinesiology

Assistant Professor L. Colby Mangum, Athletic Training

Assistant Professor Eunkyung "Muriel" Lee, Health Sciences

2023 Teaching Incentive Awards

Teaching Incentive Program Awards recognize teaching productivity and teaching excellence, as well as contributions toward UCF's goals of offering the best undergraduate education available in Florida and achieving international prominence in key programs of graduate study.

Professor Shawn Lawrence, Social Work

Assistant Professor Humberto Lopez Castillo, Health Sciences

Associate Professor Laurie Neely, Physical Therapy

National Academies of Practice Induction

The National Academies of Practice inducted CHPS Founding Dean Christopher D. Ingersoll in athletic training and Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs Bari Hoffman in speech-language pathology. The two were named Distinguished Fellows for their contributions toward advancing interprofessional education, scholarship, research and public policy.

Ingersoll was also this year honored by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, the athletic training accreditation entity, with the 2022 Pete Koehneke Award for his leadership and significant contributions to athletic training education and accreditation.

TENURE AND PROMOTION

David Fukuda (Kinesiology) - promoted to professor

Carolyn Buchanan (CSD) - promoted to associate instructor

Jennifer Plant (Athletic Training) - promoted to senior lecturer

Estelli Ramos (Social Work) - promoted to associate instructor

Shellene Mazany (Social Work) - promoted to senior instructor

STAFF

Employees of the Year and Strategic Plan Champion

Four staff members were honored at the 2023 CHPS Spring Assembly for their outstanding performance and contributions during 2022. Pictured here with Founding Dean Chris Ingersoll (left to right) are Director of Academic Support Services Ranetta Guinn, who received the Strategic Plan Champion Award, and Human Resource Partner Maricel Soto, Administrative Assistant Barbara Dahlstrom and Academic Support Coordinator Missi Feyer, who were named as the Employees of the Year.

STUDENTS

Order of Pegasus

Shea McLinden, Health Sciences

Bethany Bradshaw, Kinesiology

Outstanding Master's Thesis

Aaron Wizenberg, Kinesiology

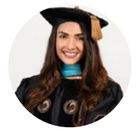
College Award

Sydney Martinez, Health Sciences

30 Under 30

Atiyah Appline '20, '22MPA

Emily Allen '17, '22MBA



Gabriella Armor '16 '21DPT

Morgan Leonard '18

In Memoriam: Emerita Mary Van Hook's Rural to Global Social Work Legacy

Mary Van Hook, an Emerita faculty from the UCF School of Social Work, believed in demonstrating goodwill through her actions. While at UCF, she published many journal articles and books as she educated students to become social work professionals. Though she retired from UCF in 2006, Van Hook continued to volunteer in the community until her death on August 14, 2022.

"Mary was passionate about academia and being able to teach the next generation of social workers as well as advocate for what the UCF School of Social Work needed," said Robin Kohn, director of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program and senior instructor.

After graduating from Columbia University in 1962 with her Master of Social Work (MSW), Van Hook practiced clinical social work at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and continued working at various mental healthcare facilities until she earned her Ph.D. in social work from Rutgers University in 1984. She taught at the University of Michigan and Northwestern College before joining UCF School of Social Work as a professor and later served as interim director.

Community Building

Van Hook's appointment was during a time of change and growth for the University and School. She was recruited in 1998 to bring her expertise and mentorship to students in the School's newly accredited MSW program.

"Mary provided me with supportive mentorship through my transition from earning a BSW to an MSW. With her encouragement, continuing my studies as a first-generation Latina college student seemed more within my reach. My UCF Social Work experience has come full circle, as I use her textbook when I teach my Online MSW students," said Melissa Coral Bermudez '06'07 MSW, alumni and UCF School of Social Work instructor.

While at UCF Van Hook received many grants, including a National Institute of Mental Health grant that provided awareness and training for depression treatment programs in rural areas. With over 20 years of expertise and experience working with rural populations, Van Hook eventually earned a Victor I. Howery Memorial Award from the National Association for Rural Mental Health. Van Hook published peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on a variety of other topics including family counseling, gender violence, and human trafficking. Her now popular textbook titled Social Work Practice with Families: A Resiliency-Based Approach is in its third edition and is used in classes to support students and social work practitioner's as they apply strengths-based practice models when working with families.

When discussing the importance of resiliency in her book, Van Hook mentions how it is "essential to find answers to how people manage to endure, cope, and even sometimes thrive under the troubles that can be part of the human condition."

Globalizing Social Work

Her interest in the human condition led Van Hook to global field research. In 1999, Van Hook traveled to Albania with her husband Jay Van Hook, a UCF Philosophy faculty, where they collaborated with scholars from the University of Tirana in Albania to explore the country's human trafficking causes and possible solutions.

Van Hook's global approach to social work was established on the simple belief of collaboration. In an archived interview, she said that working with "individuals from other countries has helped me recognize the existence of such problems and to respect people who are trying to make a difference in their countries." By formalizing study abroad programs in Albania, and later South Africa, Van Hook was able to provide UCF students with a global perspective on the importance of physical and mental healthcare.

"Mary's legacy to our School persists in the wisdom from her research and teachings that she leaves behind for generations to come. She will always be admired as a generous person and a remarkable social work scholar," said Matthew Theriot, director of UCF School of Social Work. In retirement, Van Hook continued collaborating with others through her church by helping to build a relationship with a sister church in Cuba. She was also a regular donor to the School's scholarship fund.

According to Van Hook's obituary, she was volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem prior to her demise and "the adoption of Mary's last client was finalized just two days after her death." Van Hook's steadfast dedication to the field of social work will always be honored.

12805 Pegasus Drive, Orlando, FL 32816 | 407.823.0171 | chps@ucf.edu

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