#### UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

## **College of Health Professions and Sciences**





TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE. IMPROVING LIVES.

## **IN FOCUS**

## **HEALTHY AGING FAIR**

This year marked the college's second annual Healthy Aging Fair! Local seniors, family members and caregivers joined us to check out valuable resources to help with aging safely and independently. The fair provided demonstrations of some of the latest products and tech, connections with community providers, breakout sessions with our expert faculty, and cognitive/language, audiology and mobility screenings from our Physical Therapy Clinic and Communication Disorders Clinic.









## NEW GRAD PROGRAM PROMOTES HEALTH, EMPOWERS LIVES



Starting in Fall 2024, a new Master of Science in Health Promotion and Behavioral Science will prepare students with the education and experience necessary for a career helping individuals and communities maintain and maximize healthy lifestyles.

The program trains students to conduct systematic reviews, translate scientific research into evidence-based practice, and design and implement innovative health education and promotion programs aimed at reducing the risk of chronic disease and its associated impacts. Students also gain skills in behavior modification, health coaching, and health communications. The program meets the eligibility requirements to take the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) exam and the National Board of Health and Wellness Coaching certification exam.

It's the first graduate program offered by the Department of Health Sciences.



## **EXCELLENCE. INNOVATION. COMMUNITY.**

These are common themes for the College of Health Professions and Sciences, and they were in the forefront again during our 2023-2024 academic year.

We rose in the U.S. News & World Report rankings in each of our graduate programs, integrated additional simulation technology to enhance student learning, hosted unique events to bring better health and wellness services to our community, and welcomed a number of talented and experienced new faculty members to our team.

We continue to be laser focused on preparing students to become competent and compassionate healthcare providers, and to deliver interprofessional education opportunities that will ensure their success as part of a healthcare team.

It's been my honor to serve as the founding dean, and I'm so proud of what has been accomplished here. There is so much still ahead – and, thanks to our highly dedicated faculty and staff - the future of this college is exceptionally bright. While I'll soon be leaving the University of Central Florida to pursue new professional opportunities, I'm grateful for the time here and to have been part of the creative, bold and exciting community that is our Knight Nation.

I'm confident that Interim Dean Matthew Theriot will continue our tradition of excellence.

#### Charge On!



Christopher Ingersoll

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

## **IN FOCUS**

## **IPE Day**





Fifty students from physical therapy, social work, health sciences and communication sciences and inspective disorders teamed up to conduct health assessments of patients with acquired neurologic disorders at our Interprofessional Education Event at the Rehabilitation Innovation Center.

## **Publication Credits**

#### PRODUCTION

Heather Lovett, Communications and Marketing Director David Janosik, Web Applications Developer II Paul Kelly, Communications Specialist II Lasha Markham, Communications Specialist I Stella Canfield, Communications Specialist I Dori Hejtmanek, Graphic Designer

### **CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

### **Robert Stephens**

ON THE COVER: Marlie Ellison interacts with students in the College of Health Professions and Sciences as part of the Mighty Knights program, which offers unique and inclusive play opportunities for children with complex communication and motor needs. In addition to helping families in the community, the Mighty Knights program provides interprofessional education opportunities for students in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders and the Division of Physical Therapy who learn new skills from one another and become more experienced in delivering team-based care.





# TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

Top Ranked

**Mighty Knights** 

The Power of Language

**Therapies for Stroke Survivors** 

**Public Health Researcher** 

**Sound Solutions** 

**Stopping Intimate Partner Violence** 

**Residency Records** 

Honors and Accolades

In the Community

**Student Spotlights** 

**Two Sisters, One Journey** 

**Advocacy and Authenticity** 

Man with a Mission

# AT A GLANCE

## **Research Impact**



Total PROPOSED research funding

## \$36,165,566



Number of proposals submitted for funding

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



## Total students enrolled at CHPS

6,800

## 5,861 UNDERGRADUATE

## 939 **GRADUATE**



Percent of UCF students who are pursuing a degree from CHPS

## 2023-2024 Degree Programs

#### **Communication Sciences and Disorders**

- 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

# CHPS EXCELS IN 2024 U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT GRADUATE RANKINGS

## Physical therapy, social work, and communication sciences and disorders all rank in top 25% of the nation

Three graduate programs in the College of Health Professions and Sciences rank in the top 25% of the nation according to the U.S. News & World Report rankings for 2024. The programs include the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Master of Social Work (MSW), and Master of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

With a ranking of No. 41, UCF's DPT program broke into the top 50 for the first time bringing the young and growing program into the top 17% in the nation. The program rose 16 places since a ranking of No. 57 in 2021, the last time rankings were released for physical therapy.

Since its first doctoral cohort in 2010, the DPT program has consistently exceeded state and national averages in licensure pass rates and test scores. In 2022-2023, the program's first-time National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) pass rate was 97.25% and the overall NPTE pass rate was 100%. On average, 94.5% of students secure post-graduation employment.

UCF's MSW program also made significant strides, jumping 12 spots to No. 67 in 2024 from No. 79 in 2021, placing it in the top 25% of all social work programs nationally for the first time. One of the most popular graduate programs at UCF, the MSW enrolls more than 500 students each year and offers both an exceptional in-person mode as well as a highly sought-after online program.

Students in the MSW program are thoroughly prepared for the workforce through a robust field education program, requiring them to complete 1,000 hours of field practicum to obtain their degree. The School of Social Work partners with more than 850 agencies in both the U.S. and overseas for students to complete their hours. Partner sites are comprised of nonprofit, government, healthcare and educational facilities. On average, 80% of students receive an offer of employment from their practicum sites.

The college was also highly ranked for its graduate education in speech-language pathology, which is offered in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders. The Master of Communication Sciences and Disorders ranked No. 59 in 2024, again landing it in the top 25% of speech-language pathology programs in the nation.

One of the largest programs in the country, UCF's Master of Communication Sciences and Disorders offers a comprehensive clinical education through a Communication Disorders Clinic that includes multiple specialty clinics and over 200 internship affiliations throughout Central Florida. Students in the program provide about 12,000 hours of speech, language and hearing clinical services to the greater Orlando community annually. The School also boasts five American Speech-Language-Hearing Association fellows on faculty.







## **NEW DEAN'S ADVOCACY BOARD MEMBERS**



Mason Moore Principal Director, Brand Envestnet, Inc.



**Matthew Burkhalter** Senior Director, Clinical Outcomes Orlando Health



**Victor DeRienzo** Chief Operating Officer Aging Services and Outpatient **Brooks Rehabilitiation** 



Joseph Mysz Vice President, Human Resources HCA Healthcare



Owner **Richard's Incentives** 

# **NEW FACULTY AND STAFF**

## **MIGHTY KNIGHTS PROGRAM HELPS CHILDREN**

with Complex Communication and Motor Needs

Speech-language pathologist and assistant professor Julie Feuerstein and pediatric physical therapist and associate professor 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 Early Mobility and Play (EMP) Lab - both designed to address access, engagement and communication among special populations.

The two joined forces in Spring 2022 to create the Mighty Knights program - a unique, community-based enriched play experience for infants and toddlers with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Rett syndrome and other complex medical conditions. In the program, 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-fun farm and inside UCF's Rehabilitation Innovation Center. In just the first year and a half of the program, there have been



#### Shaheen Awan, Research Professor

- **Christina Bernhardt, Lecturer**
- Kelly Chan, Manager of CHPS Student Success Programs
- Meredith Chaput, Assistant Professor
- **Caitlin Cheruka, Clinical Assistant Professor**
- **Bethany Coz, Instructor**
- Aimmy De Jesus Rodriguez, Travel & Procurement Coordinator II
- Paige DePew, Administrative Assistant I
- Andrew Dykstra, Assistant Professor
- Stephanie Eaton, Research Specialist II
- **David Eddins, Professor**
- Maggie Fleming, Video Production Assistant
- **Monica Folkerts, Research Assistant Professor**
- Jalonta Glasco, Lecturer
- Colleen Grillo, ASD Specialist II
- **Christina Grosso, Simulation Technology Specialist**
- Kaia Johnson, Administrative Assistant I
- Hsiu-Fen Lin, Assistant Professor
- Armani Mahadeo, Travel & Procurement Coordinator I
- **Grant Norte, Associate Professor**
- Shari Norte, Associate Instructor
- Taylor Owens, Director of Finance and Budget
- Yeonggwang Park, Research Assistant Professor
- **Catherine Sarkozy, Instructor**
- **Ryan Schuffert, Instructor**
- Darryl "Dee" Terry, Administrative Assistant I
- Stephanie Theodore, Administrative Assistant I
- Jasmine Vanderwolf, Travel & Procurement Coordinator II
- Ellen Williams, Academic Program Coordinator II
- **Cameron Wood, Contracts and Grants Specialist II**

## Reappointment

**Gail Kauwell** Professor and Chair, Department of Health Sciences



**New Leader** 

**Taylor Owens** Director of Finance and Budget



eight play sessions held, with five to 10 families attending each event.

The Mighty Knights program is made possible through a philanthropic gift from the Bailes Family Foundation. "We know that children's development doesn't unfold in silos," Feuerstein says. "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."

A playdate in October included a visit to the Peppa Pig Theme Park, in partnership with Merlin's Magic Wand Foundation. While there, children and their families were able to enjoy the park with the help of specially designed assistive equipment. Supports like a 10 foot-by-10-foot mobile harness system gave children who aren't yet standing on their own the opportunity to play in an upright position in the sand area, and both high- and low-tech augmentative and alternative communication supports like adaptive switches encouraged children to communicate with their parents and other children in the program.

"We provide an environment where we can support children in both exploring and learning so they can engage like all other children," Tucker says. "The work we are doing is as much about advocacy and inclusion as it is development." The Mighty Knights Program also serves as a rich, handson learning experience for undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Health Professions and Sciences. Students connect across disciplines, problem solve, and learn new skills for working with special populations, helping to prepare them to be both creative thinkers and clinically competent in their healthcare careers.

The Peppa Pig Theme Park playdate was the second event in partnership with Merlin's Magic Wand, with the first being a playdate at the SEA LIFE Orlando Aquarium.

## **Students Learn Team-based NICU Care Through Hands on Simulation**





Students at the College of Health Professions and Sciences (CHPS) are learning how to succeed on a healthcare team through immersive clinical experiences that enable them to develop skills in the delicate and high-stress environment of a simulated Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

As medicine advances and increases the survivability of pre-term infants, clinical skills in a NICU setting become even more vital for students to possess. However, training in a NICU has become increasingly difficult to access following the COVID-19 pandemic and the concerns presented by the presence of other infectious diseases like RSV and the flu, which limit opportunities for students to gain hands-on learning in critical care environments prior to entering the profession.

Students in CHPS now interact with hyper-realistic baby manikins in the Blended Learning Interactive Simulation Suite, or BLISS, a high-tech immersive space that can incorporate the sights and sounds of an intensive care setting. The suite adds a layer of complexity and realism and exposes students to the stressors of the NICU, emulating what students will see in their clinical and professional roles. While in the suite, students practice therapeutic handling skills and neonatal positioning for feeding and swallowing, behavioral assessments, and vital sign monitoring. The manikins simulate newborn behaviors like crying, suctioning, breath sounds, and even seizures. Two isolettes and a warmer are also incorporated into the instruction.

Funded in part by a philanthropic gift from the Paul B. Hunter and Constance D. Hunter Charitable Foundation, the enhanced simulation instruction is expected to bolster students' comfort and confidence in a NICU setting.

Students studying physical therapy, communication sciences and disorders and social work have the opportunity to work together in the unique training sessions. Leaders hope to also incorporate students from medicine and nursing in the future. "It gives students an appreciation for the complexity of the environment and provides the implications for growth and development," says Jennifer Tucker, clinical associate professor of physical therapy, who used the manikins in her physical therapy classes last fall. "Chances are they will treat a child that came from the NICU during their career."

After working in BLISS, students use the center's holoportation technology to meet parents who've had a child in a NICU and learn more about developmental impacts and the concerns of parents and caregivers.

"In most cases, families are not expecting their child to be admitted to the NICU," says Bari Hoffman, associate dean of clinical affairs. "So, when this happens, intense feelings of concern and worry follow suit, making it even more imperative that healthcare providers project competence and experience."

The center's immersive simulation technology, in tandem with the manikins, offers students a unique opportunity to develop, refine and strengthen their clinical skills in a forgiving environment. They'll be able to better understand the complexity of such young patients, considerations with their airways and mobility, and a stronger understanding of how to care for preterm infants and support their families.

"We're combining tangible and immersive components, and this opportunity allows us to train our students in environments they otherwise have limited to no access to," Hoffman says. "The highest level of realism for students represents their transition to practice and workforce readiness. We are thinking differently about how we train the next generation of healthcare providers, particularly in specialty skills and complex high-risk scenarios." In an exciting milestone for the College of Health Professions and Sciences (CHPS), the Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology - Strength and Conditioning track achieved accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE). The accomplishment is significant as the UCF program is the first strength and conditioning program in Florida to receive this prestigious distinction.

"This accreditation will enhance our ability to bring talented students to UCF, continue to elevate the reputation of what is already a very strong program and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for careers in the strength and conditioning industry," said CHPS Founding Dean Christopher Ingersoll. "I'm grateful for the many faculty and staff members who do an exceptional job each day to promote academic excellence and prepare students for careers in the strength and conditioning sector."

CASCE is a nonprofit accrediting agency established by the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) and devoted to advancing the strength and conditioning profession. The path to accreditation is a rigorous, two-year process that demands an in-depth self-study followed by an onsite review conducted by a team of seasoned accreditors. To obtain accreditation, the Strength and Conditioning track in the Division of Kinesiology demonstrated compliance with a multitude of standards in critical areas such as curriculum design, faculty qualifications and facility resources. The comprehensive review process also provided a thorough evaluation of the program's strengths and areas for improvement.

## Kinesiology Achieves Prestigious CASCE Accreditation for Undergraduate Strength and Conditioning Program

During their onsite visit in February, the CASCE assessors interviewed 28 individuals, including UCF administrators, faculty, staff, students, preceptors and industry partners. The accreditors complimented the program for its strong leadership, experienced faculty members, state-of-the-art laboratories, effective communication and promotion of interdisciplinary collaborations.

"CASCE accreditation demonstrates UCF's commitment to ensuring that students from the Division of Kinesiology are beyond prepared to step into the workforce as strength and conditioning professionals," said David Fukuda, professor and chair of the Division of Kinesiology

The Division of Kinesiology introduced the Strength and Conditioning track in 2022, anticipating the NCSA's mandate effective in 2030 which will require students to graduate from an accredited program to be eligible for the National Strength and Conditioning Certification exam. The 120-hour program comprises 71 credit hours of contentspecific courses in strength and conditioning and 49 credit hours of general education coursework.

Achieving CASCE accreditation, the highest level of recognition in the field, is a testament to the program's quality and commitment to ongoing improvement. Accreditation status lasts for five years, during which the program must submit annual reports to maintain its standing.



## IN FOCUS HEALTHCARE EDUCATION SUMMIT

Academia and healthcare leaders convened at UCF on May 23 for a regional summit designed to improve collaboration and develop new strategies for ensuring the talent pipeline continues to provide competent and compassionate future healthcare professionals proficient in delivering team-based care.

Hosted in partnership with the Association for Schools Advancing Health Professions (ASAHP), the summit brought together more than 60 participants from central Florida and across the state. Attendees included healthcare leaders from the area's major hospital systems; key partners and preceptors in community wellness and rehabilitative care; and administrators, faculty and clinicians from public and private Florida universities.

The summit theme was "Collaboration in Action – Engaging to Build Readiness for Interprofessional Clinical Practice." The summit at UCF was one of six taking place in-person and concurrently at five additional ASAHP member institutions across the country. The summits culminated in a virtual "harvest" session during which all regional hubs provided a briefing, enabling a live, national-level conversation.











## Research Identifies Student Pathways to Academic Success

Research underway by Center for Higher Education Innovation (CHEI) fellows is producing key insights into how to help students with adversity in their backgrounds find academic success.

The Life Happens project is led by the multi-disciplinary team of Professor Kim Anderson (Social Work), Associate Professor Alison Cares (Sociology), and Associate Professor Amie Newins (Psychology). The team collaborates with partners across campus to follow undergraduate students over their college careers, combining survey data, interviews, and academic records to better understand pathways to student success.

It is supported by CHEI, the University Innovation Alliance, the College of Undergraduate Studies, the Department of Sociology, and an Interdisciplinary SEED funding grant.

The first year of Life Happens focused on the experiences of first time in college (FTIC) students before and in the transition to college. Researchers identified some of the top adverse life experiences students had, including: natural disasters, serious mental or physical illness; loss of a loved one; and witnessing violence.

Survey data showed such experiences were widespread in students' lives before they came to college, and many of these experiences involved sexual violence or actual or threatened death or serious injury (i.e., a traumatic life event). Almost all students had experienced at least one adverse life experience in childhood, and over half had experienced at least one traumatic life event.

Reflecting national patterns, almost half of students reported symptoms that met the criteria for a likely mental health diagnosis, and this was more likely for those who had a traumatic life event in childhood. As evidence of their resilience, these students were accepted to UCF as firsttime in college (FTIC) students and then largely did well in terms of first year GPA.

Additionally, interviews revealed the supports used and challenges faced during college access and entry for Black/ African American FTIC students at UCF. In particular, the team explored how students develop a college-going identity, along with resources supporting their college-going aspirations. The research produced three growth stages for nurturing a future college self:



The first stage begins in early childhood when parents and family introduce expectations of going to college.



Those expectations are nurtured in the second stage when a student's self-motivation and career interests are strengthened by families and school in high school.



The third stage also happens in high school when decisions are made more concrete though college applications, potential fields of study, financial aid applications, and final decisions.

These three growth stages were not mutually exclusive or straightforward, as intervening conditions created either optimal (e.g., educational and family support) or adverse (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, family stressors, mental health challenges) growth environments.

Findings from the first year of the study were shared with key stakeholders in the Division of Student Success and Well-Being and College of Undergraduate Studies. The project is currently focused on continuing to examine student experiences, both before and during college, and how those relate to student academic outcomes, as well as understanding these experiences for additional groups of students, including LGBTQ+ students and Hispanic and Latino/a/x students.

Research from faculty fellows like the Life Happens team provides an evidence-based foundation for new initiatives that promote student success. The outcomes of trained researchers working in their areas of expertise provide pivotal grounding for big ideas, explained Ryan Goodwin, CHEI's founding director.

"Life Happens represents the intersection of innovation and research," Goodwin says. "The insights provided by our faculty fellows are an invaluable resource as we build and grow student success initiatives."

# 

## Leveraging the Power of Language Through ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

A five-year \$3 million clinical trial grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), widely considered the gold standard for biomedical and public health research funding, tells us something unique is again happening at the FAAST Center and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Lab at UCF.

"Both the scientific findings and, more importantly, the feedback from the families of children using AAC and their service-providers, have shown us the incredible power assistive technology can hold for children with significant speech impairments when combined with customized language therapy," says Jennifer Kent-Walsh, founder of UCF's Assistive Technology Center. "This new round of NIH funding means we can expand our work to provide clinicians with more evidence-based assessment and intervention options to help children develop language skills through use of AAC technologies."

The NIH can clearly see from data that children with significant speech impairments and genetic conditions like Down syndrome and cerebral palsy are communicating at higher levels. They can also look at the flurry of activity and engagement among the children, families, service providers, UCF students, community clinicians, caregivers and researchers at the center. Thousands of people have come for workshops, individualized training and therapy, and to borrow assistive technologies to help those struggling with language development, communication and a wide range of other needs. "We are fortunate to have had support at UCF to align the critical stakeholder groups required to simultaneously advance science and practice — community, clinical, academic, research, industry, and the next generation of speech-language pathologists and related serviceproviders," Kent-Walsh says. "Two key aspects of the study this new funding will support relate to the critical need to design interventions that are implementable in real-life contexts for clinicians and accessible to as many children as possible for sustained periods of time in community settings."

Kent-Walsh argues that engineering great technologies and even designing effective interventions can still miss the mark of meaningful scientific advancement in healthcare without implementation. This new funding will allow Kent-Walsh's team to focus on validating interventions that are designed with and for clinicians supporting children using assistive technology to communicate. The fact that the NIH is funding this work is a sign of the significant and practical progress that's been two decades in the making.

Kent-Walsh is the cornerstone of this classic fromthe-ground-up story. She came to UCF as an assistant professor of communication sciences and disorders in 2003. As a teacher and speech-language pathologist in Canada and England, she had witnessed first-hand the life setbacks that speech and language disorders can cause for children. At UCF, she would have the freedom to explore meaningful solutions, including technology-based ideas, to address these challenges. "The university always had



During her time at UCF, Kent-Walsh has secured millions of dollars in funding from local, state and federal sources to expand research and optimize assistive technology service-delivery. In 2023, after being named a Pegasus Professor, Kent-Walsh saw a banner hung in her honor with the words that have driven her from day one: "Communication is a basic human right which can, and must, be supported for all."

When any of this is brought up — the research, the scientific findings and the successes — Kent-Walsh shifts the focus to the power of people working together. "We have been able to learn and accomplish as much as we have to this point through true team science," she says.

Cathy Binger at the University of New Mexico (UNM) has been Kent-Walsh's primary research collaborator for the past two decades and she serves as the other principal investigator for this new grant. Their decades long partnership has afforded invaluable cross-institutional learning and funded training experiences for both UCF and UNM students through clinical trial investigations like this one. Professor John Heilman, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, recently joined the research team as a language measurement expert.



Other key team members include Professor Debbie Hahs-Vaughn from UCF's College of Community Innovation and Education, who serves as biostatistician for the project, and associate clinical instructor Nancy Harrington who serves as project director for this multi-site clinical trial investigation. And then there is the project team — with additional clinical and academic connections for the project facilitated by the broader village of collaborators in the FAAST Center and AAC Lab, including associate clinical instructor Carolyn Buchanan and clinical instructor Punam Desormes.

"When we involve students and our community at large, the network of advocates expands to ensure that any child can gain access to assistive technology services," Kent-Walsh says. "They know, and NIH knows, that there is a growing body of findings indicating that the use of AAC technologies, combined with tailored language intervention, is where the magic happens."

The team's overall goal is to reach as many children as possible in as many healthcare settings as possible, and ultimately, to improve lives.

## **UCF Graduate Scholars to Teach Students with High-intensity** Needs in Language, Literacy

A specially developed graduate certificate program is preparing health and education students at UCF for roles as intervention specialists in local schools.

UCF has received an interdisciplinary personnel preparation grant from the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education to again deliver Project SPEECH, a program designed to prepare students with the unique and high-demand skills needed to help children with high-intensity needs, such as those with autism, dyslexia, and other language disorders and learning disabilities. The grant funds tuition costs for a highly specialized graduate certificate for students pursuing degrees in exceptional student education or communication sciences and disorders.

A partnership between the College of Health Professions and Sciences and the College of Community Innovation and Education, the project addresses the workforce shortage of fully qualified special educators and speechlanguage pathologists in local Central Florida school districts. According to the Florida Department of Education, 19% of students with disabilities were taught by teachers not certified in the appropriate field during the 2021-22 school year, an increase from 12% during 2018-19.

Florida data also indicates that during the 2022-23 school year, almost 27% of special education teacher positions and 5% of speech-language pathologist positions were vacant. In the UCF program, students are trained as intervention specialists and earn a certificate in interdisciplinary language and literacy intervention.

"This innovative, interdisciplinary preparation program enhances and supports both the quantity and collaboration among ESE teacher leaders and speechlanguage pathologists to provide instruction and interventions in language and literacy for students with high-intensity needs in our schools," says Mary Little, professor in exceptional student education and principal investigator of Project SPEECH.

As with the first delivery of the program which began in 2020, Project SPEECH 2.0 will fund the tuition for about 40 students enrolled in the certificate program over the next five years as well as require them to complete a service obligation. For each year of funding received, scholars will be required to work with children with

disabilities for 51% of their time or caseload. Many of these scholars choose to work in a school setting after graduation.

The first cohort of students in the second iteration began in January 2024.

The 36-credit hour certificate incorporates a combination of coursework and hands-on learning. Students are required to take four specialized classes that cover topics such as classroom development of reading proficiencies, diagnostic assessment and intervention in special education, techniques for addressing severe reading and writing disabilities, and professional collaboration in language and literacy. The classes aim to provide students with a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the competencies needed to effectively work with children with highintensity needs who require sustained interventions and instructions.

"Project SPEECH provides the scholars with the opportunity to learn in the classroom and then apply their knowledge and skills working with children who need the language and literacy interventions to enhance their academic success now and in the future," says Debra Knox, associate instructor in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders and co-principal investigator on the project.

In conjunction with their coursework, students put into practice the skills and strategies acquired in the classroom by working with youth attending specialized speech and language programs offered through the Communications Sciences and Disorders Clinics and UCF's iREAD programs, including an intensive camp offered in the summer for kids. This immersive approach allows students to gain first-hand experience working with those who require additional support with reading instruction - thoroughly readying them for their future roles as special education teachers and school-based speech-language pathologists.

Since the launch of Project SPEECH in 2020, 46 students have earned the certificate, with many transitioning to careers in local school districts. An additional seven students are expected to graduate in December 2024 as the first cohort concludes.



In addition to preparing students with the necessary skills to succeed in a setting where speech-language pathologists are highly sought and actively employed, the service obligation also reflects the job markets students will face post-graduation. According to a 2022 survey from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 50% of speech-language pathologists work in a school setting.

Shanese Campbell '19 is a speech-language pathologist who works with children in preschool through eighth grade in St. Lucie County schools.

"Project SPEECH equipped me with the knowledge and tools that I need," says Campbell, who was part of



the first cohort. "I learned extensive information about Individualized Education Plans, tiered interventions and interdisciplinary collaboration. I was able to apply what I learned by collaborating with other professionals who are involved in the care of my students and patients. These professionals include occupational therapists, interventionists, school psychologists, special education teachers and general education teachers."

Nancy McIntyre, assistant professor in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders, and Elsie Olan, associate professor in the School of Teacher Education, are also co-principal investigators on the project.



## New Kinesiology Associate Professor

## **Investigates Interventions for Individuals with ACL Injuries**

Grant Norte joined the School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences in Fall 2023 as an associate professor in the Division of Kinesiology and as a codirector of the Cognition, Neuroplasticity, and Sarcopenia (CNS) Lab, which focuses on investigating the intersections of the neuromuscular system and exploring innovative interventions to help improve the quality of life for people of all ages.

Norte began in athletic training, working with college athletes as a graduate student before completing a fellowship at the Steadman Clinic in Vail, Colorado, where he worked with patients experiencing a variety of musculoskeletal injuries.

After graduation, he served for two years as the head athletic trainer at SUNY New Paltz, assisting dozens of athletes while becoming more curious about finding ways to improve recovery after knee injuries. "I had a lot of questions about what I was seeing clinically," says Norte, who would go on to get his Ph.D. in sports medicine at the University of Virginia. "Some people do well after common injuries, and some don't. I wanted to know what it is that makes those who don't, resistant to conventional therapies." Norte joins UCF from the University of Toledo where he served as the co-director of the Motion Analysis & Integrative Neurophysiology (MAIN) Lab and studied changes in muscle function and movement following knee injury and the underlying causes. His research at UCF expands on this work and focuses on what happens to the neuromuscular system after a joint injury occurs, with a specific focus on the interplay between the motor cortex in the brain (which makes the muscle move) and anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries. Muscular impairments have neurological origins and can come from the brain, the spinal cord or the way nerves connect to the muscle.

With extensive research already done on the quadriceps, Norte is shifting his research to study the hamstrings - important muscles that protect the ACL - and their neuromuscular adaptation to injury. His focus is to understand how the brain communicates with the muscle after ACL injuries and to design therapeutic approaches to improve recovery. "ACL injuries are more than just musculoskeletal injuries," says Norte. ACL injuries can have short- and long-term impacts on people's lives, including serious consequences like financial stress from medical care or employment restrictions, physical inactivity, or mental health concerns like depression, explains Norte.

In addition to these concerns, another layer of complexity is added with the fact that a lot of people don't seem to respond to conventional therapies, says Norte.

"There's a misconception that treatments have to be these sophisticated and complex things," says Norte. "The goal is to identify simple, clinically accessible interventions that are capable of achieving complex responses in the nervous system. We want to provide a scientific rationale for these simple treatments."

For example, Norte's research is determining whether recovery is better when the sensory response of an injured joint is considered during treatment. He assesses how rehabilitation is affected when provided in tandem with interventions that induce a sensory response, such as doing an exercise with ice on the knee or with a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) system, a device that delivers pulses of electrical energy to the skin's surface.

"The knee is constantly feeding the nervous system with information," says Norte. "If we can consider this sensory response in our therapies, it seems like we can have a positive impact on the way the muscle functions."

Norte utilizes a variety of techniques in his research to evaluate the interconnection between the motor cortex and lower body musculature after an ACL injury, including electromyography (EMG) and muscle and nerve stimulation to better understand the ways people are able to activate their muscles; magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to learn how the structure of the muscles change; and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and electroencephalography (EEG) to understand how the brain communicates with the muscles or influences movement. Participants' psychological health and healthrelated quality of life (e.g., anxiety, fear, knee function, activity level, symptoms, etc.) are also evaluated.





Norte, who has published more than 60 manuscripts in various peer-reviewed publications, will continue his research in the CNS Lab as the 'neuroplasticity' component. He joins two physical therapy faculty members: Assistant Professor Meredith Chaput, who studies visual and cognitive brain changes after knee injury, and Associate Professor Matt Stock, who explores ways to mitigate sarcopenia, a type of muscle loss tied to aging.

As an associate professor for the course Basic Research Methods in Kinesiology, Norte is excited to work with students. "One of the most important parts of my job, and the thing that I value the most, is working with students and being able to mentor and share my experiences with them," he said.

Norte received his doctoral degree in sports medicine and master's degree in athletic training from the University of Virginia. He also holds his bachelor's degree in exercise science and sports medicine from California Lutheran University and has been a board-certified athletic trainer since 2008. Outside of his professional life, Norte values family. He's married to Shari, who also shares his passion for kinesiology and serves as an associate instructor in the School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences.



## UCF Researcher Receives NIH Grant to Develop New Speech Therapies for Stroke Survivors

Every year, more than 795,000 people in the United States have a stroke, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. Post-stroke, people face a multitude of health difficulties, among which include acquired apraxia of speech (AOS), a motor speech disorder affecting the ability to plan and program the spatial and temporal movements responsible for fluid speech production. AOS can range in severity from minimal disruption to an inability to produce speech entirely. Nationwide, AOS is the primary communication impairment in an estimated 320,000 people and frequently occurs as a secondary diagnosis in two million people with post-stroke aphasia, a language processing disorder.

With the help of a \$570,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, College of Health Professions and Sciences researcher and Assistant Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders Lauren Bislick is exploring alternative, cost-effective practice opportunities to help people with post-stroke AOS continue speech rehabilitation beyond treatment usually available in an outpatient, clinical setting.

Those who experience post-stroke AOS traditionally receive one-on-one speech therapy in an in-person session, often two days a week for 50 minutes, to help them regain or improve verbal expression. Research shows stroke survivors with AOS respond positively to this protocol, but an extensive amount of practice is needed to drive lasting change.

However, intensive or ongoing speech therapy isn't always feasible due to financial, time and insurance restraints. Burdens like the cost of services, travel time to and from clinics, and limited insurance-covered sessions make it difficult for those affected by post-stroke AOS to continue long-term speech therapy. As a result, many people discontinue care and fall short of their communication goals.

"Recovery for patients following a stroke is not like healing a broken arm or leg," Bislick says. "Different types of therapies are often necessary, and recovery timeframes can be extensive and continue well beyond what insurance allows."

To address this problem, Bislick and her team will develop and assess a home practice protocol that utilizes motor imagery practices called Motor Imagery for Treatment Enhancement and Efficacy, or MI-TEE. "When I started combing through the literature, I realized there's a lot of evidence for motor imagery support in training athletes and the rehabilitation of limb-related injuries, but almost nothing has been done in speech rehabilitation," Bislick says. MI-TEE will serve as an accessible and practical tool that can accompany traditional speech therapy for stroke survivors and others by providing them the tools to further practice their speech skills outside the clinic through an athome program.

The treatment, individually curated for each patient, will present sounds and images of target words, prompting the patient to imagine speaking each word in their mind. In previous studies, motor imagery practice has shown to help rehabilitation by engaging neural networks that support motor execution – including those involved in speech – priming the brain for the physical act.

The grant will fund the rehabilitation of 18 patients participating in the 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ -week program. Nine of these patients will receive a combination of traditional speech therapy, comprising of three weekly 50-minute sessions and MI-TEE for 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  weeks. The remaining nine patients will receive traditional speech therapy for the first five weeks, followed by a combination of traditional speech therapy and MI-TEE for the last 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  weeks.

The research began Spring 2024.

"The goal of this research is to produce a low-cost, evidence-based speech rehabilitation tool that can bolster treatment in between sessions and beyond and be used by a large portion of the AOS-affected population," Bislick says. "We want to create something that speech language pathologists in the field are comfortable using, and we want to give people the ability to continue therapy regardless of insurance, time or financial restrictions."

Bislick's grant provides funding for three years from the NIH's National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. She is collaborating with Professors Debbie Hahs-Vaugh and Audra Skukauskaite in the College of Community Innovation and Education.

Bislick is the director of the Aphasia and Related Conditions Research Lab and the Aphasia House, a program that delivers multi-week intensive therapy for those affected by aphasia. She is a certified speech language pathologist and brain injury specialist. Bislick was also named as the recipient of the 2023 Tavistock Trust for Aphasia Distinguished Scholar Award for her research and service contributions focused on enhancing the quality of life for people with aphasia.



## Health Sciences Assistant Professor Brings New Public Health Research to College

Joy Scheidell wasn't planning on a career in public health research when she set out to Florida Gulf Coast University. Her journey to a physical therapy major came to a screeching halt at the end of her sophomore year when she shifted her sights to Bachelor of Science in community health with a focus in health education. After spending time in the health department working with public health nurses to test for HIV and HCV, vaccinate against Hepatitis B and give educational presentations on STI, HIV and HCV she decided to pursue a Master of Public Health in epidemiology from the University of Florida (UF). Eventually this would lead her into a career in research and to an appointment as an assistant professor with the Department of Health Sciences at the University of Central Florida in Spring 2023.

When her mentor at UF asked her to join her in her transition to New York, Scheidell jumped at the opportunity and shifted her doctoral studies from UF to New York University (NYU). Under the guidance of her mentor, she learned more about public health and social determinants of conditions like sexually transmitted infections, HIV and other bloodborne infections.

After finishing a PhD in Epidemiology at NYU, Scheidell received an appointment as an Assistant Professor in research at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine. During this time, she served with the Bard Prison Initiative, which she describes as one of her most impactful professional experiences. The program provides a college education to people who are incarcerated in prisons in the state of New York.

"It's not even research based, even though I consider myself more of a researcher," says Scheidell, when asked about her proudest professional moment. "I taught Introduction to Public Health, an epidemiology course, and I taught a course on sexual and reproductive health through a public health lens." Scheidell says that the experience made her hopeful about the next generation of public health and only further fueled her passion in her research area. Her doctoral dissertation, "Perceived Stress, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Reproductive Health Among Women," was just the beginning of a career in studying complex topics within public health. Due to her experience with the criminal justice system, much of her work has centered around substance abuse and its implications on sexual and reproductive health, and disparities in access to healthcare among women, people of color and other minorities. In just a few years, Scheidell already has an accomplished record of more than 40 peer-reviewed publications.

Scheidell says her attraction to researching the intersections of substance use, mental health, sexual and reproductive health stemmed from experiences in her personal life. From seeing family and friends struggle with addiction and substance abuse, to hearing secondhand stories from her sister, who is a nurse, she gained new insight into public health and the nuances that come with it. While Scheidell says she has never had an interest in working in healthcare directly, she hopes her research findings will supply healthcare providers with knowledge that results in better care for their patients.

Most of the people Scheidell worked with at the health department had master's degrees in public health and had made a career out of research. She knew she wanted to pursue research but choosing to research in a more academic setting was no accident. "There's something about being on a college campus and getting to hear people talk about their work and being a lifelong student," says Scheidell.

Scheidell says UCF's growth and diversity contributed to her decision to join the faculty, and she's excited about the opportunity to bring her research to the university's Academic Health Sciences Center. As a first-generation student, she relates to a large portion of students enrolled. "I love the flexibility and independence that comes with being a researcher, and to some extent, you get to pursue the knowledge that you think is important for the world to have. And I think that's really fun."

## Social Work Researcher Uses GIS to Map Neighborhood Impact on Mental Health and Access to Care



## **SOUND SOLUTIONS:**

**Building Smarter Hearing Systems** 

Kenan Sualp '15MSW, '21PhD is a very familiar face in the classroom. He's been teaching social work classes at UCF for eight years, earning two graduate degrees and serving as an instructor and lecturer before beginning as an assistant professor in the School of Social Work in Summer 2023. In his newest role, he's continuing his research to address the environmental risk factors for mental health and access to care.

"The classroom environment resonates deeply with me; it's a space where I inherently feel a sense of belonging," says Sualp. "Having experienced the field firsthand, I understand the profound influence social workers have on lives, and through teaching, I am trying to amplify this impact by empowering students to extend their helping hands to others."

Sualp, a Turkey native, earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from Istanbul University in Turkey. His interest in social work began during his undergraduate internship in a hospital, where he aided families in crisis and was able to explore three career areas: psychology, psychiatry and social work.

The social work portion, he says, changed his entire career path. "I gradually came to realize the crucial role social workers play in tackling fundamental challenges," says Sualp. "It was a holistic approach to making people's lives better."

Sualp applied for, and received, the Turkish Ministry of Education Future Faculty Scholarship Award, providing him the support he needed to continue his academic journey in the United States, and earn both a MSW and PhD in public affairs (social work track) from UCF.

Sualp began teaching at UCF while completing his doctoral degree and also serving as a clinical social worker for a community behavioral health agency where he provided counseling to youth and families. During his PhD program, his creation of a manual for mental health professionals to better assist unaccompanied refugee children in Turkey was recognized with the SPARC Grant – an award for those completing innovative research in the area of social work.

It was as a doctoral student that Sualp also began to evaluate how the health and wellbeing of communities may be impacted by their geographic locations, research he continues to pursue. He utilizes Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to assess the influence of neighborhood characteristics, such as immigrant density and "concentrated disadvantage." Concentrated disadvantage is a composite measure that incorporates six indicators: percent of individuals below the poverty line, percent of households receiving public assistance, percent of female-headed families, percent of unemployed individuals, percent of the population under 18 years of age, and percent of the population that is Black. His research specifically explores how geographic locations intersect with mental health outcomes and access to healthcare services. He is currently part of an interdisciplinary team, which includes transportation engineers and computer science experts, working to evaluate traffic-related risk factors and their effects on community health.

Sualp is also working with an interdisciplinary team to better assess food deserts (locations that have limited access to affordable and nutritious food). He wants to revisit how food deserts are defined and more accurately capture the newer ways food can be accessed and delivered with today's technology.

He is currently serving as the associate editor of the Journal of Social Service Research.

Looking to the future, he has a clear idea of his goals. Sualp wants to continue using his knowledge of GIS to advocate for vulnerable populations. Using his unique experience, he is striving to provide information to social services and policymakers to improve services to disadvantaged areas.

"Our objective is to furnish stakeholders with robust data and facilitate the crafting of targeted interventions," Sualp says. "Professionals contemplating intervention strategies must possess a nuanced understanding of each neighborhood's unique profile and its influence on variables such as mental health and the accessibility of care. By meticulously mapping these community traits to specific outcomes, we are equipped to tailor interventions that more effectively address the nuanced needs of the populace." A classical psychoacoustician and a clinical audiologist, Professor David Eddins is regarded across the country for his research to address hearing impairments and his discoveries leading to the improvement of diagnostic tools and hearing enhancement devices. He joined the College of Health Professions and Sciences (CHPS) last fall with more than three decades of research in the speech, voice and hearing sciences. At UCF, he's ramping up his pioneering work to develop assistive technology solutions that improve the quality of life for people with hearing challenges and create more effective tools for the clinicians treating them.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), approximately 15% of American adults, or 37.5 million people, report some trouble hearing. The developments taking place in Eddins' newly created Communication Technologies Research Center have implications for children and adults facing hearing challenges that stem from trauma, disease and neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as those with age-related conditions and for patients like professional singers or athletes who rely on voice, respiratory and speech health.

The center, based in the CHPS Office of Research, targets four focal areas: voice and upper airway disorders, auditory neuroscience, hearing technologies and simulation technologies. It includes Eddins' longtime associates, Research Professor Shaheen Awan and Research Assistant Professor Yeonggwang "Paul" Park, both of whom also joined CHPS in Fall 2023, and Ann Clock Eddins, who is a professor and director of the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders and brings research expertise in auditory neuroscience. New to the center this summer are Assistant Professor Andy Dykstra and Research Assistant Professor Monica Folkerts. Plans are in place to hire five additional faculty members in the months ahead.



### A More Intelligent Hearing Aid

Eddins comes to UCF after 13 years at the University of South Florida (USF) where he served as the director of the Auditory and Speech Sciences Laboratory, a multidisciplinary research facility dedicated to improving hearing and communication. For the last two years, he and his team have been working to develop a "smart" hearing aid that can predict the intent of a user and intuitively change the way it processes sound to meet the goals of the wearer.

Hearing aids made with today's technology simply process sound and don't know anything about the wearer's intent or how they want to interact (or not) with sounds and the environment. Eddins is creating a device that uses accelerometers to receive data about head movements and provide indicators of what the user is doing and their hearing needs, which in turn enables the device to adjust itself accordingly.

"Imagine you're really engaged in conversation and you're nodding up and down, shaking your head left and right, laughing and talking. Those actions and movements may be associated with turn taking and looking at communication partners and can convey that you're trying to understand what's going on," Eddins says. "In that situation, you might want the hearing aid signal processing to be aggressive to maximize clarity of other people's speech and focus on individual speakers, and for background noise to be minimized."

In addition to making current hearing aids available more intelligent, the technology could also be extended to cochlear implants and any other head worn systems developed in the future, including the possibility of small, head mounted chips that interface with smartphones.

Grants from the hearing aid manufacturer Sonova support the project, which is in early stages. Eddins and his collaborators are currently examining the accelerometer technology available, establishing benchmarks for accuracy, and studying and coding head movements during natural conversations to better infer patterns. Eventually, they'll tie the patterns of head movement and measures from other sensor technologies to the associated communication actions.

## **Simple Yet Highly Sophisticated**

Eddins and Awan have been collaborating for several years to find new ways to better diagnose and treat voice disorders. Their current projects include a five-year \$3.12 million NIH grant to develop a more accessible and affordable tool for speech-language pathologists (SLP) to conduct more comprehensive patient evaluations. One of the components of a voice evaluation is a respiratory evaluation, which can assess the air coming through the lungs to the vocal folds.

"The challenge is that most SLPs who do voice evaluations don't do a respiratory evaluation," Eddins says. "Part of the problem is that the equipment is expensive and not very accessible or user friendly."

Awan and his son Jordan Awan, a researcher at Purdue University, developed a 3D-printed handheld whistle that a patient blows into, producing a sound frequency directly proportional to the air flow the patient is generating. An accompanying smartphone app measures the pitch of the sound and provides an accurate measure of the patient's breathing capacity.

The device can obtain the same information as medical devices on the market that sell for hundreds to thousands of dollars, Eddins says. He envisions the whistle one day being available in individual, disposable packages. The simple vet highly sophisticated solution could potentially be used by SLPs to accurately measure respiratory function in patient evaluations, as well as by clinicians in other disciplines, like sports medicine practitioners, or even a general practitioner who needs to assess breathing capacity to help diagnose a respiratory illness.

The grant is enabling the researchers to evaluate the whistle across the lifespan and, along with research partners across the country, establish its viability for future clinical use. A mechanical engineer at Purdue University has developed a fluid dynamics model and is helping to optimize the whistle's performance, and scientists at Emory University are evaluating its utility with patients at a voice clinic.

## **Assessing Voice Disorders**

Eddins and Awan are also studying adult and pediatric voice disorders, focusing specifically on developing better tools for clinicians to more effectively evaluate the perception of a patient's voice thanks to a \$3.17 million grant and a second \$2.9 million grant, both from NIH. This work began over a decade ago with Eddins' longtime research colleague Provost Rahul Shrivastav at Indiana University.

Voice disorders can be caused by a wide variety of factors ranging from vocal abuse (which can be anything that strains the vocal cords, like too much talking, laughing or shouting), to exposure to chemicals or smoking, and medical conditions like cancer or certain diseases that affect the nerves that control the vocal cords. Factors like these can cause vocal cords to vibrate abnormally, causing patients to experience problems with pitch, volume or voice quality.

Pediatric voice disorders are rarely researched despite being very common. The intubation of infants can damage their vocal folds, sometimes rendering them non-functioning, and when this occurs, a child may vibrate their mouth to create speech and sounds, instead of using vocal folds.

Eddins and colleagues want to examine the validity of tools currently being used by SLPs to assess voice perception. Today, that typically involves a SLP rating what they hear when a patient speaks on a Likert or a visual analog scale, for example, by assigning a number between one and 100. These methods don't always provide reliable data.

"No one has systematically compared the effectiveness of current clinical tools to those we have developed in the laboratory," Eddins says. The long-term goal is to translate robust measurement methods used in laboratory investigations into more reliable and valid clinical tools that are accessible, affordable and easy to use.

## **Stopping Sound Sensitivities**

Eddins' past work includes the development of a patented hearing device and treatment method to help people with severe hyperacusis, a condition that produces an abnormal sensitivity to sound. Patients with this condition are unable to even tolerate common everyday noises like dishes clanging or doors slamming. and the condition can have an adverse impact on quality of life. There are no medical treatments currently available.

"The idea is that you need to somehow make these louder sounds that are offensive and uncomfortably loud, more comfortable for these individuals," says Eddins, who developed a device that produces sound therapy to enable patients to better manage their condition. The devices protect against exposure to high-level sounds while providing a constant, low level, soft, therapeutic background sound which gradually builds a higher level of tolerance for patients. At the same time, the device automatically adjusts itself to protect against new sounds a patient would find aversive.

"Over time, we basically are altering the way their brains are responding to high level sounds, reducing the excitability of the central nervous system to those high-level sounds," Eddins says. "If sound levels in the environment get up to be above your tolerance, devices turn down the sound level, so they actually kind of function like ear plugs when you need them by reducing sound level, but when you don't need them, they're providing healthy, comfortable sound exposure all the time."

In a clinical trial, Eddins' sound therapy was coupled with traditional counseling specific to patients with hyperacusis, a combination that together yielded a significant improvement in their ability to tolerate high level sounds.

He plans to pursue a larger scale field trial, with multiple sites. He also believes the treatment is promising for people with autism spectrum disorder, a population that often experiences abnormal sound sensitivity.

## Changing the Brain

Eddins' work to address hyperacusis is an extension of his interest in neuroplasticity, and his development of sound therapies designed to help the aging population adapt to hearing changes and the associated natural changes that occur in the way the brain processes.

A patent is pending on his second sound therapy device, this one targeting the specific auditory deficits most likely to occur with age-related hearing loss.

"Most people think of hearing problems as a hearing loss, like you don't hear certain soft sounds," Eddins says. "But another type of hearing problem is that sounds have some acoustic property that your brain just doesn't process or interpret very well. And there are lots of different types of acoustic properties that need to be processed."



His sound therapy device can distinguish between the processing deficits and tailor the therapy provided – whether that's providing a soft noise or adjusting certain speech sounds commonly misheard.

"Rather than just put a hearing aid on, what we would like to do is change the way the brain reacts and responds and processes," Eddins says.

In the new Center, Eddins and the team will continue their research, clinical trials, and the development, design and validation of diagnostic instruments. They'll coordinate product field trials: conduct product testing. evaluation and comparisons of hearing enhancement and hearing protection devices; and provide behavioral and electrophysiological assessments of hearing and auditory functions.

The team was recently funded by Sonova to study the interaction between hearing loss, hearing aids, communication and cognition. The focus of this investigation is to determine how hearing aid sound processing may improve communicative and cognitive function by employing a unique combination of cuttingedge laboratory measurements as well as real-time measurements of communicative and cognitive function during the course of a person's everyday life.

Additionally, the center will focus on using simulation technology to further their research in developing educational and teaching tools, as well as for translational clinical practice.

Eddins is a fellow of the Acoustical Society of America and the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering. He earned a bachelor's in speech and hearing sciences and a master's in audiology from the University of North Carolina and a doctorate in experimental psychology from the University of Florida.

## Physical Therapy Assistant Professor Studies How to Repair Both the Muscle and the Brain

Meredith Chaput joined the Division of Physical Therapy in Fall 2023 as an assistant professor and co-director of the Cognition, Neuroplasticity, & Sarcopenia (CNS) research lab in the School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences. Her research examines how rehabilitation from musculoskeletal injuries can incorporate more neurologic interventions.

Chaput's interest in physical therapy was first sparked as a member of her high school's basketball team. During her time as a player, Chaput underwent two knee surgeries and later broke her leg – ending her competitive athletic career. Recovery from her injuries required extensive physical therapy.

Though different from the knee injury she experienced while in high school, Chaput became interested in studying and researching the mechanism behind anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) ruptures – a common sports injury – and how the brain is affected during recovery.

Ligaments like the ACL send sensory signals to the brain that are important for detecting where your joints are in space. When ruptured, the sensory signals sent to the brain are altered. While patients usually have surgery followed by six to 12 months of physical therapy, typical rehabilitation strategies don't address the underlying central nervous system changes, says Chaput. "Our rehabilitation protocols don't actually target the nervous system that well," Chaput says. "Instead of just focusing on the muscles and the knee joint, we also have to focus on aspects of the nervous system like the brain."

Chaput's research looks to provide a more holistic approach for ACL rehabilitation. After ACL reconstruction more than 50% of people will develop advanced osteoarthritis within 15 years. Additionally, about 30% people will experience a second injury and many never return to their prior level of function.

"In addition to causing osteoarthritis later in life, the risk for a second knee injury is high," says Chaput. "Both impact people's quality of life, which is why we want to study them and learn how to better intervene early on."

To explore the neurological and musculoskeletal connection, Chaput's research uses functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a method that can evaluate brain activation during knee movements. She also uses sport-specific dual-task tests to examine how an individual performs not only physically, but cognitively as well. The long-term goal of her research is to identify novel rehabilitation interventions that can be used to improve the brain's function after ACL injury.

In traditional physical therapy, athletes engage in lifting weights and conducting exercises that help build endurance and regain muscle strength. But some research shows that regions of the brain related to visual processing and cognitive awareness of movement are also altered after having an ACL reconstruction. Standard rehabilitation waits until the very late stages to address these visual and cognitive changes, which may contribute to high re-injury risk. Therefore, Chaput is interested in developing interventions to target the brain changes in visual and cognitive regions within early stages of recovery.

Chaput's research will continue in the newly created CNS Lab, which is located in the Education Complex and housed within the Institute of Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science. She'll work alongside fellow co-directors Grant Norte, an associate professor of kinesiology, and Matt Stock, an associate professor of physical therapy. Coincidentally, the CNS Lab name incorporates the first letter of their last names and their respective specialty areas (cognition for Chaput, neuroplasticity for Norte and sarcopenia for Stock). Together, the three researchers will focus on investigating the intersections of the neuromuscular system and exploring early interventions to help improve people's quality of life across the lifespan.

Chaput holds a bachelor's degree in exercise science from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a doctorate of physical therapy (DPT) from Creighton University. She completed a Sports Physical Therapy Residency at Vanderbilt Orthopedics Nashville and is a board-certified sports clinical specialist. Additionally, prior to joining UCF, Chaput completed her doctorate of philosophy in translational biomedical sciences at Ohio University where she co-instructed several graduate level courses and served as a clinical instructor for DPT students in a probono clinic for ROTC outreach.

In 2022, Chaput received the New Horizon Award from the American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy which recognizes an emerging leader in sports physical therapy within the first five years of practice for their contributions to research, clinical practice and mentorship. Additionally, her research was competitively awarded a Promotion of Doctoral Studies II Scholarship through the Foundation for Physical Therapy Research.



CHPS Annual Publication | 27

## Social Work Researcher Seeks to Support Youth Mental Health in Cross-Cultural Settings

Assistant Professor Shuang Lu has crossed continents to conduct her research, studying the mental health of youth in disadvantaged families with a goal of improving community-based services. Lu, who joined UCF in Spring 2023, was born in China and became interested in the topic after seeing the systemic issues for migrant school children as part of an early internship.

Lu joins the UCF School of Social Work from the University of Hong Kong where she earned an Early Career Teaching Award and spent five years studying the emotional wellbeing of migrant youth and the effectiveness of school-based socioemotional interventions. In China, almost one third of the labor force is comprised of rural migrant workers who seek employment in urban cities and are often subjected to unfair treatment and residency restrictions. Millions of children, left with other relatives for extended amount of time, have limited access to healthcare and education. Lu's research has sought to explore and understand the impacts of migration on these families and to find interventions to build resilience and support their mental health.

Lu says another goal of her research is to raise public awareness. She notes the unique challenges faced by Asians, who are often labeled as a "model minority" group, a stereotype that depicts them as inherently successful and can create pressure and distress. "A lot of times they're struggling, but their efforts are not really acknowledged," Lu says. Lu's aspiration is to address this problem by conducting research on mental health and resilience and better understand ties to depression, anxiety and substance abuse. While her work has primarily centered around Asian populations, she has also studied mental health impacts in Hispanic families and families experiencing intimate partner violence.

Lu finds UCF to be the perfect fit for her academic pursuits. She emphasizes that the presence of the Center for Behavioral Health Research and Training played a significant role in attracting her to the institution. The center's mission aligns seamlessly with her own research goals and provides an ideal platform for her to make meaningful contributions in her field. Lu has published 37 journal articles in her first decade as researcher.

"Something I really love about my job is to change how people think about research and how we can use research, either through teaching research or doing my own research," says Lu, who teaches Research Methods.

"Often at the beginning of the semester students question if research is useful, because they're going to be social workers, counselors, and therapists," says Lu. "But then by the end of the semester, if one student says that I'm getting more interested in research, it's not as intimidating as I thought, then I feel a sense of achievement."

Lu holds a bachelor's degree from Anhui Normal University in China, and a Master of Social Work (MSW) and doctorate in social work from Rutgers University. She is an associate editor for Mindfulness and Director-at-Large for the Society for Social Work and Research Board of Directors.





Justine Renziehausen absorbs the bustling atmosphere surrounding her within one of the numerous research labs housed in the School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences. Student researchers engage in a flurry of activity, and she takes it all in. Just months prior, she was one of the doctoral students completing research in the same lab. Now, she's there as part of a new venture: serving as a faculty member.

In May 2023, Renziehausen was the first graduate of the College of Health Professions and Sciences' new Kinesiology PhD degree program and is now continuing her academic career as a lecturer in the Division of Kinesiology, joining the same team of faculty who once mentored her.

Renziehausen earned an undergraduate degree in exercise physiology from West Virginia University and her master's in sport and exercise science at UCF. It was an unexpected source who led her to pursue research, rather than follow a career she originally thought would involve clinical healthcare. "At first, I was stuck in a clinical mindset, considering careers in various healthcare fields, such as cardiac rehab," Renziehausen says. "My sister suggested doing research. I ended up calling my master's advisor. And, we had a great conversation and one thing led to another and I ended up here."

While in the PhD program, Renziehausen studied circadian rhythm, assessing how the time of day affects performance in healthy adults, and the differences between genders.

In her first semester teaching this summer, she taught Facts and Fallacies and Exercise is Medicine. Those two courses join Assessments and Evaluation as her course lineup this semester.

"I enjoy working with students who have diverse interests and helping them develop their professional goals over time," says Renziehausen. "I'm excited to be teaching a variety of courses, where I'll have the opportunity to teach students who are in different stages of their education."

The Kinesiology PhD program began in Fall 2022 and evolved from what was previously an exercise physiology

## First Kinesiology PhD Program Graduate Returns as Faculty In Growing Program

track in the Education PhD program. David Fukuda, professor and chair of the Division of Kinesiology, helped develop the new program. While Renziehausen is the first graduate of program, there are 20 doctoral students pursuing their degrees as of Fall 2023.

Fukuda says he expects a large majority of the graduates will go on to pursue careers in higher education and teach or conduct research, helping to prepare the next generation of healthcare and exercise professionals. He notes that some may start in academia as faculty and then move on to do contract research, providing information to those who are treating patients each day and working to improve healthcare policies.

Maxine Furtado, one of the kinesiology doctoral students, obtained her undergraduate and master's degrees in kinesiology at UCF. Furtado's area of research is athlete monitoring and sports performance, and she's been conducting research with UCF's soccer team for several years. Her dissertation assesses frontal plane hip strength in collegiate female soccer players, and she monitors the athletes' training load throughout the season.

"My graduate courses set me up to learn how to write and conduct research, while also learning more in-depth concepts in exercise physiology, sports nutrition and strength and conditioning," says Furtado. "The faculty and staff actually care about the students in the program and always look for ways to improve courses offered and opportunities available for students."

In addition to Renziehausen, three more faculty members joined the Division of Kinesiology and began teaching in its undergraduate and graduate programs in Fall 2023: Clinical Assistant Professor Caitlin Ann Cheruka, Associate Professor Grant Norte and Associate Instructor Shari Norte.

"Students and faculty are coming from across the country and around the world to be part of this program," says Fukuda. "We're preparing people to be industryrecognized teacher scholars and scientists who are leaders in the various fields encompassing kinesiology."

## **SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHER**

Examines Intimate Partner Violence and Economic Empowerment Assistant Professor Hsiu-Fen Lin joined the College of Health Professions and Sciences this fall in the School of Social Work and is a member of UCF's Violence Against Women (VAW) faculty cluster. A licensed clinical social worker in a global context for more than 25 years, Lin is actively involved in research surrounding intimate partner violence (IPV) and homicide, violence on immigrant women and children, economic and financial abuse, and economic empowerment.

> Lin began her work in the field of social work in 1998 in Taiwan, the same year the country passed the Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Act and became the first Asian country to implement legal measures to protect victims. During her nine-year tenure at the Center for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention and Intervention, she helped low-income families as well as women and children exposed to violence. It was there that she first began to see the connection between poor economic safety and IPV - a risk factor she believes is severely overlooked and has since become a focus of her research.

Lin came to the United States in 2013, earning a MSW and Ph.D. in social work from Rutgers University where she studied economic abuse within intimate partner violence. Abusers can prevent survivors from accessing funds, seeking job training or being employed, says Lin. 'When people hear 'abuse,' they assume physical violence and rarely consider financial or economic abuse.'' she says.

"When people hear 'abuse,' they assume physical violence and rarely consider financial or economic abuse," she says. "Economic abuse is difficult to talk about and is often overlooked." Lin is committed to promoting economic empowerment to lessen the negative effects of IPV.

Prior to joining the School of Social Work at UCF, Lin served as a post-doc scholar at Arizona State University (ASU), working with Jill Messing, a professor in the ASU School of Social Work and director of the Office of Gender-Based Violence. Messing was the recipient of four grants totaling \$2.3 million for research on intimate partner homicide and gun violence. Lin used her skills to lead a transdisciplinary student research team, manage large-scale research operations including management and analysis of large datasets, and effectively communicate with research partners including faculty and community members – research she is continuing in her new role at UCF. The research team is reviewing over 8,000 homicide victim case files from law enforcement, medical examiners and prosecutors across six states. The goal is to identify risk factors to prevent future homicide cases, and update the Danger Assessment tool, an instrument that assists professionals to assess the IPV victim's likelihood for being killed by their intimate partner.

Researchers are also interviewing the victims' next-ofkin to better understand the victims' relationship with their abuser, the family dynamics and details on the firearm ownership prior to the homicides. They endeavor to understand more about IPV-related homicides when IPV leads to the deaths of corollary victims including

- children, other family members, neighbors, and community members. Over the long-term, researchers will evaluate the intersection of domestic violence homicides and macrolevel risk factors such as firearm regulations.
- "It is very hard to see the lives lost, and we think many of these homicides are preventable," Lin says. "The work we do can help identify better risk assessment tools that can be used by both professionals and the IPV survivors themselves. Our goal is to develop better interventions and
- y create strategies to save lives."

Lin and her team are working with professionals from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, criminal justice, nursing and public health. "It is a great experience for me to work with people from different backgrounds because it allows us to understand the issues more comprehensively," says Lin.

"Social work education doesn't fully prepare students to talk about money with clients," Lin says. "We can do a better job to initiate difficult conversations on finance and understanding the root of the problem – is it a lack of money, is it money management, is it an inability to find employment – so we can help to find solutions."

Lin says one of the main reasons she came to UCF was
because of the VAW faculty cluster and its work underway. The VAW members span several disciplines and are
dedicated to research guiding policymaking. "Despite
our diverse research backgrounds, we all have the same
understanding and the same goal that we want to achieve:
to stop violence against women and terminate loss of
life due to intimate partner violence," says Lin. "I am so
inspired to be a part of the VAW cluster because for us,

researchers, this is a life-changing opportunity."

## **Record Number of Doctor of Physical Therapy Students Accepted to Residencies**

Of the 38 students who will graduate from UCF's Doctor of Physical Therapy program in Spring 2024, one in four – an impressive 26% – will immediately go on to develop further specialization in their defined areas of practice at a post professional physical therapy residency. This year is a record high for the DPT program, which typically sees only about 10% of graduates accepted to residency programs.

Across the U.S., less than 12% of DPT students apply to residency programs following graduation.

The increase comes as no surprise to program leaders in the College of Health Professions and Sciences who, over the last three years, have increased the number of education sessions delivered to students to help make them more aware of residency opportunities and how they can further their expertise and ultimately improve patient care.

Physical therapy residency programs provide advanced training and prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to pass a certification examination for a specialized area of practice. "Residency training for physical therapists is the crucible where theory meets practice, forging expertise through immersive learning and mentorship," says Associate Professor and Division of Physical Therapy Chair William Hanney. "It's the

transformative journey that hones skills, instills confidence, and shapes compassionate caregivers, ensuring excellence in every step towards healing."

The 10 students graduating from UCF in Spring 2024 and entering residencies will receive structured mentoring, further didactic learning and guided clinical experiences. They'll develop skills in specialty areas that include sports, neurology, orthopedics and cardiopulmonary.

Riley Hogge will serve her orthopedic physical therapy residency at The Ohio State University and says she's eager to receive one on one mentoring from experts in her chosen specialty area and looks forward to the chance to teach.

"I hope to develop my clinical reasoning and further build on the education that I received from UCF DPT through the high level and structured mentoring that residency education provides," Hogge says. "This will help prepare me for my career goals of becoming an orthopedic expert for my patients and an educator within the Doctor of Physical Therapy program."

According to the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education, there are 7,896 physical therapists who are residency program graduates from 426 accredited residency programs.

## **IN FOCUS** SEAL OF APPROVAL

The School of Social Work invited CHPS faculty and staff stop by the Center for Behavioral Health Research and Training to interact with their new PARO therapeutic robot, modeled after a baby harp seal, and brainstorm ways to incorporate it into research. The robot will be used to learn more about animal-assisted interventions in behavioral health research. Faculty and staff were invited to get creative and suggest a name for the robot. Sully was the winning name!



## **Black Undergraduate Kinesiology Association Celebrates First Anniversary**

graduation.

Since early 2023, Simmons and Straghn have established the organization's business protocols, held member interest events and fundraisers, and rolled out a series of career development sessions and social events.

Lecturer Alison Redd in the Division of Kinesiology and Fitness Coordinator Rashun Garner with the UCF Recreation and Wellness Center serve as the group's advisers. Membership in BUKA is open to current UCF undergraduate students and Valencia students enrolled at UCF Downtown.



## The graduating students going to post professional physical therapy residency programs include:



- Dimitri Shurik, attending the University of Miami-Jackson Rehabilitation Hospital Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Physical Therapy Residency
- Scott Stockunas '21, attending the AdventHealth Orthopedic Physical Therapy Residency
- Gabriella Orlando, attending the AdventHealth Sports Physical Therapy Residency
- Emma Scammon, attending the UCF and Orlando Health Neurologic Residency
- Riley Hogge, attending The Ohio State University Orthopedic Physical Therapy Residency



- Juan Rodriguez, attending the University of Miami Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency
- Breven Dalsemer, attending the Nationwide Children's Sports Residency
- Reid Whiting, attending the AdventHealth Neurological Physical Therapy Residency
- Kylie McCarty '19, attending the University of North Carolina Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency
- Marc Luzadder '20, attending the Brooks Orthopaedic Residency



A new student organization at UCF is building a community of aspiring kinesiology professionals and offering support and mentoring to its members. Established as a registered student organization in Spring 2023, the Black Undergraduate Kinesiology Association grew to 60 members in its first year.

The organization was created by two kinesiology seniors, Mekhi Simmons and Ryala Straghn, who wanted to provide students with resources for academic success, provide peer mentoring, and help prepare students for their careers after



## HONORS AND ACCOLADES

## FACULTY

**Reach for the Stars** 

Excellence in Research

**Research Incentive Award Recipient** 

Lauren Bislick Wilson -Assistant Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders

#### Champions of **Student Success** and Well-Being

Kim Anderson -Professor. Social Work

#### Excellence in **Graduate Teaching**

Morris "Rick" Beato - Clinical Associate Professor, **Physical Therapy** 

#### Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

Alison Redd -Lecturer, Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Kinesiology

Susanny Beltran -Assistant Professor, Center Co-Director, Social Work



**Research Incentive** Award **Teaching Incentive** 

> Program Award Ethan Hill - Assistant Professor, Kinesiology



**Teaching Incentive Program Award** David Fukuda -Professor and Chair,

Kinesiology



**Teaching Incentive Program Award** Keith Brazendale -Assistant Professor,



#### Humberto Lopez Castillo - Assistant Professor. Health Sciences

Award



**Health Sciences** 



William Hanney School of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences - promoted to professor

Xiaochuan

"Sharon" Wang\*\*

Work - promoted to

associate professor

Julia O'Connor\*\*

School of Social Work - promoted to

associate professor

Eunkyung "Muriel" Lee\*\*

Department of Health

Sciences - promoted

to associate professor

Amy Thomas

Communication

Danielle Webster

senior lecturer

Department of Health

Sciences - promoted to

Disorders - promoted to associate instructor

Sciences and

School of

School of Social







Outstanding **Master's Thesis** 

Jason Pagan, Kinesiology

Lauren Bislick Wilson\* School of Communication Sciences and Disorders - promoted to associate professor



\*Promotions effective Aug. 8, 2024 \*\* Recommended for tenure



Clinical associate professors Laurie Neely and Jennifer Tucker '23PhD were elected as Distinguished Fellows of the National Academies of Practice (NAP) in physical therapy. Fellowship is an honor extended to those who have excelled in their profession and are dedicated to further interprofessional practice, scholarship and policy in support of interprofessional care.



American College of Sports **Medicine Fellow** 

David Fukuda, professor and Division of Kinesiology chair, was awarded Fellow status by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). Fukuda was selected for the honor based on his outstanding service to ACSM and his distinguished professional achievements in the field of exercise science and sports medicine.



## **STUDENTS**



Paola Rivera, Kinesiology



Calvin MacDonald, Health Sciences



Jada Cody, **Health Sciences** 



Sydney Martinez, **Health Sciences** 



Aadith Menon **Health Sciences** 



**College Award** Calvin MacDonald **Health Sciences** 



### 30 Under 30



Juliana Hirn '17 19MA

**Steven Jacques** '18



Daniel Khaytman '17



Paola Rivera '16 '19MS '24PHD

# N THE COMMUNITY

# SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Doctor of Physical Therapy student Lily Rubio found her passion for community service through UCF's DPT program. Rubio and her peers supported student cadets in ROTC programs, organized food drives, and worked with UCF's Mighty Knights program to create inclusive play environments for children with disabilities. UCF PT students collectively participate in more than 50 events and contribute approximately 250 service hours annually.





## STUDENT DRIVERS



The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at UCF offered an 18-week driver education program to eight teens with ASD. Featuring one-on-one driving lessons with a registered occupational therapist and driving rehabilitation professional, this initiative is made possible thanks to the generous support of Armani Williams and the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism.

## AYUDANDO A LA COMUNIDAD

Yamil Ramon Cortes '22, soon to be a graduate of UCF's Master of Social Work program, completed his final semester of field education at the Hispanic Family Counseling Center. Upon graduation, Cortes will transition into a fulltime therapist position at the center.



## **PERFORMANCE MEETS WELLNESS**

This year's UCF Celebrates the Arts featured "Guardians of the Stage," a presentation that explored wellness for performing artists with insights on vocal health, hearing and injury prevention. The panel of experts included Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs Bari Hoffman; Professor and Director Ann Eddins and Professor David Eddins from the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders; Assistant Professor Colby Mangum from the Athletic Training Program; Associate Professor Tara Snyder from the College of Arts and Humanities; doctoral student Evyn Callahan from the Division of Kinesiology; and medical director Jeffrey J. Lehman from Ear, Nose, Throat, and Plastic Surgery Associates, Orlando.

## YEE-HAW JUNCTION

The Mighty Knights visited Puzzle Ranch Farm in Lake County, Florida. UCF's Mighty Knights program provided specially designed assistive equipment to children with complex communication and motor needs to enable inclusive play experiences. The equipment includes a mobile harness system enabling upright play for children unable to stand independently.

## **CRITICAL SCREENING**

According to the CDC, one in 36 children have autism spectrum disorder, and families can face long waiting lists to have their children evaluated. At an ASD screening event hosted at the Rehabilitation Innovation Center, 74 families were screened in one day with 60 referred for full evaluation. Families traveled from as far as Lakeland and Plant City to receive a diagnostic evaluation. In addition to filling a much-needed healthcare gap and connecting the community with necessary assessment and clinical services, the event also provided a unique learning experience for our graduate students. The event was hosted by the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders in conjunction with Nemours Children's Hospital.













# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

## CHAPTER OF THE YEAR

The UCF NSSLHA chapter was named the 2023-2024 National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) Chapter of the Year, the highest honor awarded to only one chapter annually. This prestigious recognition highlights the exceptional dedication and efforts of our students, who go above and beyond in their contributions and service.

Our chapter's impressive achievements include over 3,600 volunteer hours, the writing of over 500 Take Action letters, organizing a donation drive for individuals with neurological motor disabilities, engaging in legislative advocacy to promote inclusivity, and establishing a scholarship to support fellow students. Additionally, they earned GOLD chapter honors for the fourth consecutive year for their outstanding work and leadership. We are thrilled to see their hard work and commitment to advancing the profession and serving the community acknowledged at a national level.





## COOL OPPORTUNITY

Madison Fraser, a second-year Master of Athletic Training student, chose the program for its diverse clinical opportunities. Fraser was in clinical rotation with the Orlando Solar Bears, an ECHL hockey team, where she gained hands-on experience in a professional sports setting. Under the guidance of her preceptor, she provided treatment and rehabilitation support to athletes, applying her classroom knowledge to realworld situations.

The Master of Athletic Training program offers a comprehensive two-year, six-semester curriculum that prepares students for careers as athletic trainers through varied clinical experiences. These experiences include working with collegiate and professional sports teams, outpatient rehabilitation clinics, and industrial and performing arts settings. The program boasts a 95% pass rate on the Board of Certification exam and a 95% employment rate. Program director Kristen Schellhase attributes their success to dedicated faculty and an extensive alumni network. This thorough clinical education equips students to handle diverse athletic training scenarios, ensuring they are well-prepared for the workforce.

#### HANDS-ON TRAINING

CSD grad students joined the annual Dysphagia Training and Simulation Day led by Associate Instructor Todd R. Fix. The course gives hands-on experience of the complexities and nuances of speech-pathology servicedelivery for dysphagia, a swallowing disorder.



#### **CLINICAL SHADOWING ABROAD**

Health sciences senior Bryan Fajardo aspires to be an anesthesiologist, and his participation in the new Clinical Shadowing Abroad program solidified his career choice. Fajardo spent three weeks in Italy and three weeks in Spain. shadowing healthcare professionals at the National Cancer Institute of Milan and Río Hortega University Hospital in Valladolid. He gained invaluable insights from surgeons and anesthesiologists.







#### EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT

Amber Eutsey is a first-generation student who graduated with her high school diploma from Acceleration East High School and associate degree from Valencia College at the same time! She transferred to UCF through DirectConnect and graduated from the School of Social Work track in Spring 2024 at just 18 years old! She is the recipient of the 23-24 Patricia T. Barnes Memorial Endowed Scholarship and the Invincible Knights Scholarship.



Fajardo is one of 29 students who took part in the Clinical Shadowing Abroad program, which offers sessions ranging from one to six weeks to expose students to international healthcare systems and patient treatment. Additionally, a separate study abroad program allows students to take health-related courses in Barcelona, Spain. These programs not only provide academic credit but also offer students the opportunity to gain new skills and experience diverse cultures.

# UCF CLASS SPOTLIGHT

## **Healthcare Delivery for Hispanic Populations**

The College of Nursing and the College of Health Professions and Sciences are preparing students to provide better healthcare to Hispanic/Latino/a/e/x patients while considering their unique cultural and linguistic needs with a new course that's part of the online Hispanic serving healthcare professionals certificate. The program is funded through a grant from Project ENFERMERÍA, a title V grant awarded to the office of Hispanic Serving Institutions Initiatives at UCF.

#### **Class Name**

**HSC 6626** – *Healthcare Delivery for Hispanic Populations* 

#### Instructor

Assistant Professor of Health Sciences Humberto López Castillo

#### When is it offered?

Spring semester

#### How many students in a class?

Thirty students are in a class. Fifteen seats are reserved for students enrolled in the graduate certificate, and 15 seats are open for any graduate student interested in taking the course as an elective.

#### Prerequisites

For students completing the graduate certificate, NGR 5131 (*Exploring Transcultural and Culturally Congruent Care for the Hispanic Population*) is required. For students taking the course as an elective, there are no prerequisites.

#### FROM THE PROFESSOR

## Give me a brief overview of this course in your own words.

In this course, we study the dynamics of encounters between healthcare practitioners and Hispanic clients and patients in the clinical and community contexts, as well as encounters between subjects, participants, and respondents in a research context. Students learn to identify potential sources of language or cultural barriers for optimal healthcare delivery and to propose mediation strategies when caring for Hispanic clients and patients, especially among those with limited English proficiency (LEP). The class covers how to engage the services of medical or community interpreters, whether via a third-party interpreter or a bilingual provider. Spanish proficiency is not required to take the course.

#### What does the coursework entail?

Students will participate in discussions using Yellowdig, an online learning platform that has proven to be an engaging new tool that combines discussion posts and social media. Given that students in the course are already employed in the healthcare or a related professional field, they contribute with rich experiences and relatable examples. The course received the UCF Global Learning High Impact Practices (HIP) designation. Some activities the students will do include a 5-minute interview with clients and practitioners following a podcast format and writing letters to the editors of journals to do reasoned critiques of published articles.

## Why is this class important for students wishing to go into healthcare?

For students who are already in healthcare, as well as those wishing to start a career in healthcare, this class will offer tools to mediate language and cultural challenges during encounters with Hispanic clients, patients, and research participants. Given the large proportion of Hispanics in the U.S., in Florida and in Orlando, we expect that these resources will be useful to improve health outcomes in the Hispanic population.

## What are three things you hope students will learn in this course?

After completing this course, I hope students will learn about:

- Healthcare disparities faced by Hispanics in the U.S.

   especially the Hispanic health paradoxes, which holds that Hispanics have a lower mortality rate in the U.S. than other ethnic groups, when in fact, health outcomes have found to be better for this population. I expect students to have a comprehensive view of these paradoxes, which include biological reasoning integrated with social determinants of health.
- 2. With the knowledge above, I expect students to recommend and implement ethical, competent, evidence-based, cultural and language mediation strategies during healthcare encounters with Hispanic clients including medical interpreters in their encounters with Hispanic patients.
- 3. For students who qualify, I hope they sit for and pass the national exam offered by the National Board for Certified Medical Interpreters (NBCMI) and earn their CMI-Spanish credential.





### FROM THE STUDENT

Franscico Mena '21 kinesiology alum

#### Why did you decide to take this course?

I decided to take this course due to my involvement with the Hispanic serving health professionals graduate certificate. My goal is to pursue medical school and become a healthcare provider; taking a course titled *Healthcare Delivery for Hispanic Populations* allows me to expand my knowledge on diverse populations and provide more culturally congruent care.

#### What have you enjoyed most about this course?

I thoroughly enjoy that the majority of this course is discussion based and that the cohort is very diverse in terms of profession and education. This allows for a variety of opinions and different walks of knowledge to be shared.

## How do you feel this is preparing you for your career?

Throughout my gap year, I believe this course has been an excellent expansion to my academic journey before my pursuit of medical school. It correlates to my career goals by preparing me for future patient interactions, obtaining a greater knowledge on healthcare disparities and helping me learn some of the intricacies of the healthcare system. The diverse cohort is also a wonderful networking opportunity.



## **Two Sisters, One Journey.**





## After a shocking medical diagnosis brought them closer together, Gabie and Zoe Owens are inspiring each other to follow careers in healthcare.

Physical therapy doctoral student **Gabrielle "Gabie" Owens '23** and junior social work student Zoe Owens are often spotted together on the UCF campus where they take classes in the same building and work out at the Recreation and Wellness Center. The sisters, just two years apart in age, are close friends. But they're also bonded by an unexpected and traumatic medical event that has shaped their aspirations for careers helping others with their physical and mental well-being.

Growing up, Gabie and Zoe were typical sisters - riding bikes, baking and going on picnics together. They shared everything with each other, including their dreams for the future. Gabie saw herself becoming a marine biologist, and Zoe saw herself following in her parents' footsteps and becoming a nurse. After years of accompanying her sister to therapies, Gabie began to realize her increasing interest and fascination for one - physical therapy. "I was able to see Zoe take her first steps again and

But their paths began to change when Zoe was 14 years old and started to experience severe headaches and nausea. With no known cause, her symptoms persisted for a little over a year until April 2017, when she had a minutelong, unexpected seizure.

"I called 911, and the ambulance came right away to pick Zoe up with my mom to go to Seattle's Children's Hospital," said Gabie. "Everyone was very frazzled. We didn't know what was going on."

Zoe had another seizure the next day at the hospital. This one, considerably longer than the first, was 10 minutes long. She received an MRI shortly after the seizure ended, and doctors found a benign brain tumor the size of a golf ball at the base of Zoe's brain stem. It was pilocytic astrocytoma, a low-grade, central nervous system tumor that occurs most commonly in children and young adults.

Following the discovery, Zoe went straight into surgery to remove the mass. Post-surgery, she entered a monthlong coma.

"She was just in the hospital bed, not able to move a finger or her toes," said Gabie. "She couldn't stick out her tongue or even blink."

## Waking Up

When Zoe woke up, she began to experience the onset of posterior fossa syndrome – a condition that causes speech impediments, difficulties in muscle control and coordination, and mood changes. The condition impaired Zoe's everyday functions.

Following the surgery, Zoe was unable to speak for six months.

She began a multitude of rehabilitative therapies, including speech, physical, occupational and vestibular therapy, to help restore her functions to their previous capabilities. "She had to learn how to do everything again," said Gabie. "She had to learn how to eat, how to talk, how to walk, how to balance – all over again."

"I don't remember much after the surgery," says Zoe. "But I remember how much my family was supportive of me during that time."

Almost every day after school, Gabie began accompanying Zoe to her therapy appointments, something she would continue to do in the years that followed.

"I really had to narrow down what was most important in my life, and it was a no-brainer," says Gabie. "I wanted to be right by her side, holding her hand through it all."

"I was able to see Zoe take her first steps again and that sparked some interest in me," says Gabie. "I loved how they not only were patient with Zoe, but they also reminded her that she could do it with the right mindset and determination. I knew right then that's what I wanted to do."

## **Looking Forward**

Zoe would miss a year of high school following her surgery, but with the aid of her parents and a paraprofessional, she returned to complete her classes. She was active in student government, serving as the secretary. Never far away, Gabie served as their high school's executive president.

After graduation, Gabie enrolled at UCF, completing her bachelor's degree in kinesiology in Spring 2023 and enrolling in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program that summer. Zoe obtained her associate degree at Valencia College and then transferred to UCF through DirectConnect, enrolling in the School of Social Work in Fall 2023.

Zoe, who still experiences challenges with speech and balance, served as a guest speaker in Gabie's Patient Care Skills class, sharing more about her recovery and demonstrating the assistive devices she uses to maintain her independence. She uses a wheelchair for mobility and a quad cane to assist with her balance. Zoe has chosen a new path to help fulfill her dreams of helping others; she has decided to become a pediatric social worker to help children who have had similar experiences.

"I feel as though I still have the opportunity to help people," says Zoe. "My dream job is to work in a pediatric department, specifically in pediatric neurology, to help children emotionally with what they're going through."

"In social work, you're helping people with the emotional aspect, instead of the physical, and that sometimes is most important because without a good mindset or perspective then we probably won't get anything done,"

says Zoe. "You can have the best OT, PT or doctor, but if your mind isn't willing then you won't really get through."

## **Defying Limits**

Beyond serving as professional inspirations to one another. Gabie and Zoe have encouraged each other's personal growth as well. The two are finding ways to push their limits and test themselves physically. They're looking to conquer Spartan races - competitions in which athletes run long distances as well as take on obstacles that require them to scale walls, crawl under barbed wire, and traverse monkey bars.

In December 2023, Gabie and Zoe spent their winter break completing a Spartan, which consisted of 20 obstacles over a 5K course through terrain covered in heavy mud. After completing a Spartan before with her father, Gabie wanted to do one again. This time though, the race would include the entire family.

"Almost a whole year ago, Zoe was like, 'I want to do one,'" said Gabie. "I was like, 'Okay, let's do it. Let's train for it."

Zoe, who was a track and field athlete before the brain tumor, had begun weightlifting to help with her physical recovery. When the family signed up for the Spartan, the sisters began training regularly together.

Although Zoe was making strides in her physical and fitness goals, her balance was still a concern.

"I told her, 'We're going to focus on your balance and on getting you stronger," says Gabie.

Zoe didn't use a wheelchair once during the race.



The only support she had was a gait belt around her waist while she held her father's and Gabie's hands. It took the Owens family five hours to complete the race.

More than just a race to test both sisters' physical abilities, the Spartan allowed Zoe to showcase her progress after years of rehabilitative therapy.

"The race was just another thing that I could do to show the improvement I've made," said Zoe. "I was proud of myself because walking is not really in the cards for me."

Their next goal is to gradually increase their race distances to complete a 10K and then a 21K.

Beyond the trials and tribulations, Gabie and Zoe have become an inspiration for one another. Not only have they inspired each other to pursue a career in which they can share their stories and help others, but they have also shown what it means to be sisters and best friends through faith, grace and strength.

"We've truly grown to push each other to be the best versions of ourselves," said Gabie.



## **Kinesiology Students Graduate** with Advanced Credentials

Several students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology this spring have already passed national examinations and obtained key industry certifications by the time they cross the commencement stage. It's part of a new initiative that calls for students to obtain one of 12 certifications the Division of Kinesiology has classified as gold, silver or bronze standards. The program is designed to better prepare students for a broad range of careers in health and wellness and position them as strong applicants for graduate programs.

"Gold level" certifications include the American College of Sports Medicine Certified Exercise Physiologist (ACSM EP) and the National Strength and Conditioning Association Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA CSCS). Other certifications include credentials like certified sports nutritionist, certified personal trainer and certified group exercise instructor.

The four students who passed gold level tests are:

Mitchell Dressler – ACSM - Certified Exercise Physiologist;

Antonio Giannini - ACSM - Certified Exercise Physiologist;

Jaelyn Jenkins - ACSM - Certified Exercise Physiologist; and

Jackson Luberto – NCSA - Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist.

Six additional students passed silver and bronze level tests.

The 10 students are the first to meet new program guidelines that call for undergraduate kinesiology students to pass a certification exam in their last semester to graduate. The requirement began with students who entered the program in Fall 2022.

Jackson Luberto, who plans to become a personal trainer and specialize in working with outdoor athletes, says preparing for the exam was a rigorous process, but he felt ready. "The certification is looked at in such high regard within the industry," Luberto says. Without it, "I wouldn't have the knowledge that I do now, and I don't think I would be able to go into this industry confidently."

In subsequent semesters, as more students move through the program, even larger groups of students will





graduate with certifications, leaving UCF better prepared to meet workforce demands. More than 300 students earn bachelor's degrees in kinesiology each year.

Industry certifications are valuable since many jobs in the profession require additional training and certification beyond a bachelor's degree, says Lecturer and Undergraduate Program Coordinator Alison Redd. "Our industry is upping their standards as far as educational requirements and credentials to work with both athletic and special populations, like patients with cancer, diabetes or high blood pressure," Redd says. "We want to ensure our degree program provides a proper education, plus the required credentials, so that when students apply for jobs or graduate programs, they will be the most desirable candidates."

Students graduating from UCF with degrees in kinesiology enter a wide variety of careers in medicine and clinical healthcare, sports and fitness, and research and academia. Many pursue graduate degrees in occupational therapy, physical therapy or athletic training. Starting this year, graduates have the opportunity to extend their training through the newly implemented Master of Science in Kinesiology - Clinical Exercise Physiology Track, which focuses on the use of exercise in improving the lives of individuals with chronic diseases, conditions, and comorbidities.

"All of these certifications will be valuable for students going out to the field or applying for graduate programs," says Redd. "We want to offer what most employees and admissions boards look for on resumes. We also want to give students options for credentials because this career field is extremely diverse."

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## Advocacy and Authenticity: Social Work Grad Recruits Top Talent



A native of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, alumna **Paola Luigi '18 '21MSW** moved to Florida a decade ago to pursue new opportunities and follow her passion to find work in the human services field.

At UCF, she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and returned to obtain a master's in social work (MSW). As an undergraduate research assistant, she studied language and emotions. As a graduate student and fellow, she worked under the mentorship of Assistant Professor Susanny Beltran in the Center for Behavioral Health Research and Training to conduct research focused on disaster management and emergency preparedness in Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

While most MSW students pursue therapy as their profession, Luigi pivoted her passion for helping others into a non-traditional path — a corporate role with a financial services industry giant. Today, this young alumna lives and works in New York City, where she serves as a recruiter for Morgan Stanley. She builds networks with students and universities across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and in particular Hispanic- Serving Institutions like UCF, to help secure top talent for the investment bank and financial services company.

It's a position she says draws from the transferable skills she obtained as a student and incorporates her interest in diversity, equity and inclusion. "I knew I wanted a career that kept the qualities I was passionate about," Luigi says.

She returned to campus in Fall 2023 to share her personal and professional perspectives with students in a social work class taught by Beltran.

### **Andrew Wiater**

#### **Bachelor of Social Work**

"I just recently received an offer from my internship placement where I have been interning for the past semester doing accessibility case management, and I accepted a part-time position. While working part-time, I plan to also write a memoir of my experiences being



a queer, disabled individual. I believe now is the perfect time to tell my story as I have proven to myself, and truly believe for the first time in my life, that my story is worth telling. This is because I feel like the experience of going to college and living independently has really brought me so much growth and insight, and I want to share it with the world."

#### Daija Wade

#### **Master of Social Work**

"I will enter the field as a medical social worker at Vitas Healthcare, providing services to families and individuals in hospice. During my time at Vitas, I will work towards completing my supervision hours so that I can sit for

the licensure exam within the next two years. Along with establishing myself within my career, I plan to focus on my non-profit, which will be tailored towards providing food, clothing, and other resources to individuals facing challenges in life and who are homeless."

## Calvin MacDonald

#### **Bachelor of Health Sciences**

"I will be attending medical school in the fall with plans to pursue either neurosurgery or plastic surgery."



#### Keisuke Ota

#### Master of Science in Kinesiology

"I have been an assistant coach for the UCF women's soccer team during my time in graduate school, and I will continue coaching for the women's soccer team after graduation."





# Contended of the conten

## Jacob Allen

#### **Doctor of Physical Therapy**

"My next goal will be passing the board exam in July so I can become a licensed physical therapist. Until then, I will be spending extra time with my wife and son, enjoying our favorite hobbies like visiting local springs. I will continue to be a manager of Goodrich Seafood and Oyster House in Oak Hill."



## Riley Hogge

#### **Doctor of Physical Therapy**

*"I will be completing Orthopaedic Residency at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio."* 



### Kayla Neher

## Master of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders

My plan is to remain in Orlando and begin my career in the medical setting or working with the Deaf and hard-ofhearing population.



## **Philanthropy in Action**

## **Philanthropy in Action**

## Collaboration with Brooks Rehabilitation Advances **Physical Therapy Training, Specialized Care**

A collaboration between Brooks Rehabilitation and the College of Health Professions and Sciences (CHPS) is providing new opportunities for physical therapy education and clinical training in the region.

Brooks Rehabilitation, a nationally-ranked nonprofit that provides rehabilitation solutions from acute care to ongoing outpatient treatment, has helped the college complete an expansion of the Physical Therapy Clinic at the Innovative Center in Research Park by donating several pieces of equipment, including cable columns and shuttle system, both used for exercise prescription and interventions.

"Brooks Rehabilitation has a long-standing reputation for excellence, and we're grateful for opportunity to work together to advance healthcare education," says CHPS Founding Dean Christopher Ingersoll. "Their support has enabled us to accelerate our timeline for completing this important clinical site, which helps patients of all ages in our community lead stronger and healthier lives."

"Education and innovation are core to the values of Brooks Rehabilitation," says Victor DeRienzo, Chief Operating Officer - Aging Services and Outpatient. "This partnership - and by supporting the university's current and future physical therapy students through a gift of essential rehabilitation therapy equipment - will aide in learning and make an impact on the profession for years to come."

CHPS and Brooks Rehabilitation will work together in the clinic to offer education and training opportunities for CHPS students studying to become physical therapists and community providers.

"Community partnerships are the cornerstone of sustainable development, fostering collaboration, innovation, and mutual support to address shared challenges and achieve collective goals," says William Hanney, associate professor and division chair. "We're pleased to offer our students so many unique and intensive opportunities to grow in the profession."

The Physical Therapy Clinic at the Innovative Center is just one of three locations providing treatment to the local community. The clinic works closely with the Communication Disorders Clinic, providing a one stop shop for both speech and physical therapy for patients recovering from strokes or undergoing aphasia treatment. Treatment is provided by faculty clinicians there who specialize in geriatric and neurological physical therapy.

The two additional clinics are located on the UCF main campus; one focuses on orthopedics and sports injuries and a second treats student athletes. Care is provided by licensed physical therapists who are clinical experts and faculty members with the UCF Division of Physical Therapy.



## **Alumnus Mason Moore establishes** new fund for testicular cancer research and awareness

Mason Moore '97 has created a new fund to expand research and awareness programs on testicular cancer at the College of Health Professions and Sciences. Himself a three-time testicular cancer survivor, Moore has become an avid advocate for men's health and wellness both in the community and across the nation.

Moore was first diagnosed with testicular cancer in January 2003, just two weeks before his wedding. He was examining himself in the shower when he noticed a lump on his testicle. Soon after his discovery, Moore visited his primary care physician and a urologist who identified and confirmed the diagnosis - testicular cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, testicular cancer is rare, but is the most common malignancy in men ages 15 to 39. If caught early, it is highly treatable and curable.

Moore successfully completed treatment and spent the next five years under surveillance comprised of frequent monitoring, doctor check-ups and self-examinations.

Following his experience, Moore became active in the cancer community, working to encourage men to take ownership of their health and to practice routine selfexaminations. He joined with the Livestrong Foundation to lobby elected officials for increased funding to the National Institute of Health and the National Cancer Institute. In 2013, he joined the National Speakers Bureau for Testicular Cancer Foundation where he speaks to local groups about testicular cancer and how men can play an active role in their health.

"As men, we were always taught to just tough it out, and as a result, we don't make our health a priority," Moore says. "It's about learning your body and learning what's normal and what's not."

It was while serving as a speaker one day at UCF that Moore had the opportunity to meet Associate Professor Michael Rovito in the Department of Health Sciences. Rovito's research investigates testicular self-examination, testicular cancer, male health behavioral change, intervention and instrumentation design, and health communication. Rovito is also the founder and chairman of Male Wellness Collective, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting healthy behaviors among men while advancing the academic and scientific fields of men's health.



"As I got to know Dr. Rovito and talk with him more, I learned about the things he does through the male wellness collective organization he started and his focus on male wellness as a whole," Moore says. "It seemed like a natural fit to create a fund with the college."

In February 2018, Moore experienced a sudden onset of pain in his upper right abdomen while at a professional networking event. "I thought to myself, 'Okay, Mason. You speak to groups about the importance of men making their health a priority. What do you need to do in this case?' And so, I did something that I'd never done before in my life," Moore says. With the pain only becoming more severe, he drove himself to the emergency room.

At the hospital, doctors identified a nodule on Moore's right lung. It was originally diagnosed as lung cancer, requiring surgical removal of the middle lobe of his right lung. Unfortunately, during follow-up surveillance less than a year later, a new nodule was discovered. After further testing, it was determined that this, along with the previous recurrence, was related to the testicular cancer he originally had in 2003 - a recurrence 15 years later, something highly unheard of with testicular cancer.

Moore completed a successful chemotherapy treatment along with additional lung surgery in May 2019. April 2024 marked Moore's five-year mark of being cancer-free. Moore hopes his fund will support research and awareness programs on testicular cancer at the college as well as bring more focus to the mental health aspects of the disease.

"There's been very little discussion, if any at all, around the mental and emotional stress that's created by going through something like this," Moore says. "Not just when you hear the diagnosis or when you go through treatment, but post-life as a survivor, and the fears and anxiety that goes along with that. That's an area of specific focus for me as I continue to advocate."



Moore earned a Bachelor of Science in health services administration in 1997. He has served on the UCF Alumni Board and the Advisory Board for Nicholson School of Communication and Media since 2020, and this year was appointed to the Dean's Advocacy Board in the College of Health Professions and Sciences.

## **Philanthropy in Action**

## **Community Grants Received**

• The **Doug Flutie**, Jr. Foundation for Autism sponsored Camp iREAD, which focuses on preliteracy skills for Pre-K - 2nd graders with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The camp is based on the science of reading and targets early reading and writing through multi-sensory and movement-based activities.



• The Chesley G. Magruder Foundation provided its second year of a three-year grant for the Empowered Futures Program, an initiative in the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) designed to connect community members with assistive technologies for hearing, mobility and communication, provide new community programming and generate awareness about resources available. The gift will also provide for an emergency and disaster preparation training event for first responders and community members with communication disabilities.

• Orlando Health and Variety – The Children's Charity of Florida both continued 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.



• The DeLuca Foundation supported the Institute of Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science Conference as the event sponsor for the annual conference.



## **Endowments**

The Learning Institute For Elders at UCF created an endowed scholarship fund to support students studying healthy aging.



## Named Programmatic and Scholarship Funds

The **UCF National Student Speech** Language Hearing Association created a named scholarship to help students in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders with expenses like tuition, research or conference attendance.

The **Orlando Orthopaedic Center Foundation** created a named scholarship for students in the Athletic Training Program.

**Mason Moore** created the Mason Moore, '97 Fund for Testicular Cancer Research and Awareness to provide general expenses for research and awareness programs relating to testicular cancer.

Variety - The Children's Charity of Florida, Inc. created the Variety -The Children's Charity of Florida Fund for Immersive Literacy. This fund supports the College's Immersive Literacy Program for young children with ASD. The fund helps cover operational costs, the creation of multimedia content for immersive experiences and fee waivers for program participants.

## 2024 Day of Giving

769

of 96%

<sup>Total Raised:</sup> \$72,582

increase of 285%















## IN FOCUS IEPRS CONFERENCE

The Institute of Exercise Physiology and Rehabilitation Science (IEPRS) held its fourth annual conference on Feb. 2 and 3 at FAIRWINDS Alumni Center, bringing together more than 300 researchers, clinicians, students and athletes to exchange ideas and advance the fields of exercise and rehabilitation science. The conference featured a Lab Crawl that showcased how IEPRS research fellows collect data and lectures from 10 internationally recognized investigators covering topics such as metabolic flexibility, ACL reconstruction, muscle hypertrophy, cross education, and concussion, among others.



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





inninninninninnin

1 1

ditter.



100

VISIT US ON SOCIAL

## CHPS.UCF.EDU