2014

Physical Therapy Department Newsletter for Spring 2014

URI Physical Therapy Department

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A Season of Change

Spring is finally upon us! Like the warm weather, all of the change that this season brings is welcomed and exciting for the DPT students. Spring means graduation for the Class of 2014, venturing out into new territory during clinicals for the Class of 2015, and transitioning to the role of seasoned veterans for the Class of 2016. We also welcome the new Class of 2017 to campus! It is an exciting time and we are wishing all of the students in the DPT program much success as they take their next steps, whether their journey is just beginning, coming to a close, or somewhere in between.

Like any new and grand endeavor, there are bound to be wrinkles that need to be worked out and this newsletter is no different. We are still assessing how to best represent our department and hope to continually make improvements. You may have noticed the difference in URI logos from this newsletter and the first. We have

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Letter from the Chair

As I have just completed my first full semester as chair, I can’t help but be amazed at how much is accomplished by everyone involved with our physical therapy program. I have had the pleasure of meeting so many people who have given their time, expertise, and generosity in many ways that make URI’s PT program one of the very best. In just six short months, I have seen firsthand the qualities and potential that our students possess as they prepare to become licensed physical therapists and make a difference in their communities and in people’s lives. I am so impressed by how many of you serve as clinical instructors, guest lecturers, mentors, and in other capacities to our students. You make a tremendous difference in their educational preparation and professional development. Our recent commencement ceremony was a wonderful event that highlighted the multitude of success stories, accomplishments, and abilities to overcome challenges and persevere to reach one’s goals. During this event, family and friends shared in the opportunity to recognize this year’s graduates and the deserving award recipients. If there is one thing that stood out to me loud and clear, it is that there are so many individuals whose contributions are worthy of formal recognition and not enough awards to be given out. All of us on faculty and staff, and especially our students, truly appreciate what each and every one of you do to support our program. Here’s to a happy and healthy summer!

Jeff G. Konin, PT, PhD, ATC, FACSM, FNATA
Professor & Chair

Alum Spotlight:
Melissa Nassaney, PT, DPT,

Melissa Nassaney is an experienced physical therapist and a pioneer in the field of pelvic floor health in Rhode Island. She graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a Master of Science in Physical Therapy in 2004 and received the Physical Therapy Program Outstanding Alumni Award in 2012.

In 2012 Dr. Nassaney founded the Pelvic Floor Therapy of Rhode Island special interest group (SIG), and she is currently an active advocate in the APTA.

See “Spotlight” page 5 for an interview with Dr. Nassaney.
Class of 2014 Graduation

Looking dapper in their jet black gowns, the newly minted Class of 2014 DPT graduates reconvened for a final time on Saturday, May 17th, with the support of their family and friends, to finally receive their hard-earned diplomas and toss their caps. The teal color on the outside of their hood (sash) represents integration of the royal blue of philosophy and the green of medicine. The silk interior of the hood is blue and white, signifying the traditional hues of the University of Rhode Island.

Class member Timothy Haitz delivered a dynamic speech about how receiving physical therapy rebuilt his life after a life-threatening injury, and also motivated him to become a physical therapist. He also acknowledged his classmates and professors regarding the passion they possessed for specific physical therapy settings. His appreciation and gratitude toward his classmates, his family and the faculty resounded throughout his speech.

Certain students were recognized for their contributions to the department including excellence in academics, research, effort, and faculty recognition. The annual Outstanding Alumni distinction was awarded to Dr. Megan Wyatt (class of ‘07) who continues to make vital contributions as a clinical instructor.

A special congratulations to this group of new grads as they prepare for their board exams and their new life as practicing physical therapists!

Pictured above: Tim Haitz addresses his fellow classmates and faculty

Pictured above, left to right: Outstanding award recipients Christopher Collard, Katlynn Mathis, Nicholas Mikkelsen, Dan Macera, Dr. Megan Wyatt, Timothy Haitz, Igor Jadrovski, Jessica Simmons, Kyle LaCassee, Katrina Crossley.
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decided to utilize the most recent URI logo in replacement of the older classic seal to stay consistent with the University’s public marketing image. Themes are staying consistent, as we feel we are featuring the most important aspects of our department: highlighting alums and clinics or clinical instructors, spotlighting a current student, reporting noteworthy department news, and informing the greater URI DPT community of upcoming events. New additions include a feature story and recognizing an individual who provides integral support to the department. The beauty of this newsletter being produced entirely by students is that it can always morph based on the desires and personalities of the GAs.

As the semester comes to a close, so do our responsibilities as Graduate Assistants. This means the spring GAs bid a warm farewell to you as your newsletter publishers. The next newsletter will be published in the fall by a new batch of Graduate Assistants who will bring their own talents to the table. We feel proud to have started this newsletter tradition and look forward to its continued success in the future.

With URI pride,

Your Spring 2014 GAs

PT Alumni News Corner

Melissa Robidoux (2011, formerly Melissa Goosmann) married Kenneth Robidoux on June 23, 2012. She works at Performance Physical Therapy in East Greenwich and was recently certified in dry needling. She is currently enrolled in an orthopedic residency program. Melissa lives in Cumberland with Kenneth and their black lab, Bailey.

Laura Luitje (2013) lives in Portland, OR and works in an outpatient orthopedics clinic specializing in chronic neck and spine pain. She married Patrick Kayser on September 1, 2013.

“PT Alumni News Corner” is a place to share any news you have with your fellow alums. This could be related to new jobs, geographical relocations, family additions, achieved credentials or promotions, etc. We hope you take advantage of this great way to stay connected! Please email your news to secretary Jane Schmitz with “Alumni News” in the subject line at jane@uri.edu, and she will pass along the information to the editors.
“Spotlight” continued from page 2

Alum Spotlight: Insight and

What is something you appreciate about your PT education at URI?

“My PT education from URI was a solid foundation that I have been able to build upon over the last 10 years. I came to the program as a PTA and hoped to further my knowledge and experience in the profession. Since graduating in 2004, I’ve come to appreciate the continued support from my former professors to be a mentor, a clinical instructor and active APTA member, an educator and an advocate.”

What is the best part of being a physical therapist?

“It is rewarding to know that I am making a significant difference in a person’s life.”

What advice would you give others who are interested in starting their own SIG as you did?

“Starting a SIG is a great way to connect with other therapists with similar practice interested in you state, region, or at the national level. To start, consider developing a purpose statement, which identifies the focus, the intentions, and the goals of the group. This can evolve over a few meetings as a collaborative effort and help to guide future meetings and endeavors. The Women’s & Men’s Health SIG here in RI has meetings that offer a “share & learn” component. This involves course critiques and the opportunity of members who went to a continuing education course to share some of what they learned. A SIG can be directly associated with a chapter or section with formal bylaws and procedural guidelines or as a stand-alone entity. Both are fun and rewarding. The APTA provides a model and guidelines for SIGs on their website.”

What advice would you give to current students?

“If you really feel strongly about something, go for it.”

Dr. Nassaney is currently employed by Rhode Island Hospital Rehab Services working as a pelvic floor and orthopedic physical therapist. She also serves as the RI State Representative for Section of Women’s Health and the RI Chapter APTA Federal Affairs Liaison. Dr. Nassaney received her Doctorate of Physical Therapy in 2007 and has completed Levels I, II, and III for the Transitional Certificate of Achievement in Pelvic Physical Therapy Program (tCAPP). She currently lives in Richmond with her husband of 18 years and their two children, Ryan and Gracie.
SPT & Coast Guard Reservist

Making Time For Both

Maintaining the rank of Petty Officer 3rd Class (BM3) in the Coast Guard Reserve and being a full-time student in URI’s DPT program requires skilled time management and dedication. But neither of those things are a problem for student Kristen Cavaco (Class of 2016).

Cavaco joined the Coast Guard in 2007 and is stationed at Station Castle Hill in Newport, RI. She grew up in a fishing family, has a passion for raising environmental awareness for the ocean, and has a brother in the service. All of these factors influenced her decision to join. After completing a scrutinizing physical and medical exam, and passing numerous tests, she became a boatswain mate, a specialist in navigation, seamanship, and boat handling (driving) skills. Her training maintenance includes staying current on required qualifications, such as annual tests, online updates, educational courses regarding terrorism, technology, fitness assessments, and survival suit swims; training one weekend a month at Station Castle Hill where she participates in man overboard drills, boat handling, rigging lines, and towing; and two weeks per year where she either participates in active duty at the station or attends a training school. Additionally, once every six months she has a marksmanship evaluation.

Needless to say, the Coast Guard keeps her busy as she juggles her duties with the DPT program. “The Coast Guard has taught me determination, time management, and perseverance, which comes in handy in a challenging program such as this one. I need to plan ahead and study more efficiently when I know that I have my Coast Guard drill weekend coming up and I have an exam or assignment due the following week, as Coast Guard will consume the entire weekend,” says Cavaco.

Upon completing her DPT degree, Cavaco intends to use her PT expertise to give back. “The Coast Guard assisted in paying for my Masters in Exercise Science and I would like the opportunity to give back to the members of the Armed Forces that have made sacrifices for our country. I am a patriotic person and hope somehow I can find a way to use my profession to give back or help veterans whom have made sacrifices and served.”

Pictured above: SPT and Petty Officer 3rd Class Kristen Cavaco receives instruction from boatswain mate Ricky Hernandez in Miami Beach, FL on March 17, 2013. Source: dvidshub.net.
PT Department Hosts Distinguished Visiting International Scholar

The University of Rhode Island and its Department of Physical Therapy hosted Distinguished Visiting International Scholar, Dr. Emma Stokes, the week of April 6-11. It was an eventful week, full of meet-and-greets, presentations, luncheons, and dining, and it proved to be memorable for both Dr. Stokes and the PT department.

Dr. Stokes is vice president of the World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT) and also Associate Professor in physiotherapy at Trinity College, Dublin. She has authored numerous publications and was previously a representative of the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists. Her unique perspective of physiotherapy on a global scale provided the DPT students with innovative ways of considering physical therapy practice. “One thing that I hope our students gained from this week is that physical therapists are doing amazing things all over the world and that our professional presence is global. The sky, at least for the time being, is the limit to where you can take your practice,” said Dr. Samantha Brown.

Doctors Jenny Audette and Samantha Brown, both professors in the physical therapy department, were the primary initiators in bringing Dr. Stokes to Rhode Island and were the key organizers in the week’s success. When asked why they felt inspired to have the department of physical therapy host a Distinguished Visiting International Scholar, Dr. Brown replied, “This puts not only the department, but our profession, on center stage here at the University. Jenny and I were excited for the opportunity to spark conversations around healthcare and the field of physical therapy at the University, in our community, and even at the state level.”

They seemed to have succeeded in that task. During the week, Dr. Stokes was the keynote speaker at the Rhode Island APTA meeting,
discussing the relevance and application of outcome measures in PT practice; she presented the Distinguished Visiting International Scholar public lecture entitled “A Cabinet of Curiosities: How Opportunities and Innovation Can Shape Healthcare,” a thought-provoking talk on how the profession of physical therapy began and its place amidst the evolution of health care and technology; and she was one of four guests for a panel at the Rhode Island State House, which discussed health policy and delivery practices.

Additional events of the week for Dr. Stokes included a welcome dinner at the President’s house, meeting with the deans and chairs within the College of Human Science and Services, meeting with a group of community members living with Parkinson’s Disease who regularly attend the PT department’s Parkinson’s Group exercise class, and multiple events with students on campus. “It was a very busy week, which gave us the opportunity to put Dr. Stokes in

DPT Students Represented at Campus Luncheons

Two luncheons that were designed to highlight URI students across campus and their respective involvement in, and perspectives on, healthcare were held during the week of Dr. Stokes’ visit. Three second-year DPT students were among the presenters. Anna Skaggs spoke as part of the “International Opportunities at URI” luncheon where she shared about her time observing physical therapy in a hospital and rural clinic for three weeks in Tanzania. Mark Billard and Leanne Wilson delivered their perspectives prompted by the luncheon title, “What Healthcare Means to Me.” The three students represented the department well and offered intriguing insight to their experiences with healthcare.

Pictured above: Dr. Stokes provides closing remarks for the panel discussion at the RI State House.

Pictured above: Anna Skaggs (top) explaining scenes from a hospital in Tanzania. Dr. Stokes (below) with Leanne Wilson and Mark Billard.
Think Big. We do. What started as an idea to take a few physical therapy students to the highlands of Guatemala to experience physical therapy in an underdeveloped country has blossomed into what is now known as Broadening Experience (BE). Broadening Experience is a two-credit course offered during the second year of the curriculum, and its purpose is to expose students to physical therapy in an atypical setting they otherwise would not be exposed to in the classroom or during regular clinical observation hours. While Guatemala is still an annual BE location, destinations have expanded to numerous sites locally, nationally, and globally. Students are active participants in their learning, responsible for choosing what type of physical therapy setting they observe and where they go for the two-week internship.

Broadening Experience is truly something that sets URI PT apart from other DPT programs and it leaves its students with memories for a lifetime. Below are some travel highlights by second-year students during spring break in mid-March.

Guatemala

Eleven students went to Guatemala over spring break where the two weeks were filled with physical therapy treatments, service work, and teaching. It was an eye opening experience for the students and very educational to see how physical therapy intervention in Guatemala compares to physical therapy in the United States. The students’ involvement in physical therapy included treating local children in clinics and in their homes.

Some of the disabilities that were seen were cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and other undiagnosed conditions.

Physical therapy was not the only thing on the agenda during the trip. During a visit to Centro de Maya, a clinic for kids with disabilities, the students were happy to lend a hand as they helped local construction men build a ramp, repair walls and roofs that would leak during rainfall, and painted outer walls.

Assisting in a variety of classroom settings was also a great way students spent their time. At Life School, a local school started by Americans...
“Broadening” continued from page 9

where classes are taught in English and Spanish, the URI students taught 8th graders basic anatomy, and they participated in physical education activities, such as kickball and obstacle courses, with children in grades 2-8. Students also helped facilitate classroom activities in La Puerta Abierta, a pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade school in Santiago.

While the days were full, there was also time for cultural emersion activities. Many students enjoyed hiking Volcano Acatenango, going to the beach in Monterrico, visiting the Mayan ruins in Tikal, zip-lining, and exploring Antigua and Lake Atitlan.

Ireland

Mike McMahon, Melissa Ricciotti, Kayla Whiting and Katelyn Wye spent two weeks exploring Ireland and learning how physiotherapy practice is carried out in a socialist society. They attended the University of Ulster in Jordenstown, Northern Ireland, where they observed a number of courses with their physiotherapy students and toured the Sport Institute of Ireland, a facility on campus likened to an Olympic training center. They were given the unique opportunity to experience an anti-gravity treadmill and to use advanced computer software for biomechanical alignment.

The students then traveled south to Dublin, where they visited Trinity College, St. James Hospital, and Ballymoon Civic Center. At St. James Hospital they visited multiple inpatient wards to experience a variety of physiotherapy treatments. The students observed and participated in community-based health services, including nursing homes, home care therapy, and outpatient services, provided by Ballymoon.

It was not all work and no play for the group. They were able to take advantage of the fun sights and activities, such as visiting the Cliffs of Moher, traversing a rope bridge on Carrick-a-Rede Island, visiting St. Patrick’s Cathedral and Blarney Castle, and watching a Gaelic football match. The students were also fortunate to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day while in Ireland.

Florida

Learning about equine therapy in the sunshine state of Florida is how Paula Kleniewski, Jillian Rebello, and Julia Snedegar spent their two-week spring break. The students volunteered at Special Equestrians, a non-profit therapeutic riding center that is run entirely by trained volunteers and instructors in Fort Myers, FL.

At Special Equestrians, the students were trained how to do side walking (walking next to the horse to provide patient safety) with a therapeutic hold so that children and adults with disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome...
there are no physical therapists that work in the NICU at Women and Infant’s Hospital, but Ma commented that physical therapists carry out similar tasks at other hospitals so the shadowing proved to be a valuable experience.

The two students observed the therapists’ treatments on three different nursery floors. Every day was fully scheduled with going between floors feeding and massaging the infants, educating parents, and performing assessments for tone and reflex integrity. Overall, the students said that the best moments of the experience were the rare opportunities to hold the infants.

Massachusetts

Chelsea Gibbons, Emily Hart, and Andrew Mikkelsen spent their spring break at the stables of Greenlock Therapeutic Riding Center in Rehoboth, MA learning about hippotherapy, a practice where therapists utilize horses’ movements to aid in treatment. The students worked as members of a 3-person team to lead the horses or provide support to the speech, occupational, and physical therapists on site during treatment, and assisted with the provision of therapy. They fully participated in all stable activities, including cleaning and tacking the horses and cleaning stalls. The group shared that it was wonderful seeing the impacts of the treatments transfer from the horse to the participant, positively impacting posture, movement, and the ability to interact with others. They left feeling that it was an amazing experience.

Women and Infants Hospital

Janet Ma and Danielle Lovett observed occupational therapists at the NICU at Women and Infants Hospital in Providence, RI. Currently,
Kelley Visits APTA Headquarters, Capitol Hill For Broadening Experience
Guest Editorial by Mary F. Kelley, SPT

Visiting the APTA headquarters during the Federal Advocacy Forum sounded like a great way to learn more about the legislative process for healthcare issues as well as learn about all of the programs and projects our association develops to keep members informed on current practice standards. I wanted this to be my Broadening Experience because I wanted to learn more about the process that essentially determines the physical therapy scope of practice and how to advocate for valid patient care.

I spent the week with Justin Moore, VP of Public Policy, Practice and Professional Affairs Unit, and his team. I saw firsthand the role the APTA has in determining clinical scope of practice, the efforts to continue the growth of the field of PT in the healthcare continuum, and how they advocate for PT to Members of Congress. It was amazing to see how all of these things happen in one place and the teamwork required to keep each department working toward a unified goal.

I also attended the APTA Board of Directors meeting. The Board meeting included updates on what the APTA plans are for new coding system proposals, a registry program to track outcome measures in different settings, and other topics applicable to physical therapy and the future of practice. I was also given the opportunity to sit in on a meeting with the PT-Political Action Committee (PAC) and hear their plans for advocacy efforts for the upcoming years.

I then crossed the Potomac and settled in DC for the Forum. The Federal Advocacy Forum is a three-day event in Washington, DC organized by the PTeam grassroots program and the PT PAC. The goal of the Forum is to provide an opportunity to improve advocacy skills and lobby to Congress on the issues affecting the profession of physical therapy. This year there were 250 advocates for PT in attendance, 80 of whom were students (the most ever!). There was a full day of breakout sessions to learn about the hot topics in PT, the role of the PT PAC and PTeam grassroots program, and coaching on how to advocate to Members of Congress about our profession.

I was able to apply some of these newly learned skills when I meet with Representative Jim Langevin. I was happy to thank him for his long time support of physical therapy and chat about current healthcare issues and how they affect patient outcomes.

It was amazing hearing all the stories from other professional and students across the country.

Pictured above: Kelley meets with Rep. Jim Langevin, politician & advocate for the PT profession

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DPT Students’ Professional Advocacy

“Advocacy” continued from page 12

All the professionals had the same take home message, “Keep advocating for the profession, and don’t ever assume people know how valuable PT is and what PTs are qualified to do. It is up to you to tell them.”

The students had amazing energy and passion for advocacy, because any time spent working to secure the future of the profession and ensure our ability to improve patients’ functional abilities and quality of life is time well spent.

This was truly a broadening experience, as I learned about government affairs and received amazing insight on where the field of physical therapy is going. I left DC with a clearer understanding of the value of membership in our professional association, the importance of building relationships with our elected officials, and the need to advocate for improvements in patient care.

Mary Kelley is a member of the Class of 2015.

Hoffman Attends Political Breakfast

A Rhode Island tradition for the past quarter century, the 25th Annual Spring Family Breakfast was held by Senator Jack Reed on May 4, 2014 at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston. A mixture of guests interested in Rhode Island politics attended the breakfast, ranging from School Committee members to Gubernatorial candidates. First year student Kate Hoffman (2016) attended as the guest of URI PT department friend Andrea Hopkins.

Inspiring speeches were given by a number of public servants, focusing on dedicating their resources to help rebuild the middle class of Rhode Island. While there are many projects proposed to achieve this goal, of particular relevance is Mr. Reed’s work to hold health insurance companies responsible for paying Rhode Island’s allied health practitioners a fair reimbursement fee for their work, in comparison to figures in Connecticut and nearby Boston. “The cost is the same, the talent is the same; the pay should be the same,” said Mr. Reed.

Ms. Hoffman hopes to represent URI PT at similar events in the future to aid in the American Physical Therapy Association’s efforts through the special section on Health Policy and Administration to qualify Physical Therapists as members who may participate in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). The NHSC is a program targeted to

Pictured above: Kelley on Capitol Hill.

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delivering state-of-the-art healthcare to undeserved areas. When asked about her interest in politics, Hoffman said, "I have no interest in being a political leader, but as a member of the rehabilitative side of the allied health team, I think it’s really important to connect with our representatives in government to let them know that as members of their constituency, we believe that keeping people out of surgery and getting them off of Worker’s Compensation by aiding in their return to function is one of our top priorities. That is what Physical Therapy professionals do best. Advocacy is one of the core values of Physical Therapist practice, and we need to start networking with people while we are students so that when we enter the workforce, we have already established relationships that may facilitate change that delivers services to where they’re needed most."

In one of her presentations to students, Dr. Stokes offered a personal account of why she entered the field of physical therapy. “I believe that your body is a vehicle and a priceless gift that helps you gain an experience that can be found nowhere else. I work to help others make themselves happy and get the most out of life.” This powerful outlook on her role in the profession summarizes the vibrant positivity Dr. Stokes emanated all week. Dr. Brown echoes this sentiment. “Her amazing personality and ability to connect with everyone she met in a very personal way made this visit very special. We cannot thank Dr. Stokes enough for bringing her energy, inspiration, and expertise to URI — we feel so fortunate to have had this opportunity to host her, in large part from support of the provost’s office and the HSS Dean’s office.”

“Stokes” continued from page 8

connections and already has plans in the works for future collaboration between our institutions. Additionally, her leadership role in the WCPT will foster more dialogue in how we can connect on a global stage,” noted Dr. Brown.

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Performance PT and URI PT Collaboration

Thank you to Performance PT for opening your company Continuing Education course to select URI DPT students! Mary Kelley, Matt Heckel, and Anna Skaggs participated in the CE course on April 12th, which focused on functional screening, assessment, and treatment of the lower quarter. It was an outstanding experience and the students appreciated the invitation to learn and practice alongside future colleagues.

Pictured left: Performance PT Dr. Joe Russellelo demonstrates a lumbar HVLA thrust on 2014 DPT Graduate Matt Thatcher
Multi-Disciplinary Learning Experience

Second year URI PT students recently participated in an Interprofessional Education (IPE) event hosted at the Warren Alpert School of Medicine of Brown University. The World Health Organization defines interprofessional education as “when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes”. What makes this IPE event unique is that it involved three different institutions and six programs. Over 600 students from URI PT, URI Nursing, URI Pharmacy, Rhode Island College (RIC) Nursing, RIC Social Work, and Brown University Medical attended the workshop that was offered on two different half-day sessions, April 17th and 24th, 2014. This is the second year that URI PT has been involved with this event.

Prior to the event, faculty from each discipline worked together to organize the workshop to ensure that learning objectives would be met. During each session, students were divided into three academies and then placed in smaller groups, typically consisting of one student from each program. Groups rotated through three stations: a team building activity, a paper-based patient case. At the end of each session, the team members debriefed about the activity and received feedback from facilitators regarding the group’s experience.

During a post-event classroom discussion, the majority of URI PT students stated that they had positive feelings about interprofessional teamwork and education. The incorporation of IPE into the PT program’s curriculum over the two academic years has increased students’ confidence in communicating with healthcare professionals from other disciplines and improved awareness of other disciplines’ educational background and expertise. Samantha Brown, MS, DPT, PT, one of URI PT’s biggest proponents of IPE, feels that it is a critical component to any healthcare program and says “I am truly excited to get the PT students involved and I hope to expand on these events and integrate them even more so into the curriculum.”

Pictured above: URI DPT student Deryl Pace (3rd from right) with her interdisciplinary team at Brown. Source: news.brown.edu.

Pictured top left: Brown, RIC and URI students collaborate to discuss a patient case. Source: news.brown.edu.
Administrative Professionals’ Day: Thank you, Jane!

Administrative Professionals’ Day is time to recognize and show appreciation for administrative personnel. This year, that day of recognition fell on April 23rd. In observance of this day and because of her many contributions to the program, the University of Rhode Island’s Physical Therapy Department would like to express its gratitude to Jane Schmitz, our Administrative Secretary.

Jane, a Rhode Island native, has been employed by the University of Rhode Island since 1996 and has held several positions on campus during this time. Prior to joining the PT family in Independence Square, Jane held positions on campus with the Police, Kinesiology, ROTC, and Chemistry departments. We are fortunate to have had Jane in the Department of Physical Therapy for the past four years.

As one of her many responsibilities, Jane is often the first friendly face and voice that students experience when inquiring about URI’s Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program. She is highly involved with the admissions process and provides guidance to applicants and their families. She also has daily interaction with current students and is a key support person for them. In fact, she says that her favorite part of her job is when students stop by her desk to talk or simply say hello.

Before joining the PT department, Jane had a positive experience with physical therapy when she was treated by one of our own, Professor John McLinden, M.S. PT, in the URI PT clinic. She recommends the URI PT clinic to anyone that may need physical therapy services. Students and faculty know that when Jane is not at her desk, she can be found walking around campus in order to meet her 40-miles-a-week quota. Thank you, Jane, for all of your hard work, your dedication to the department and students, and your continual positive attitude! We are blessed to have you represent our program and appreciate all that you do.
Charity, transparency, excellence and community outreach -- these are some of the preeminent tenets that motivate Elite Physical Therapy founder and owner Dr. Michael Nula, MS, DPT, PT, to create an award-winning physical therapy organization. Now with seven locations, with its newest in Lincoln, RI, Elite PT has been the recipient of numerous accolades including being named 2009 Best Physical Therapy Practice in the country by ADVANCE Magazine, the Business Excellence Award by Providence Business News in 2012, and most recently, the title of 2014 Best Places to Work by Providence Business News. Dr. Nula has also been the recipient of the Providence Business News ’40 Under 40’ award as well the 2009 URI Distinguished Alumni Award.

What galvanizes someone to create such an impactful, unique organizational culture? For Dr. Nula, his father’s example of honesty, hard work, and authentic compassion for people influenced his way of running a business. From an early age, Dr. Nula harnessed his entrepreneurial spirit by raking leaves, mowing lawns and running lemonade stands. After a ruptured patellar tendon in a basketball game during his senior year of high school, and an instant connection with his physical therapist at the time, Dr. Nula knew precisely what he wanted to do with his life. He later went on to graduate with a MPT from URI followed by his DPT from Temple University in Philadelphia. Needless to say, owning his own PT clinic has exceeded his wildest dreams.

The importance of education plays a leading role in his clinics as he is always looking to enhance his employees’ knowledge through in-house workshops, seminars, professional conferences and regular continuing education opportunities. Similarly, he emphasizes to his employees that this job isn’t about being perfect; it’s about being excellent to your patients. “Being a clinician requires a high degree of unselfishness and a commitment to do what you’re best at”, says Dr. Nula. “I try to tell my employees to be their best every day. We’re about being leaders in our industry by being an example of excellence”.

“Be genuine, not artificial”, he said with regards to managing a thriving clinic. “Commit to making communication a two-way street with your staff, and always be open minded. Be willing to receive feedback, think collaboratively and make sure they have the resources they need to do their job well”.

Perhaps the crux of his leadership is community outreach. Elite PT supports almost 75 different charities and local organizations through active involvement in events and activities for children and teenagers. “We’re playing for something much bigger than ourselves. We’re the facilitators and educators in our communities”, he voiced. His clinic staff and team members are regularly involved in health fairs, little leagues, 5k runs, recreational leagues, and community fundraisers. All the while, he continues to invest back into the URI PT program that invested so much into him. Thank you, Dr. Nula, for your vision and dedication to see our community transformed through physical therapy, as well continuing to invest back into our PT department for future generations.
News by Classes

Class of 2014

GRADUATED!
Approximately half of the class already has jobs lined up and are eager to enter the working world, either immediately or after taking the National Physical Therapy Exam in July. Some are still in pursuit for that first job, while still others are intentionally taking time off to celebrate the hard-earned degree and enjoy some leisurely vacation time. No matter the path to work, the Class of 2014 is close to achieving the goal that all have been diligently working toward these past three years. We wish you the best of luck.

Class of 2015

Comprehensive Exams are just around the corner for the Class of 2015. As a culmination of the two years of academic work on campus, the Class will sit for the “Comps” as a way to demonstrate the wealth of knowledge obtained during their academic tenure, and it will serve as a practice for the licensure exam after graduation. Shortly after, the Class of 2015 will say a temporary goodbye to Independence Square for the next year. Students are scattering across the country for their clinical rotations in pursuit of the hands-on education that will tie their classroom knowledge to the real-world application of PT. Good luck stepping into this next phase of education!

Class of 2016

Congratulations on finishing the first year of PT school! Now officially “Second-Years”, the Class of 2016 is currently taking the summer Musculoskeletal Therapeutics II course, learning in-depth anatomy and treatment of the spine. They will still have a well-deserved summer break before recommencing courses in the fall.

Congratulations to the Class of 2016 Fall Graduate Assistants:

Chelsea Anderson - Physical Agents
Jenna Fitzsimmons – Evidence Based Practice
Shannon McConnell - Geriatrics
Kate Hoffman – Neuroscience
Laura Costa - Biomechanics
Abbey Lamb - Applied Anatomy
Francesca Mainiero - Basic Evaluation

Class of 2017

Welcome to the URI PT family, Class of 2017! The first official course is already under their belts (Introduction to Physical Therapy) and now the majority of their summer will be spent in Lecture Room A and the cadaver lab where they will be immersed in the infamous Gross Anatomy course. Good luck as you begin your student PT career and once again, welcome!
The Physical Therapy faculty is dedicated to graduating doctors of physical therapy competent in providing physical therapy to a variety of patient/client populations in Rhode Island and nationwide; who value the need for and use of evidence in practice; who are committed to professional development through life-long learning; and are active contributors to their professional and social communities. The faculty aspires to advance the theory and practice of physical therapy and provide service to the University, State, and Nation, through works that promote the profession, interacting communities and related disciplines.

The program is highly selective and seeks candidates who exhibit a combination of success in the sciences, a broad understanding of physical therapy practice, dedication to their community, and potential for success in the Program. The curriculum is designed to challenge students toward excellence in clinical practice, professional behavior, and service.
Lauren Bachand
William Barbieri
Chelsea Buck
Brandon Byrne
Christopher Collard
Katrina Crossley
Kelly Dulka
Nicole Enos
Christopher Grant
Timothy Haitz
Rory Hartnett
Igor Jadrovski
Monica Joseph
Kyle Lacasse
Jillian Lewis
Kaitlin Liese
Danielle Lovisone
Daniel Macera
Katlynn Mathis
Edward McCormick
Nicholas Mikkelsen
Jun Mizutani
Caitlin Monahan
Lauren Rashford
Brenna Rock
Jessica Simmons
Emily St. Pierre
Matthew Thatcher
Elisa Virgilio