

## Director's Corner



► As we wrap up another year (and yes, another year of COVID), I again am full of gratitude for our students, alumni, faculty, and staff. I know that this year has been tough on every one of you, but we made it through. I'm so proud to be a Chatham PA grad and a part of this great program. Our class of 2021 spent all but five months of the 24-month program in a pandemic, but they all pulled through. All 65 students who started in

that class graduated! We can't be prouder of them and their hard work. Talk about being resilient!

Speaking of resiliency, all of you who are working the front lines exhibit such amazing strength in your day-to-day dealings with patients. And so many of you also take time to continue to give back to the profession by precepting students. Whether they are our PA students or other students, THANK YOU! I sincerely hope that you all know what a big difference you make. I also hope that you are taking care of yourselves and your families so that you have the strength and desire to continue to work in the PA field for years to come.

We have had several changes this year in the PA program with faculty members. Dr. John Laird retired after 25 years in the program. Did you all know that his first interest in the PA program was when he tried to get accepted into the clinical year and skip the first didactic year? He wanted to become a PA but did not want to do first year classes. The joke was on him when he got stuck in that first year for 25 years straight. (Groundhog Day...)

Kelly Donkers spent 13 years in the PA program as a faculty member and recently left to be able to focus some much-needed time on her family. And, finally, Lea O'Keefe, who had been here at Chatham since 2013, left to pursue other opportunities. All three are missed!! Take a look at the other areas of the newsletter where we introduce Ahmed El Sergani, L'lee Janicki, and Shuo Li—our three newest faculty members.

We also will be introducing a new dean at some point in the next year. Dean Pat Downey retired from Chatham after 27 years as a PT faculty member, PT program director, and then Dean of the School of Health Sciences. She has been an incredible advocate for our program and will leave some big shoes to fill!

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## From the Dean



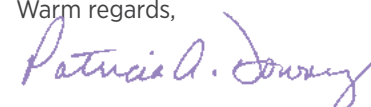
► I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about my retirement in December 2021. I have had the privilege to be a part of Chatham University since 1994. My journey has included being a faculty member, a program director, and for the past seven years I have served as the inaugural Dean for the School of Health Sciences. This announcement gives me the opportunity to do some reflection regarding both our School and the physician assistant studies program.

When I became the Dean in 2014, the University restructured and formed the School of Health Sciences. Prior to that, most of our programs were in the College of Graduate Studies. It has been very exciting over the past seven years to bring together programs in physician assistant studies, healthcare informatics, nursing, physical and occupational therapy, exercise science, counseling psychology, and athletic training. The collaboration and interprofessional education that I have witnessed has been truly remarkable.

During my tenure, I have also seen the PA program continue to grow in terms of excellence. I oftentimes hear wonderful praise for Chatham PAs from friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. This is a testament to the impressive faculty who are dedicated to student success through teaching and mentoring, and to the committed preceptors who are an invaluable part of our program. If you are one of our preceptors—my sincere thanks for all that you do for our students. If you have not made that step in your own professional development, we encourage you to join the team!

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Judy Truscott for her strong leadership and vision. I consider myself lucky to have had the pleasure and privilege to collaborate with someone as dedicated and smart as Judy.

Warm regards,



## FACULTY NEWS

# Faculty Research and Scholarship, 2020-2021

### Publications

**Abebe, A.** Chapter 194: Tuberculosis. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 378-379.

**Abebe, A.** Chapter 220: Human Papillomavirus. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 394-395.

**Abebe, A.** Chapter 214: Measles, Mumps, and Rubella. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 386-387.

**Abebe, A..** Chapter 209: Trichomoniasis. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 378-379.

**Brown NE, Abebe A,** Abebe K, Eisaman D. Determining factors associated with sexual behavior and undesired outcomes in urban, young, adult female populations: A comparative study. *Women Health Open J.* 2021; 7(1): 10-26. [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjSmPb69\\_zzAhUeq3IEHY\\_nDCAQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fopenventio.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2FDetermining-Factors-Associated-with-Sexual-Behavior-and-Undesired-Outcomes-in-Urban-Young-Adult-Female-Populations-A-Comparative-Study-WHOJ-7-142.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2b8YIntdTLkksHfluBUisE](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjSmPb69_zzAhUeq3IEHY_nDCAQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fopenventio.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2FDetermining-Factors-Associated-with-Sexual-Behavior-and-Undesired-Outcomes-in-Urban-Young-Adult-Female-Populations-A-Comparative-Study-WHOJ-7-142.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2b8YIntdTLkksHfluBUisE)

Eisaman D, **Brown NE**, Geyer S, Suyama J. Characteristics of ectopic pregnancies presenting to an urban academic emergency department at a tertiary care center for obstetrics. *Annals of Emergency Medicine.* October 2020;76(4S), Abstract 61 S24-S25. [https://www.annemergmed.com/article/S01960644\(20\)30818-0/fulltext#relatedArticles](https://www.annemergmed.com/article/S01960644(20)30818-0/fulltext#relatedArticles)

**Cendroski P.** Chapter 243: Hip Fracture and Dislocation. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 444-445.

**Cendroski P.** Chapter 256: Low Back Strain/Sprain, Vertebral Disc Herniation, Vertebral Fracture, Cauda Equina Syndrome. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 459-461.

**Cendroski P.** Levy, JA. Chapter 283: Radiculopathy and Myelopathy. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 505-506.

**Donkers K,** DeLong D, **Brown NE.** Effect of online training modules and virtual patients on first-year physician assistant students' confidence levels. *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education.* September 2019; 30(3) 159-163. [https://journals.lww.com/jpae/Abstract/2019/09000/Effect\\_of\\_Online\\_Training\\_Modules\\_and\\_Virtual.6.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/jpae/Abstract/2019/09000/Effect_of_Online_Training_Modules_and_Virtual.6.aspx)

Liu D, Ban HJ, **El Sergani AM**, Lee MK, Hecht JT, Wehby GL, Moreno LM, Feingold E, Marazita ML, Cha S, Szabo-Rogers HL, Weinberg SM, Shaffer JR. PRICKLE1 × FOCAD Interaction Revealed by Genome-Wide vQTL Analysis of Human Facial Traits. *Front Genet.* 2021 Aug 9;12:674642. doi: 10.3389/fgene.2021.674642. PMID: 34434215; PMCID: PMC8381734.

Nauwelaers N, Matthews H, Fan Y, Croquet B, Hoskens H, Mahdi S, **El Sergani A**, Gong S, Xu T, Bronstein M, Marazita M, Weinberg S, Claes P. Exploring palatal and dental shape variation with 3D shape analysis and geometric deep learning. *Orthod Craniofac Res.* 2021 Jul 26. doi: 10.1111/ocr.12521. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34310057.

**El Sergani AM**, Brandebura S, Padilla C, Butali A, Adeyemo WL, Valencia-Ramírez C, Muñeton CPR, Moreno LM, Buxó CJ, Long RE Jr, Neiswanger K, Shaffer JR, Marazita ML, Weinberg SM. Parents of Children With Nonsyndromic Orofacial Clefting Show Altered Palate Shape. *Cleft Palate Craniofac J.* 2021 Jul;58(7):847-853. doi: 10.1177/1055665620967235. Epub 2020 Oct 28. PMID: 33111571; PMCID: PMC8079510.

**El Sergani AM**, Anderton J, Brandebura S, Obniski M, Ginart MT, Padilla C, Butali A, Adeyemo WL, Long RE Jr, Moreno LM, Marazita ML, Weinberg SM. Prevalence of Torus Palatinus and association with dental arch shape in a multi-ethnic cohort. *Homo.* 2020 Nov 30;71(4):273-280. doi: 10.1127/homo/2020/1316. PMID: 33146661; PMCID: PMC7674192.

## FACULTY NEWS

### Research & Scholarship *continued*

Croquet B, Matthews H, Mertens J, Fan Y, Nauwelaers N, Mahdi S, Hoskens H, **El Sergani A**, Xu T, Vandermeulen D, Bronstein M, Marazita M, Weinberg S, Claes P. Automated landmarking for palatal shape analysis using geometric deep learning. *Orthod Craniofac Res*. 2021 Jun 25. doi: 10.1111/ocr.12513. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34169645.

**El Sergani AM**, Brandebura S, Padilla C, Butali A, Adeyemo WL, Valencia-Ramírez C, Muñeton CPR, Moreno LM, Buxó CJ, Neiswanger K, Shaffer JR, Marazita ML, Weinberg SM. The Influence of Sex and Ancestry on Three-Dimensional Palate Shape. *J Craniofac Surg*. 2021 Jul 7. doi: 10.1097/SCS.00000000000007796. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34231514.

**Schirato, N.** Chapter 126: Bladder Cancer. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 225-226.

**Schirato, N.** Chapter 111: Hypospadias and Epispadias, Paraphimosis and Phimosis. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 208-209.

**Schirato, N.** Chapter 117: Prostatitis. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 213-214.

**Truscott, J.** Chapter 46. Parasitic, Lice, Scabies. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 90-91.

**Truscott, J.** Chapter 208. Helminth Infestations / Pinworms. Bushardt R, Colomb-Lippa D, Klingler A, Reed H, eds. In: *The JAAPA QRS Review for PAs*. Wolters Kluwer; 2021: 377-378.

### Presentations

Jameson S, **Brown NE**, Fisher MD, Goreczny A, **Schirato N**, Schreiber J. IPE Across Five Professions: Challenges, Triumphs, and Lessons Learned. Presented at: Interprofessional (IPE) 2020 Conference: From Conception to Action (virtual); June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Cendroski, P.** Radiculopathy and Myelopathy. Presented at PSPA 46th Annual CME Conference; October 28th, 2021.

## Dr. Laird Retires After 25 Years of Excellence



► To students and colleagues who knew him, Dr. Laird was often referred to as “the smartest person I’ve ever met!” He has retired from Chatham University’s physician assistant studies program after 25 years of excellence. Dr. Laird was never content with the previous year’s knowledge base. He sought the best and most current information for every topic he covered, frequently teaching the students information before it reached the preceptors. Some will be surprised that Dr. Laird, a naturopathic physician, taught

PBL prior to developing and teaching the Clinical Application of the Basic Sciences course (CABS). He is a rare combination of anatomist and clinician, and his combined expertise shaped many aspects of the current curriculum.

Dr. Laird could often be found late in his office giving personal instruction to students who were struggling with CABS, and never turned away a student

or colleague who had questions about possible complementary medicine treatments for various conditions. He also did many additional lectures for the PA program on wellness and complementary medicine/integrative health, as well as related lectures out in the community. He was Advisor of the Year in 2012, and those who were his advisees counted themselves lucky as he gave specific and helpful guidance on how to better themselves in the PA program. He led the PA Program Admissions Committee for many years, guiding the important process of choosing the right students for Chatham’s program.

Dr. Laird’s research interests were numerous, from PBL to PA admissions, from wellness to complementary and integrative medicine. He had many publications and presentations on these topics. His infectious laugh and sense of humor will be greatly missed.

—Susan Hawkins

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## FACULTY NEWS

### Laird Retirement *continued*

#### The ANATOMY of Dr. Laird

We gather to honor a PA pillar  
CABS is his game; his course a thriller.  
He's called Dr. Laird, but to many he's John  
His course's success will never be gone.  
What makes up this man who we all dearly love?  
Let's dissect his anatomy and put on a glove.

Under the A, many words are so fitting,  
ABUNDANCE of info obtained in CABS sittings.  
ADMIRER, ARTICULATE, ACCOMPLISHED and ACTIVE.  
ALL-KNOWING and AGELESS—his birthday extracted.

N is for NATUROPATHIC, an ND by trade,  
Following this path, a healthful life he made.  
NERVOUS is another N, but not describing him  
It's a yearly crush by a student wearing a silly grin.

For more A's to describe him, let's focus on ATTIRE.  
How many wardrobe sweaters don the "anatomy sire?"  
A is for the AVIARY in his house that we now see  
Thanks to Zoom we shared the chirps and saw those cute birdies!

T, the TESTS; both practicals and MCQs,  
Testing students' knowledge from nerves to all tissues.  
Into the lab we picture first-hand the cadaver TABLE,  
Recording himself lying ever so still—yes, this is no fable!

O stands for ORGANS—and this we must share  
Many dissected and probed yet handled with care.  
Infamous ONE-LINERS he offered during lectures,  
For the students or himself? One could conjecture.  
Admit it, right now, his great laugh you recall.  
It's simple but classic Laird—there never was a lull.  
ONE-OF-A-KIND describes this man; these shoes are hard to fill,  
He's unique and smart and part of our hearts from now until until.



M represents MYSTERIOUS; his life is fairly private  
But his MUSIC playlists tell a lot—ABBA to Pink, what a riot!  
His MUG is a podium staple; it has a home for hours.  
Are you thinking "what was that drink" granting him such super-power?

Y: Let's just say "Y" is he leaving?  
Forget that it's a "W", we are cells who are cleaving.  
A time of divide; but we still must grow.  
He has steered his course well and we'll carry on the show.  
Y is for YEARS: 25 to be exact.  
A quarter of a century making a huge impact.  
Y must be for YOGA—but have any of us really seen this happen?  
Warrior 2, downward dog, right now we all imagine.  
We will YEARN for a quick return: a lecture or visit.  
Whether a formal or social stop-in, we would cherish every minute.

So we've tried to dissect him and define this great man  
To pay honor and homage is part of the plan.  
You've been here so long and yet time has gone fast,  
You'll always be with us—not just part of our past!

—Paige Cendroski

Top left: Dr. Laird heads into Eddy Theatre with his MUG

Top right: PA faculty and staff celebrate Dr. Laird

Above: PA Faculty Emerita Susan Hawkins, Dr. Laird, and Professor Tony Goreczny (counseling psychology)

## FACULTY NEWS

# Welcome New Faculty!



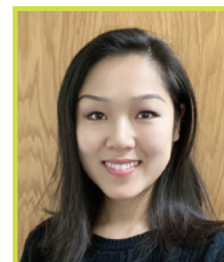
► **Dr. Ahmed El Sergani**

is an assistant professor in the physician assistant studies program. He is a clinician-scientist having acquired advanced clinical and research training in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery,

and Oral & Craniofacial Sciences respectively. His academic career is focused on bridging together the clinical and basic science worlds. Specifically, his research focuses on answering clinical and diagnostic questions using the study of biological shape and form of the face and surrounding structures. This serves in risk and outcome assessment, as well as treatment planning for different conditions affecting the craniofacial complex. In addition to his published research articles, he serves as an ad hoc reviewer for multiple scientific journals such as *Scientific Reports*, *Public Library of Science* (PLOS) and *Journal of Applied Oral Science*. Furthermore, his teaching is focused on the clinical applications of the basic sciences and their integration into clinical education. This serves in establishing a solid foundation of basic biomedical sciences that are directly applicable in the problem-based learning environment and future clinical practice.



► **L'lee Janicki** is a 2013 graduate of the Marietta College PA program. She has worked clinically in family medicine, orthopaedic surgery with a primary focus in spine, and pain management. Coming from a long line of educators, she has always had an interest in education and learning. She started at Chatham in August 2018 as an adjunct in the Clinical Skills for the PA course and remained in that role until she joined Chatham full-time in October 2021 as skills coordinator. L'lee is passionate about teaching students the hands-on skills needed to become strong clinicians and valued members of the medical community. She enjoys watching the students grow in knowledge and confidence throughout their time at Chatham. L'lee resides in Washington County with her husband Rich, two children Anastasia (age 4) and Alina (19 months) and two dogs Ollie and Leo. In her free time, she enjoys spending time outdoors with her family, kayaking, and baking. She can often be found curled up on the couch under a blanket with a good book and one of her furry best friends.



► **Shuo Li, MPAS '17**

joined the PA program this year and is an assistant professor of the practice and clinical coordinator team. A graduate of the Chatham PA program, she also holds a Doctorate of Medical

Science diploma from the University of Lynchburg. She is compassionate about working with students and practicing medicine. She is also excited to come back and bring positive influence to future physician assistants that will make profound impact on individuals, communities, and even globally in health care. Shuo has worked with Allegheny Health Network Orthopedic Institute since graduated and continue to work clinically casually. Shuo lives in greater Pittsburgh area with her amazing husband and son. There are also two dogs and two tortoises in the household. She enjoys spending time with her family, cooking, sightseeing, and go on road trips with the family.

### Director's Corner, *continued from page 1*

I wish you all well and would love to hear from you. Please let us know if you want to visit, help with interviews, meet us at an alumni event, or precept our current students.

Hope to see you in '22.

Best,

*Judy Truscott*



## FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR



Dear Chatham PA Alumni,

I am thrilled to be entering my ninth year as medical director of the Chatham PA studies program. In that time, we've grown a deep relationship between the program and my clinical job at the Squirrel Hill Health Center, which is now one of the largest sites for second-year students doing pediatrics and family medicine rotations. Not only do we have Lauren Yamada, my fellow Chatham faculty member, working here as the primary pediatric provider and instructor, but two recent Chatham graduates, Cassy Porter and Erin Gurley, began their careers here. While we miss Cassy as she continues her work in the wilderness of Minnesota, Erin continues with us today as an integral part of our work providing primary care to newly arrived refugees, people seeking treatment for opioid use disorders, and newly born babies among many other things.

On the academic side, I am thrilled to be back in the physical classroom in 290, with many new educational experiences on the horizon this year. Despite the success

of our "Healing People, Not Patients" communication workshop, based on my book of the same title, there was one consistent critique: we could have used this *before* we started our clinical year. So this year, we'll be splitting the workshop in two: a lecture and skill-building workshop for the first-year students, and then a more reflective "practice inquiry" workshop for the second-years to critically examine their experiences in the clinic. We'll also be adding a lecture on refugee health, continuing the lecture on sustainability in healthcare, and permanently tweaking our skills lecture on vaccines to include the real-world example of the COVID vaccines' development.

Last but not least, the return to class has meant the return of my home-hospitality journal clubs and morning "coffee and crit lit" sessions. We are using the time to "critically read" about how some of our standard practices may contribute to structural inequalities, like race-normed GFR equations and uneven prescribing of pain medication for kids of different races with appendicitis.

The through line in all of these efforts is that somehow, in just two years, we are turning out amazing, socially aware, well-rounded PAs who know how to treat the whole patient, look beyond the algorithms, and deliver first-rate care. Thank you all for your continued support and interest.

Jonathan Weinkle, MD, FAAP



## Community Outreach

► The Carnegie Science Center hosted a Health & Human Body SciTech Day where STEM professionals introduce Pittsburgh youth to the wide array of career opportunities. Our PA faculty and staff joined in the fun and talked to many local high school students about the PA profession. In addition, Brenda Ealey and Paige Cendroski joined a virtual panel to discuss their career paths. More than 500 students joined this session remotely to learn about STEM professions. Chatham continues our outreach to communities and youth to encourage students to consider this great career. Recently, faculty and students visited Woodland Hills High School to share our journeys. We haven't gone to space to do this yet; that is just Judy and Paige enjoying some fun at the Carnegie Science Center. (But we are out of this world!)



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Marcy Holloway, MPAS '01



#### Tell us about yourself and your PA career path.

Wow 20 years and counting. I would like to think that my experiences as a PA have been unique. Every stop along my career path has been truly amazing. I have had the honor of working alongside some of the best people and developed some long-lasting relationships.

My first stop, the University of Pittsburgh. Starting off in HIV Research was a cool way to begin my career. The study volunteers and coworkers made my first seven years as a PA memorable. In addition to working in research, I was afforded the opportunity to serve as adjunct faculty for The Community College of Allegheny County and did some work with The Duquesne University PA Program as well.

Next up I served in the US Airforce. I always had a drive to be part of something bigger than me and joining the military offered me that opportunity. So, I did it! Going from research to family medicine was a huge shift but worth it. I was stationed at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas and served for over four years as an active-duty Medical Officer in Family Medicine and then six years as a reservist. I had the privilege of taking care of active and retired military members and their families. I traveled and deployed once.

After active duty I landed in my current career. Now I am working for a large medical group in Las Vegas doing geriatric assessments and wellness exams. Fun fact I am working with another Chatham graduate, Gretchen Pohawski, MPAS '02.



#### Looking back on your time at Chatham, what was a highlight of the PA program for you?

Thinking back at my time at Chatham I am grateful for two things: the relationships I had with my classmates and professors and the problem-based learning experience. Problem based learning prepared me for real life learning situations. After graduation I felt comfortable with working in teams, confident in my ability to identify what I needed to know quickly and knew where to get the information. I know PBL is tough but trust the process.

#### What are some lessons that you have learned since practicing medicine as a PA?

- LISTEN: not only to your patients but also to your team members.
- Learn to TRUST: trust your training, trust your team, trust your gut.
- Let GROWTH happen: the learning never stops.
- Show GRATITUDE: be thankful for even the small successes.
- Practice SELF-CARE: you must take care of your own well-being first. You need to be the best version of yourself to show up for your family, your patients, and your team.

#### What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

I can't say that I am proud of just one thing in my career. I have gained so much over the last two decades and it hard to select just one moment or accomplishment that defines my career. I like to think in terms of collective gains over the years and hopeful that I am setting a good example for those coming behind me.

#### What does the future look like for you?

I don't have any plans for big change now, but I eventually would like to make my way back to education. Seeing my career come full circle would be incredible.



## STUDENT EXPERIENCES



### Shining Like Stars at STAR!

► Less than two months into the PA program, our first-year PA students take action! The problem-focused medical simulation session held at the West Penn/Allegheny Health System STAR (Simulation, Teaching, and Academic Research) Center is a highlight for these students. This program offers a unique learning experience in which students effectively communicate and actively engage in the assessment and treatment of simulation patients. STAR is incorporated in the students' *Clinical Skills for the PA* course. The students will participate in these simulations throughout the didactic year in preparation for their clinical rotations.



### PSPA Student Medical Challenge Bowl 2021

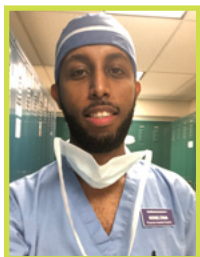
► At the annual Pennsylvania Society of PA's conference at the Kalahari Waterpark resort, the student challenge bowl was once again a highlight of the conference. Six teams competed in a "jeopardy" like game, testing their medical knowledge, including our very own Class of 2022 team: Grace McCracken, Megan Guzzardi, and Alaina Graziano. Other teams that competed were from Penn State University, University of Pittsburgh, Mercyhurst, DeSales University, and Slippery Rock University. Chatham competed against Mercyhurst in the first round with Mercyhurst winning after a tough battle which ended in a sudden death round. In the championship round, Penn State University faced Mercyhurst with Penn State taking the victory. The University of Pittsburgh took home the third-place finish. Lots of camaraderie and fun were had by all along with lots of door prizes given away. Congrats to the Chatham team, you represented us well!



## STUDENT EXPERIENCES

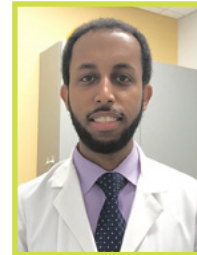
### 2nd Year Student Perspective

► As I reflect on my life, it is amazing to see how far I came along. If someone was to tell my 13-year-old self I was going to win a visa lottery to come to the US from Ethiopia, go to college on a full scholarship, get a master's degree in biology, get accepted to a PA program, and be on track to medically help others, I would certainly say I must be dreaming. My journey has taught me that I will never know where life takes me, but as long as I stay positive, focused, adaptable, humble, and grateful, the challenges become conquerable, the goals become fruitful, and the opportunities become plentiful. I'm sure this mindset is what carried my classmates and me as we have gone through the PA program. From the early stages of the pandemic where we were unsure if our program is going to start on time, to completing our didactic year hoping it is not all going to be online, to continuing to complete our clinical rotations through the multiple variant surges, maintaining a positive mindset in times of uncertainty was the most challenging part. Despite the challenges early on, the highlight of the didactic year certainly has been getting to know, learning from, and traveling this journey with all of my classmates who are intelligent, gifted, and downright kind human beings.



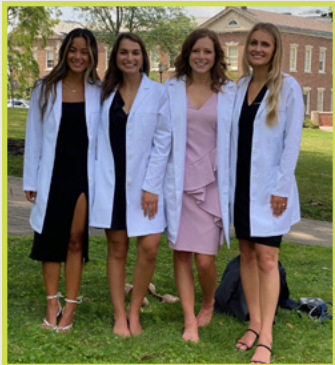
As for the clinical year, I'm grateful for having amazing preceptors who have gone above and beyond to make my clinical rotation experience educational and memorable. Chatham alumnus and preceptor Attila Nyilas, PA-C

welcomed me on my first clinical orthopedics rotation, and he instilled in me to have self-confidence from the start and how to be an excellent PA in the workplace. Chatham alumnus Taylor Schwarzberger, PA-C kindly offered to be my preceptor without being prompted when I was waiting for a preceptor during my psychiatry rotation. Chatham faculty member, alumnus, and preceptor Kelly Mutsavage, PA-C has shown me what it means to truly serve the underserved patient population during my women's health rotation. She and I put up multiple Christmas trees and decorated them with winter hats, gloves, scarfs, and socks for the patients to take during the cold winter. Going to a local high school with Brenda Ealey PA-C and Paige Cendroski PA-C to inspire potential future PA students is how I already started to pay my blessings forward. I'm also grateful for getting the chance to complete a couple of my clinical rotations in underserved communities. Completing my emergency medicine in Fayette County, Pennsylvania taught me the social and medical challenges that exist in rural areas. My family and pediatric combined clinical rotation offered me the chance to meet and medically serve unaccompanied minors as well as refugees from Afghanistan and Africa. I'm excited to see where life takes me next as I continue my journey to become a PA. Thank you to my classmates, faculty, preceptors, and others who made this journey a rewarding and memorable experience.



*PA students preparing for rotations*





## Graduating Class of 2021!

► Congratulations to the PA Class of 2021! Chatham faculty and staff are so proud of you and wish you the best in your future endeavors!



## Connect with our students and be a mentor!

► As you know, PA school is challenging! Everyone has their own unique experience in PA school. It's hard enough to remember all the diastolic and systolic murmurs, the complete neurological exam, and the intrinsic and extrinsic pathways and then you add in your own challenges.

### Being a student who:

- Is living out of state for the first time and is a little homesick
- Is married and trying to manage homelife
- Is a parent or caretaker
- Has a different background than most: color, race, religion, ethnicity
- Has a family member who needs them—whether mentally or physically or emotionally
- Has plenty of undergraduate loans also and wonders how this will all come together
- Doesn't think they are good enough to do this
- Is in an unhealthy relationship
- Doesn't manage stress very well
- Is scared about travelling for rotations
- Struggles with who they are

### **...is HARD**

Do one or more of these sound familiar? Did you wish you could talk to someone who was in a similar place? Consider being a mentor and connect with a student who can gain so much by talking to you! As we know now, we can connect so easily now even being miles away. The time involved is up to you and your mentee. You'll both gain a new perspective and become future colleagues along the way! Contact Paige Cendroski (p.cendroski@chatham.edu) if you can mentor a student a make a difference. Thank you!



# PROGRESSION of our PROFESSION

## Big legislative changes for PA's in PA!

► In October, both the PA House and Senate passed Bills 397 and 398 which Governor Tom Wolfe signed into law to become Acts 78 and 79. The Pennsylvania Society of PA's Governmental Affairs committee has been working on this legislation since 2017 with setbacks and delays along the way. Act 78 (Osteopathic board) and 79 (Allopathic board) help remove many of the barriers that were in the way for PA's to begin to practice as well as in their everyday practice. Prior to these Acts, PA's shared a rotating seat with other allied health professionals on the State Medicine Board and the State Board of Osteopathic Medicine which only occurred every 20 years. With the new Acts, PA's now have a permanent seat on each board. The Acts have increased ratios of PA's:Physicians from 4-1 to 6-1 in both the outpatient and inpatient setting and eliminated the requirement for physicians to be on-site at satellite clinics if that's the agreement between the PA-MD/DO.

Countersignature has always been a paperwork issue for supervising physicians. In the new Acts, countersignature can be determined at the practice level but is still 100% required within ten days for new graduates for their first year and for those in a new specialty for the first 12 months. The biggest hindrance to many new graduates or for those changing agreements has been the waiting period for applications to be approved by the boards of medicine. Act 78 and 79 now say agreements only have to be filed, eliminating the approval process. The boards of medicine did put in language in both

Acts giving the ability to review up to 10% of those applications but language for how those applicants will be chosen is still unknown.

With the Governor's signature, these new Acts were put in effect immediately though the regulations for these laws could take anywhere from 18-24 months. The important thing for everyone to remember is that wherever a PA practices, they must follow those institution's policies and procedures so make sure the practice/institution is up-to-date with the new language before practicing under these new Acts. If one's practice is no longer going to require countersignature for instance, a new agreement must be filed. If any PA has questions about the new Acts, check out the PSPA website [www.pspa.net](http://www.pspa.net) and the State Board of Medicine or Board of Osteopathic Medicine websites.

Special thanks to all of those who are PSPA members, without the support of fellow and student members, the governmental affairs committee would not have been able to push for these changes. Support PSPA by becoming a member today!

## Name change voted on at the House of Delegates 2021

► The AAPA House of Delegates voted to change the name of the profession from Physician Assistant to Physician Associate. There were many hours of debate before the vote took place from fellow and student delegates. It will take many months and years for the language and laws to catch up with the vote so PA's are to continue to use the term assistant as per their license until their state's organization has given the authorization to go by associate.



## Bringing in the Holiday Fun!

► The Class of 2023 must have been very good this year! Santa and Mrs. Claus stopped by to say "Merry Christmas" right after PBL this past December. Delicious sweets were delivered for nourishment for the Unit 3 exams! Thank you Santa (Mark Hertweck) and Mrs. Claus (Kath Donnelly) for your spirit and energy. We know all faculty, staff, and students needed this at this time of the year!



# PA Student Awards

The PA Student Award is given to the student who best demonstrates change as a result of the Chatham University physician assistant program and progress towards becoming an excellent, compassionate healthcare provider.

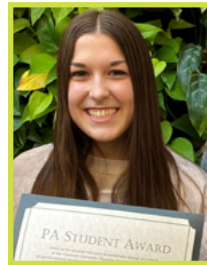


► Rabiah Ahmed, MPAS '21, was the recipient of the 2021 PA Student Award which was presented during Campus Days in December 2020—virtually. Rabiah recently began her career as a certified PA in Bone Marrow Transplant in Seattle.

*"We take care of patients with hematologic malignancies that are undergoing autologous/allogeneic stem cell transplant as well as immunotherapy such as CAR-T cells.*

*We start our day with pre-rounding, then participating in walking rounds with the attending. Around noon, we attend radiology rounds and for the rest of the day we work on any consults, discharges, notes, new admissions and anything else that comes up. I am spending the day with the Infectious Disease team today and the ICU team tomorrow. It has been an*

*enriching learning experience especially given the complex nature of the patient population and I am grateful to be surrounded by a supportive team who is always willing to teach me as a new PA! Sending my regards to all the Chatham faculty that helped me get to where I am today."*



► This past December, the 2022 PA Student Award was presented to Alena Costulas, MPAS '22.

*"My name is Alena Costulas, and I am currently on my seventh rotation of clinical year. I completed my first five rotations in Panama City, Florida and I am now finishing them out in my home, Pittsburgh. My favorite rotations so far have been pediatrics and family medicine. Clinical rotations have been the best part of PA school. I love being able to apply the*

*knowledge that I learned over the last year to real patients and establish strong connections with them through medicine. When I graduate, I hope to work in family medicine somewhere sunny and warm."*

For more information about Chatham's PA Student Award and to support this honor, [click here](#).

## Pi Alpha Honor Society



► We congratulate the newly inducted members of Pi Alpha! Pi Alpha is the national physician assistant honor society organized for the promotion and recognition of both PA students and graduates. Membership signifies the inductees' significant academic achievement and honors them for their leadership, research, community/professional service and other related activities. The society also encourages a high standard of character and conduct among students and graduates. The Pi Alpha Honor Society was organized in 2004 by the Association of Physician Assistant Programs (APAP) for the promotion and

recognition of significant academic achievement, leadership, research, community/professional service, and the encouragement of a high standard of character and conduct among physician assistants (PA) students and graduates. The motto of Pi Alpha is "Scholarship, Service, Leadership." The following 2021 graduates have exemplified these qualities over the past two years. We commend these students who have gone beyond the academic responsibilities of PA school.

Clare Clifton  
Sarah Gleicher  
Morgan Herold  
Laura Moss

Kayla Piatkowski  
Hailey Smith  
Cody Sponholz  
Sarah VanWynen



We also congratulate April Hollenbeck who was nominated by the Chatham PA faculty and inducted as an honorary member this year. April's commitment to PA education is quite notable.

As a PBL facilitator and preceptor for over 16 years, she holds our profession to high standards and encourages strong teamwork and self-directed learning for our students.

# Clinical Education Updates

► It is hard to believe that we are still dealing with the impact of COVID-19 within our Chatham community as well as globally. As I wrote this letter last year, I did not think I would still be writing about the effects that COVID-19 still has on our PA faculty, staff, and students. But we still find ourselves being reminded every day that we still have a global pandemic that continues to hit us not only personally but professionally as well.

I am happy to announce that the PA Class of 2021 has graduated and has started to make their way into the PA workforce, and we are excited to call them colleagues! The White Coat Ceremony in July was able to be held in-person as well as being live streamed for those who could not attend due to varying circumstances. With much planning, and

several changes being made throughout the process, the ceremony took place without a hitch. It was great to see the excitement in the student's eyes as well as their family members as they were able to walk across the stage to receive their white coat. What a way to end their PA schooling during the pandemic!

The PA Class of 2022 completed their didactic year with a hybrid experience, began their clinical rotations on time, and have been able to complete their first five rotations. Although we have seen a slight drop in the number of available clinical sites due to the pandemic, we truly appreciate those sites and preceptors who have agreed to take our students and we have been able to place all students. We are happy to welcome the Class

of 2022 back in December, in-person, for Campus Days which provides an opportunity to participate in lectures on APP Career Strategies, PANCE prep, Loan repayment options, and student case presentations. It also gives everyone the opportunity to socialize and reconnect after being in all areas of the county for the past six months. We are looking forward to seeing everyone and hearing all about their clinical experiences! We thank the PA faculty, staff, and preceptors who helped to make the best out of a year to remember.

All of this could not have been accomplished without our clinical preceptors and health care affiliations that have remained dedicated to providing excellent clinical education to our students even while they continue to deal with the many

[continued on next page](#)

## CONGRATULATIONS to our Outstanding Preceptor and Clinical Site!



► We congratulate Diana Baca, MD, who is our Outstanding Preceptor and Clinical Site of 2021! Dr. Baca has been a preceptor for more than 30 Chatham PA students in just three years! This annual honor is awarded by our students to the preceptor who they felt had the most impact in their education and clinical experience during their clinical year. On behalf of the faculty and staff at Chatham, we truly thank you, Dr. Baca, for choosing to precept, especially during this challenging time in the medical community. We are truly grateful that you were not only able to provide this opportunity, but for taking all precautions to make it a safe and exciting learning environment. We have sincere appreciation for your invaluable input and expertise you have graciously given to our students this past

year. It is our hope that you know how much we appreciate all you have done and continue to do for our program!

*"I really love this opportunity because it allows me to help other future providers be comfortable in a very important field. Women's health is so intimate and being able to be comfortable with your provider is so important to patients. Plus, the Chatham students are always so well trained to help patients! We have a good time and they keep me on my toes. My best advice is to recognize the role you have in people's lives and the great opportunity that exists for providing tools to help patients make good decisions. It's a privilege to be able to be a part of their support group and try to not take that for granted! And I always tell my students don't be hesitant to ask for help. Medicine changes so quickly!!!!"*

Diana Baca, MD  
Obstetrics and Gynecology

## Clinical Education *continued*

stressors both professionally and personally during this COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot express our gratitude enough because without them we would not have been able to accomplish what we did throughout such a challenging time. As we prepare for the Class of 2023 Clinical rotations, please consider continuing to support the clinical education of our PA students or if you would like to become a new preceptor in whatever specialty you practice, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you.

Each year the graduating PA Class nominates preceptors who had the most impact on them throughout their clinical education. The clinical team and the Class of 2021 are pleased to recognize the preceptors below:

### Best Preceptors of the Year: 2021

Awarded by the Class of 2021 to preceptors who had the most impact on their education and clinical experience in their clinical year.

#### OUTSTANDING PRECEPTOR OF THE YEAR

**Diana Baca, MD**

WOMEN'S HEALTH

East Suburban OB/GYN Associates, Monroeville, PA

#### EMERGENCY MEDICINE

**Allison Bakowicz, PA-C**

Westmoreland Emergency Medicine Specialists,  
Greensburg, PA

**Joel Rosenbloom, DO**

Forbes Regional Hospital, Monroeville, PA

#### FAMILY PRACTICE

**David Surovchak, PA-C**

Carolina Family Health Centers, Wilson, NC

**Chao-Yi Wu, MD**

North Sound Family Medicine, Bellingham, WA

#### INTERNAL MEDICINE

**Brian Lamb, DO**

Allegheny Health Network Primary Care Morningside,  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Christopher Fleissner, DO**

Hussaini Medical Associates, Bellevue, PA

#### PEDIATRICS

**Lauren Yamada, PA-C**

Squirrel Hill Health Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Derek Holman, PA-C**

Future Pediatrics, Panama City Beach, FL

#### PSYCHIATRY

**Vinay Vajjhala, MD**

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Pittsburgh, PA

**Brittany Halpern, PA-C**

Park Valley Behavioral Health Care, Wheeling, WV

#### SURGERY

**Travis Bickmore, PA-C**

West Penn Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA

**Shannon Altpeter, PA-C**

UPMC Shadyside Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA

#### WOMEN'S HEALTH

**Diane Baca, MD**

East Suburban OB/GYN Associates, Monroeville, PA

**Dean Pollack, MD**

Private Practice, Pittsburgh, PA

#### ELECTIVES

**Attila Nyilas, PA-C**

ORTHOPEDICS

Allegheny Orthopedic Associates, Pittsburgh, PA

**Marc Liang, MD**

PLASTIC SURGERY

Aesthetic Plastic Surgery of Pittsburgh,  
Pittsburgh, PA

In May 2021, Lea O'Keefe, associate director of clinical education, left Chatham University's PA program to embark on a new adventure in her career. Lea had been with the PA program for the past seven years. Her dedication and commitment to the PA program and the students was instrumental and we are grateful that she was part of our team. We wish her the best in her future endeavors

Please join me in welcoming two new members to the clinical team:

**January Yurchak** started in August 2021 as our new graduate assistant. She jumped right into the position without hesitations and has already become an integral part of the team. January is currently in the Master of Arts in Psychology program as well as having a Master of Business Administration. We are excited to have January as part of the clinical team!

**Shou Li, MPAS '17, PA-C** joined the clinical team on December 1, 2021. Since graduating from Chatham, she has been working in orthopedic surgery and in March 2021, she received her Doctor of Medical Science from Lynchburg University. We are excited to welcome Shou to the clinical team!



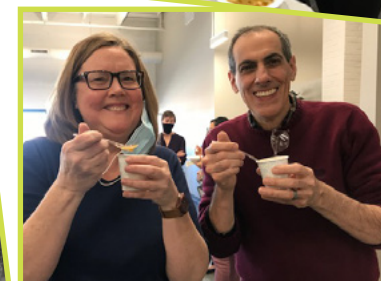


## Wellness in Mellon

► This past spring, Chatham PA students, faculty, and staff celebrated their Wellness. For over 25 years, our PA program has supported students' wellness during PBL in the spring for the first-year students. The goal of this program is to encourage our students to maintain their well-being during their second year as they encounter the challenges of rotations, travel, and studying. This year, we have implemented more wellness during orientation and throughout the fall term as students begin PA school. Our wellness festivities last May were held in Mellon Park across from Chatham Eastside. Students enjoyed healthful snacks and engaged in many activities: yoga, exploring the nature of Mellon Park, pet-time, meditation, and socializing.



*Soup for the Soul:  
Students, faculty,  
and staff taking time  
to enjoy soup and  
conversation*



## Stay connected

Please keep the PA program updated with your achievements! E-mail Paige Cendroski, alumni coordinator, at [p.cendroski@chatham.edu](mailto:p.cendroski@chatham.edu) with any updates including e-mail address, address, news, publications, accomplishments etc.



Chatham University Physician Assistant Program



@MPASChatham



@chathamupaprogram



[www.linkedin.com/groups/12309808/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12309808/)

Stay connected and get involved with the Office of Alumni Relations! We offer numerous volunteer and networking opportunities as well as alumni receptions at professional conferences and exclusive events at local Pittsburgh attractions. Interested? Please send us an e-mail at [alumni@chatham.edu](mailto:alumni@chatham.edu) or visit us at [chatham.edu/alumni](https://chatham.edu/alumni). Stay connected with the Alumni Association via Facebook.