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Joint Connections

Spring 2025

Highlights from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program



Assistant Professor Grace C. Johnson, PT, DPT, MS, OCS

Grace C. Johnson, PT, DPT, MS, OCS, set to retire

After 25 years as a faculty member in the Physical Therapy Program, she will be closing her office door one final time - Assistant Professor Grace C. Johnson, PT, DPT, MS, OCS, is retiring from academia on June 30.

Grace was hired by then-Program Director Pat Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA, and started as a faculty member at UNMC in October 2000.

The jump from clinic to teaching was described as a huge learning curve for her and she often says it took five years for her to figure out the language and tempo of academia.

"If imposter syndrome was a thing back then, I would be poster child #1 for that," notes Grace.

Dr. Johnson acclimated and her teaching skills have been recognized by both her students and colleagues. She was a nominee for the UNMC Alvin M. Earle Outstanding Health Educator Award in 2005. She received the 2009 Teacher of the Year Award from the School (now College) of Allied Health Professions and the Achievement in Education Award from the Nebraska Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association in 2016.

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Dr. Johnson set to retire *continued*

Dr. Johnson is the course coordinator for Musculoskeletal PT 1, Musculoskeletal PT 2 and Seminar 4. She also serves as a lab instructor for Human Movement 3 and Musculoskeletal PT 2. She is recognized as an expert in orthopaedic physical therapy. She was an invited member of a select group of orthopaedic clinical specialists to serve as a Subject Matter Expert for Revalidation of Description of Specialty Practice with the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties, Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy (2021-2024). She has served on the ABPTS Orthopaedic Specialty Council as both a member and Item Review Coordinator (2016-2019). Her reappointment to the ABPTS Committee of Content Experts (2012-2015, 2020-2024) provided leadership to the item writing review process and to the Specialization Academy of Content Experts.

Throughout her academic career, Dr. Johnson has remained clinically active. She currently treats patients regularly at Nebraska Medicine's Lauritzen Outpatient Center.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities and clinical practice, Dr. Johnson has contributed to the program in a variety of other roles. She serves as the faculty advisor and supervises physical therapy students in the student-run UNMC SHARING clinic. She has presented locally, regionally, and nationally on topics such as interprofessional telehealth patient care provided by students in a student-run free clinic for the underserved; assessment of professional behaviors and clinical reasoning with video assignments; and bridging the gap between clinical practice patterns and evidence-based treatments.

Dr. Johnson has also contributed to the program as the chair of the Student Success and Performance Evaluation committee since 2013. In this role, she is an effective communicator, measured, and considerate. She also served as the faculty advisor for SUN-APTA from 2001-2013.

Assistant professor Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT, said, "I have had the pleasure of knowing Grace Johnson as a teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. As a DPT student at UNMC, Grace was a significant presence in my education—both as an instructor for several courses and as the SUN-APTA faculty advisor. As a third-year student, I had the privilege of serving as a teaching assistant for

her musculoskeletal labs, an experience that helped refine my skills and sparked my passion for teaching.

I credit Grace for "roping" me into academia. After running into her at a continuing education course, she convinced me to drive three hours to give a two-hour guest lecture. The next year, she encouraged me to apply for a teaching position, and nearly nine years later, I am incredibly grateful for her belief in me and her guidance along the way. That is one of Grace's greatest gifts—she has an incredible ability to recognize talent and/or interests in others, offering wisdom and encouragement in a way that inspires growth. Her colleagues, patients, and the hundreds of students she has taught have all benefited from her enthusiasm and passion for physical therapy."

During her time at UNMC, Dr. Johnson has contributed to the education of approximately 1200 PT students. Included in this number is her daughter, Marisa, a 2016 graduate of the UNMC Physical Therapy Program.

Grace states, "I have loved my time as a faculty member working with a great team of colleagues through the years. But the students have been my greatest inspiration to do my very best. They bring such joy and challenges every day and have motivated me to try and figure out how they learn and how to teach them. I have truly enjoyed working with all the classes of students through the years. The laughter and fun we have shared include fond memories, such as karaoke, arm wrestling (I won), lots of learning and eventual graduation."

Although she will no longer be teaching, she plans on continuing clinical practice on a PRN basis stating she is not quite ready to hang up her goniometer just yet. She has treated patients continually since the start of her career in 1989 and would like to finish her career in the clinic when the time comes. "There are plenty of people and patients out there I haven't met yet."

Program director Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, states, "Dr. Johnson's unique talents enriched our program, and we'll miss her enthusiasm for teaching and crafting exam questions. (Only she could find it exhilarating!) We'll always remember her ukulele playing and delicious baked treats. Grace, we are wishing you a wonderful retirement filled with joy, new adventures, and plenty of hugs from your granddaughter. Congratulations!"



Pictured (l-r): Regg Strotheide, PT, DPT (Class of 2020) from Inspire Rehab and Jacob Laville (Class of 2025)

Career Fair 2024

The 2024 Students of the University of Nebraska American Physical Therapy Association (SUN-APTA) Career Fair was held on Friday, October 11, in the Center For Healthy Living. Sixty vendors participated in this year's event.

The fair introduced PT students to possible employment opportunities, clinical sites, and many aspects of physical therapy. Funds raised through the Career Fair will be used to supplement costs for the following: scholarly and professional development of students, hosting PT awareness events, community service, and the annual Joint Effort Volleyball tournament.

PT2 Ashton Boyer stated, "Attending the career fair as a physical therapy student was an invaluable opportunity to connect with professionals in the field and explore potential job and clinical rotation options. I had the chance to meet several prospective employers, which helped me understand what options are available for a future job or opportunities I can have to shadow . . . I've kept in touch with a few vendors to stay updated on potential openings and future opportunities for clinical rotations."

The 2025 Career Fair is scheduled for Friday, October 10, in the Truhlsen Events Center. Those with questions may contact SUN-APTA representatives at sunapta@unmc.edu.

UNMC Physical Therapy Students Advocate at Legislative Day 2025



Pictured (l-r) front row: Ashton Boyer, Josie Arduser, Hope Whitney, Tristan Larson | back row: Zach Bennetts, Logan Moravec, Brooke Peterson, Andrew Davis, Ximena Alvarez Magana, Alexandra Benson

On Tuesday, February 4, second-year UNMC Physical Therapy students participated in Legislative Day at the Nebraska State Capitol in

Lincoln. Organized by APTA Nebraska, the event provided students with a unique opportunity to engage with state legislators and advocate for policies that enhance patient access to care.

During the event, students met with Senators and their staff to discuss key legislation supported by APTA Nebraska. Their advocacy efforts focused on reducing barriers for patients and expanding access to care through improved reimbursement. By distributing informational materials and engaging in meaningful discussions, the students played a vital role in advancing awareness of these critical issues among state policymakers.

Student participant Hope Whitney stated, "Attending the Legislative Day at the NE State Capitol felt like a great introduction to the advocacy process, and I was able to appreciate the important relationships between PTs and government officials."

According to Assistant Professor and Associate Director Sara E. Bills, PT, DPT, "The students' professionalism and dedication were evident throughout the morning, and they did an outstanding job representing UNMC and the physical therapy profession."

Joint Effort 2025

The 30th annual Joint Effort volleyball tournament was held on Friday, January 31, at Nebraska Elite Volleyball at the Union Bank and Trust Sports Complex in Elkhorn, Nebraska.

Each year, physical therapy students from Creighton University and UNMC collaborate to plan and execute the all-night event to raise funds for the American Arthritis Foundation.

This year, over 60 teams participated and more than \$6,000 was raised for the American Arthritis Foundation through sponsors, raffles and player fees.



Joint Effort participants, UNMC students are as follows – front row (l-r): JC Himmelberg, Spencer Wagner, Koby Brandenburg, Trent Lubberstedt, Tristan Larson, Sophia Duggan | middle row (l-r): Tatum Hemmingsen (second from left), Kara Roos, then last on the right, Tanner Ruda | back row (l-r): Bryant Jeary (second from left), AJ Johnson, Josie Arduser

Jayden Young, PT, DPT, receives Alpha Eta Award

Jayden Young, PT, DPT, a 2024 graduate of the UNMC PT program, recently received the Alpha Eta Society's Lee Holder Award for Excellence in Graduate Allied Health Education.

The Alpha Eta Society is a national honor society whose purpose is the promotion and recognition of significant scholarship, leadership, and contributions to the allied health professions. Applications are offered to student candidates in the final year of their allied health program who obtained an overall 3.8 graduate GPA or better at UNMC. These students are invited to submit an application for consideration of election to membership. Each applicant is reviewed by the nominating committee for the demonstration of leadership capacity and commitment to service and demonstration of achievement in their chosen allied health field.

When asked what winning this award meant to her, Jayden replied, "I am very grateful to have won this award and know it would not have been possible without the dedication, passion, and expertise of educators and role models within the UNMC PT program. I am thankful for faculty members who inspired, encouraged, and enabled me to participate in outreach programs and learning experiences that shaped my professional career and passions, including fall prevention and care of aging adults. This award encourages me to pursue continued growth, knowledge, advocacy, and service through physical therapy."



Jayden Young, PT, DPT

Dr. Young was recognized as the recipient of the Lee Holder Award for Excellence in Graduate Allied Health Education at the Alpha Eta Annual Meeting. She received a \$1,000 honorarium.

Dr. Young is currently working as a traveling physical therapist. She has had the opportunity to work with and learn from skilled clinicians in Washington and California.

Abigail Aplaca, SPT, receives Hageman Award



Pictured (l-r): UNMC Alumni Association associate director Kat Hamilton; Kaitlyn Uwazurike, PT, DPT; Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC; Marcela Williams, BHM; Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD; Pat Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA; Abigail Aplaca; Dawn Venema, PT, PhD; Grace Johnson PT, DPT, MS; Tessa Wells, PT, DPT

On October 11, 2024, PT3 Abigail Aplaca was awarded a scholarship from the Pat and Bruce Hageman Physical Therapy Alumni Award Fund established with the University of Nebraska Foundation.

This fund was created to honor a PT2 or PT3 student in good academic standing who has demonstrated evidence of exemplary professional behavior and/or commitment to service through involvement in activities that benefit others in the community, the workplace and the profession. The recipient is selected by the PT Alumni Engagement Council within the CAHP Alumni Association.

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Student Making an ImPacT: Zach Bennetts, SPT

Hometown: Denton, Nebraska

Undergraduate Degree:

Concordia University, Nebraska
Seward, Nebraska | 2018-2023
Bachelors of Science in Biology and Exercise
Science with a Minor in Chemistry

Professional affiliations, leadership and volunteer activities:

- APTA Nebraska Chapter (student member)
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (student member)
- UNMC Sharing Clinic (student volunteer)
- DPT Class of 2026 Joint Effort Fundraiser (co-director)

What has been your favorite activity to do with your peers?

One of my favorite things to do on campus is utilize the green space when we get breaks between classes. Whether we were tossing a ball around or having fun ice skating together, those moments of relaxation with my classmates are memories I'll always cherish when I think back on the "good old days" of PT school. I also love spending time off campus cheering on the Huskers during close games and joining in the celebrations at the end of each semester to mark our progress toward graduation.

Tell us about your recent Clinical Experience.

My rotation at a small outpatient ortho clinic was unique and challenging in a way that makes me wish I could do it all over again. A full year of course and lab work provides a lot of learning, but being in a clinical setting offers a distinct experience . . . I had a chance to learn from three DPTs and a PTA, each bringing unique perspectives on care that have influenced my education. As I visualize skills and study for tests, it is this clinic I see in my imagination . . . One of the interventions that made this experience unique was my opportunity to see and practice aquatic therapy twice per week with



Zach Bennetts, SPT

patients at a local pool. My favorite thing I got to do was create and lead my own exercises I made specifically for patients. This opportunity really challenged my creativity in making and modifying activities for patients.

What is your advice for others who are seeking to enter the PT profession?

Physical Therapy is one of the most rewarding professions one can hope to practice in and you can start getting ready for it at any time . . . getting experience through your own physical health is one of the most important things you can do to get yourself ready for the PT profession. Coming into the PT world with a background in how your own body moves makes it much easier to understand interventions and helps you empathetically treat your patients.

Abigail Aplaca, SPT, receives Hageman Award *continued*

Pat A. Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA, is a graduate of the UNMC Physical Therapy Program. She was a faculty member in the program for nearly 40 years and served as its program director for 19 of those years. She retired in 2024.

Of the award, Abby said, "I am very grateful and honored to have received the 2024 Pat and Bruce Hageman Award. Service has always been a passion of mine, and UNMC has given me the opportunities to pursue it in and out of the classroom. I will cherish all the people I have gotten to work with and meet in the Kearney community through these service endeavors."

Student Making an ImPacT: Tristan Larson, SPT

Hometown: Trumball, Nebraska

Undergraduate Degree:

University of Nebraska at Kearney
2019-2023

Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science with
a Minor in Health Science

Tell us about your professional affiliations, leadership and volunteer activities:

- DPT Class of 2026 President
- APTA's Nebraska Student Special Interest Group (vice president)
- Aging Interprofessional Group (co-president)
- CAHP Student Senator and Health and Wellness Liaison
- Some of my favorite volunteer activities include car building for MMI's GoBabyGo and working with my community patient!

What has been your favorite activity to do with your peers?

Playing sand volleyball! Our class does a great job of staying active outside of the classroom, so it's safe to assume that when the weather gets warmer, you will find many of us on the Aksarben courts on a Friday afternoon.

Tell us about your recent Clinical Experience.

Most recently, I had my first full-time clinical experience in an in-patient setting in rural Nebraska. It was so rewarding and exciting to get to finally apply the conditions we are



Tristan Larson, SPT

covering in class. Getting hands-on experience alongside my CI and many of the other PTs was so valuable to me. My favorite part of my rotation was getting to meet the patients and hear their stories; it's such a good reminder of why we put in the work we do and how important our profession is in the interdisciplinary team. Every time we walk into a patient's room, we can make such a difference in their lives, and that gets me so excited for the future.

What is your advice for others who are seeking to enter the PT profession?

Get as much hands-on or shadowing experience as possible. Not only will these hours help your application (which is always a good thing), but shadowing different PTs can show you the vastness of our profession. There truly is a specialty for everyone, so get out there and find the one you love!

Intramurals contribute to camaraderie and learning



Pictured (l-r): Kloe Kirwan, Emma Brandt, Amanda Giannou, Eliot Tidgren, Hunter Hoatson, Lauren Pfeifer, and Mykael Stoddard

For the PT1s on the Kearney campus, intramurals played a part in helping the students get to know each other. According to Mykael Stoddard, "Spending time with my classmates outside of the classroom really helped us connect on a personal level, especially since we were all strangers at first. It made a huge difference in building a sense of community that carried over into our work together in class." Hunter Hoatson said, "Playing with this intramural team brought me lots of joy throughout the semester. It was refreshing to be around my classmates and get closer with them without having to sit in a classroom. We were deep into our anatomy course during this so we would yell out the muscles we were using when we hit a ball. This created a fun and active learning environment!"

Dr. Sleddens named Associate Director



Nikki Sleddens, PT, PhD

Effective November 1, 2024, Nikki Sleddens, PT, PhD, has been named an associate director for the UNMC Physical Therapy Program. Dr. Sleddens was hired in 2014 as an assistant professor and the director of clinical education.

Dr. Sleddens states, "I am honored to step into the role of co-Associate Director in our nationally ranked Physical Therapy Program. This position allows me to continue supporting our exceptional faculty, staff, and clinical partners in educating the next generation of physical therapists while maintaining the high standards that define our program."

Sara Bills, PT, DPT, also serves as an associate director in the program.

Dr. Venema featured on Rural Health Matters television program

Associate professor Dawn Venema, PT, PhD, who has clinical and research expertise in fall risk reduction for older adults in a variety of practice settings, joined University of Nebraska President Gold on the January 20, 2025, episode of Rural Health Matters to discuss a range of topics related to fall risk reduction for older adults, including common risk factors for falls and practical advice for reducing fall risk. Dr. Venema highlighted the vital role of physical therapists in fall risk reduction, including educating patients on environmental modifications and other compensatory strategies, and the prescription of individualized exercise programs.

Dr. Venema said, "I was honored to be an invited guest on Rural Health Matters. The problem of falls is relevant to both rural and urban settings. However, rural communities across the country tend to have a higher percentage of older adults in the population



Dawn Venema, PT, PhD

compared to urban communities, making this an important topic to address with viewers of this program. Given the intended audience, I was even able to discuss my rural roots, growing up on a farm outside of Clarkson, NE, to the delight of my parents!"

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Dr. Venema featured on Rural Health Matters television program *continued*

RFD-TV is a 24-hour national subscription streaming channel dedicated to agribusiness and rural-focused news coverage, rural lifestyle, country music entertainment and rodeo. Rural Health Matters is a weekly program hosted by University of Nebraska President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. Rural Health Matters began as a public service by RFD-TV and UNMC to bring the latest COVID-19 updates to a national rural audience. The show has endured and

broadened to include topics on health and other issues germane to rural America. Guests have included University of Nebraska faculty, as well as state, regional and national experts from community, health, business, government, academia and the military.

The interview may be viewed on the UNMC YouTube channel [here](#).

Dr. Siu serves as president of the UNMC Faculty Senate



Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, PhD

In June, 2024, Professor Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, PhD, was installed as the president of the UNMC Faculty Senate for the 2024-2025 academic year. He has been serving in the UNMC Faculty Senate on behalf of the College of Allied Health Professions for more than six years. He has served as Secretary/Treasurer

and Vice-President positions in the past two years.

The UNMC Faculty Senate represents UNMC faculty as the official "voice" of the faculty, charged with protecting academic freedom and uphold standards regarding academic rights and responsibilities. The senate consists of 67 UNMC faculty members.

Dr. Siu said serving as the 46th president of the UNMC Faculty Senate is a distinct honor.

"UNMC is currently undergoing a leadership transition. As part of the UNMC faculty senate, it is important for us to work with the administration and the Board of Regents to search for the next chancellor for UNMC," he said. "It is a team effort."

Dr. Siu said the faculty senate is committed to shared governance and working with the UNMC administration and University of Nebraska System constituencies toward the common goal of achieving excellence in education, research and patient care.

"I encourage all UNMC faculty to actively engage by sharing your suggestions, concerns and visionary ideas with elected senators within your academic unit, members of standing committees or me," he said.

"I look forward to working with all senators and UNMC administration in academic year 2024-25."

Frazee and Wellsandt accepted to UNMC's iLEAD program



Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT

In July, 2025, two UNMC PT Program faculty members, Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT, and Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS, will begin participation in the UNMC Faculty Development Program iLEAD.

According to the Office of Faculty Development, iLEAD (Interprofessional Leadership for Excellence and Academic Development) is a certificate program that provides the tools to become an agile, creative, and confident leader.

iLEAD is a one-year, applied-learning experience. It is designed for individuals who are committed to advancing their leadership skills and performance within and outside the organization. The program typically runs in alternating academic years.

Dr. Frazee was hired as an assistant professor within the UNMC Physical Therapy Program in August 2016. She has served as the program director for the UNMC orthopedic physical therapy residency program since January 2020. In May 2024, Dr. Frazee received the College of Allied Health Professions Excellence in Teaching award. Of her acceptance to iLEAD she stated, "I am excited for the opportunity to grow as a leader and team alongside colleagues from across UNMC. Leadership in healthcare

and education is constantly evolving, and I look forward to using this experience to develop new strategies for mentoring, teamwork, and institutional impact."

Dr. Wellsandt began her assistant professor position with our Physical Therapy Program in June 2016. She has served as the director of the Physical Therapy Program's Clinical Movement Analysis space within the Ryan Wellness Innovation Lab since 2018. In 2022, she was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She was awarded the American Physical Therapy Association Emerging Leader Award (2017) and the Distinguished Mentor Award (2022) from the UNMC Student Senate. Regarding her participation in iLEAD she said, "I am honored to be accepted into the iLEAD program and am looking forward to its experiences that empower me to grow as a resilient, collaborative, and forward-thinking leader. I look forward to strengthening my leadership skills in an ever-evolving academic and healthcare landscape alongside an amazing and interdisciplinary group of colleagues from across UNMC."



Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS

Faculty Spotlight: Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC, CSCS



Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC, CSCS

Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC, CSCS, has been an associate professor in the UNMC Physical Therapy program since January 2021. He is the course coordinator for the Human Movement 3, Imaging for Physical Therapists, and Differential Screening for Physical Therapists classes. Additionally, he serves as a lab instructor in the Gross Anatomy and Musculoskeletal courses and is an instructor in the Sports elective course. In addition to teaching, Mike enjoys conducting research on blood flow restriction training and contributing to other orthopedic-related research. He also remains clinically active in outpatient orthopedics and sports.

Prior to joining the faculty at UNMC, Dr. Rosenthal was an assistant professor in the San Diego State University (SDSU) DPT program from 2016-2020.

The majority of Dr. Rosenthal's professional career has been as a physical therapist in the United States Navy. Following graduation with a Master of Physical Therapy degree from the U.S. Army Baylor University PT program in 1993, he served tours of duty as staff therapist at the Portsmouth (VA) Naval Medical Center, director of physical therapy at the U.S. Naval Academy, and director of physical and occupational therapy at Naval Hospital Jacksonville (FL).

In 2002, Dr. Rosenthal was selected to attend the U.S. Military-Baylor University physical therapy-sports medicine program which culminated in a Doctor of Science degree.

Completion of the sports residency served as a springboard for Dr. Rosenthal to be the first Navy PT to serve in multiple capacities for the Special Warfare community. He was the first physical therapist with the Navy SEALs as the director of rehabilitation at the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training base. That military tour was followed by assignment as the first Navy PT with an operational SEAL unit, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One where he was also the first Navy PT to deploy to Iraq in support of Navy Special Forces.

Mike's final tour of duty was as the director of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and sports medicine at Naval Medical Center San Diego overseeing 11 clinics and 130 healthcare providers and staff. While at NMCS D he also served as consultant to the Surgeon General of the Navy and Specialty Leader for the Navy's Physical Therapy Community. In 2016 he retired from naval service at the rank of Captain.

Mike's academic background includes a bachelor's degree from Doane University. He is a board-certified clinical specialist in Sports Physical Therapy from the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties, Certified Athletic Trainer, and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist.

Mike and his wife, Linda, have three sons and two daughters.



Dr. Rosenthal pictured in a deployment in Iraq in 2009.

Program Updates

UNMC hosts visitor from China

In October, 2024, Dr. Hangxing Wang, the dean of the College of Rehabilitation Medicine at Binzhou Medical University in China, visited the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions' Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. During his visit, he met with department chair and Physical Therapy program director Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, and associate program director for the Occupational Therapy program, Stacy Smallfield, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA.

Additional partnerships established

In early 2024, Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, PhD, chair of the Physical Therapy program's Global Health Opportunities Program (GHOP), signed a memorandum of understanding with National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University in Taiwan to establish a formal partnership between the two Physical Therapy programs. And later in 2024, Dr. Siu signed an agreement of collaboration with Chang Gung University in Taiwan to establish a dual Master's degree program.

UNMC well-represented at APTA Combined Sections Meeting



Pictured (l-r): Jenae Pope, SPT and Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD

In February, 2025, the UNMC Physical Therapy Program was well-represented by its faculty and students at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in Houston, Texas.

Jenae Pope, SPT, and Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, presented a poster titled: A Model for Advocacy, Advancing Policy Change in Support for Patients with Medicaid. Their poster was awarded a Blue Ribbon for recognition of work in promotion of social responsibility by the APTA Academy of Leadership and Innovation. Ms. Pope also received the Nebraska Physical

Therapy Foundation Scientific Dissemination Award. The poster and abstract are available for download [here](#).

Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT; Grace Johnson, PT, DPT; and Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, presented a two-hour education session titled, "Charting Connections: Social Networks, Wellness, and Academic Excellence in Physical Therapy Education." The presentation was selected as an APTA Academy of Education Spotlight Session and is available on demand with CSM registration.

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Pictured (l-r): Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT; Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD; and Grace Johnson, PT, DPT

UNMC well-represented at APTA Combined Sections Meeting *continued*

Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, and her team received the Best Research Abstract in Sports Physical Therapy award for their work titled, "Squat Biofeedback After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injury: A Randomized Controlled Trial." The team included medical student Lauren Vatter; Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC,

CSCS; Mike Wellsandt, PT, DPT; Matthew Tao, MD; Ashley Baker, PT, DPT, OCS; and Zach Specht, PT, DPT, SCS, CSCS.

Their abstract was selected from more than 300 submissions to the American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy at CSM 2025.

Scholarly Activity

Physical Therapy Program faculty are actively disseminating research and scholarly work on a variety of topics. Below is a list of publications, presentations and grants since the last Joint Connections newsletter in October 2024. Names in bold are faculty members in the Physical Therapy Program.

Publications

Bilek, LD, Flores, LE, Waltman, N, Mack, LR, Smith, K, Kelly, C, Keaveny, TM, Hillstrom, D, Griffin, M, Yecies, L, Jaasma, MJ. Benefits of Targeted Vibration for Bone Strength and Bone Density in Postmenopausal Women with Osteopenia: A Randomized, Sham-Controlled Trial, JBMR Plus, 2024; ziae104, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jbmrpl/ziae104>

Jackson MK, Ehlers DK, **Bilek LD**, Graeff-Armas L, Acquazzino M, Hébert JR, Price S, Beaudoin R, Hanson CK. The Impact of a Virtual Educational Cooking Class on the Inflammatory Potential of Diet in Cancer Survivors. Applied Sciences. 14 (12), 5332

Jacobs CA, Jones MH, Collins JE, Waddell LM, Li X, Winalski CS, Pietrosimone B, Kraus VB, Otero M, **Wellsandt E**, Schmitt LC, Spindler KP, Anderson DD, Rodeo SA, Magnussen RA, Wolf BR, Hart JM, Stone AV, Conley CE, Golightly YM, Myer GD, Snyder-Mackler L, Lotz MK, Kim JS, McLeod MM, Huebner JL, Lisee C, Selzer F, Katz JN, Long K, Frier KC, Betensky DJ, Felson DT, Losina E; for PIKASO Team. The PIKASO trial (Preventing Injured Knees from Osteoarthritis: Severity Outcomes): Rationale and design features for a randomized controlled trial. Osteoarthritis Open. 2024 Dec 23;7(1):100563. doi: 10.1016/j.ocarto.2024.100563. PMID: 39867299; PMCID: PMC11758201.

Manning J, Heselton HJ, **Venema DM**, Boron JB, Yentes JM. Defining the concept of physical resilience and quantifying recovery during standing balance in middle-aged and older adults. Sci Rep. 2025 Mar 7;15(1):7988. doi: 10.1038/s41598-025-92746-7. PMID: 40055421; PMCID: PMC11889150.

O'Sullivan O, Bennett AN, Cameron KL, Crossley K, Driban JB, Ladlow P, Macri E, Schmitt LC, Teyhen DS, **Wellsandt E**, Whittaker J, Rhon DI. Prevention of Post-Traumatic Osteoarthritis in the Military: Relevance of OPTIKNEE and Osteoarthritis Action Alliance recommendations. BMJ Mil Health. 2024 Oct 8:military-2024-002813. doi: 10.1136/military-2024-002813. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39384221.

Rosenthal MD, **Wellsandt M**, Specht Z. Return to Play After Shoulder Stabilization – What If This Isn't Going Well? Operative Techniques in Sports Medicine. 32(4), 2024,151134, ISSN 1060-1872. doi: 10.1016/j.otsm.2024.151134.

Siu KC, Hao J. (2024). Psychological Aspects of Virtual Reality in Chronic Non-communicable Diseases. In: Martin CR, Preedy VR, Patel VB, Rajendram R (eds). Handbook of the Behavior and Psychology of Disease. Springer, Cham. doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-32046-0_128-1. (book chapter)

Wellsandt E, Werner D, Tao M, Michaud K, Wichman C, Golightly YM. Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior Differ by Sex During the First Six Months after Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction. Med Sci Sports Exerc. 2025 Apr 3. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000003714. Epub ahead of print.

Other Publications

Becker BJ, **Volkman K**, **Wells T**, **Sleddens N**, **Cochran TM**. (2024). Lifestyle Medicine: Enhancing Success for Health Professionals. In Thrive: Success Strategies for the Modern-Day Faculty Member. University of Nebraska Medical Center, DigitalCommons@UNMC.

Becker BJ, **Johnson GC**, **Gossman K**. (2024). Exercise: Boosting Health and Academic Success. In Thrive: Success Strategies for the Modern-Day Faculty Member. University of Nebraska Medical Center, DigitalCommons@UNMC.

Other Publications *continued*

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Vatter L, Werner D, McManigal M, **Rosenthal M, Wellsandt M**, Jorgensen A, Johnson C, Baker A, Specht Z, Wichman C, Knarr B, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Squat Biofeedback After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injury: A Randomized Controlled Trial - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Houston, TX. 2025 Feb 14.

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Grants

PI: Primary Investigator

Co-PI: Co-Primary Investigator

Co-I: Co-Investigator

Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD (PI)

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Co-investigators: M. Nicole Martino, OTD/L, PhD; Miechelle McKelvey, CCC-CLP, PhD; Dave Palm, PhD; Harlan Sayles, PhD

Dates: January 2024 – December 2024

Giving Day

SUN-APTA contributed \$500 to the Physical Therapy Education Fund for Excellence as part of Giving Day 2025. \$1,925 was raised through 29 gifts. A challenge was 'unlocked' with 25 donors.

The Physical Therapy Education Fund for Excellence benefits and supports areas of greatest need within the Physical Therapy Program.

Thank you to all who participated! For anyone who missed the opportunity to participate in Giving Day but would still like to donate, please do so here:

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