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# Joint Connections

## Spring 2026

*Highlights from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program*



*UNMC Physical Therapy faculty and staff (not pictured: Megan Frazee, PT, DPT and Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD)*

### UNMC Physical Therapy Program Earns Reaccreditation

The UNMC Physical Therapy Program is proud to share that it has been awarded the maximum 10-year accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Even more notably, this achievement was earned with no compliance reports required — a rare outcome that speaks to the exceptional preparation, quality, and commitment of our program.

This success reflects the collective efforts of our dedicated faculty and staff, engaged students, supportive alumni and employers, and outstanding clinical instructors who contributed to accreditation materials and participated in the site visit. The PT Program has maintained continuous accreditation since its inception at UNMC in 1972, a testament to more than five decades of excellence in physical therapy education.

### Dr. Dexter becomes SUN-APTA Faculty Advisor

On January 1, 2026, Brad Dexter, PT, DPT, became the faculty advisor for the Students of the University of Nebraska-American Physical Therapy Association (SUN-APTA). SUN-APTA is a collective body of student physical therapists at UNMC. Its mission includes developing relationships between its members, clinicians, and other healthcare professionals; preparing members for career-long, active participation in professional organizations; promoting the profession of physical therapy in coordination with the APTA-Nebraska and APTA; providing educational and professional development opportunities directed toward the unique needs of students; and performing service to positively impact the lives of people in the community.

Previously, Megan Frazee, PT, DPT served as the SUN-APTA advisor for nearly a decade. Regarding her time as the SUN-APTA advisor, Dr. Frazee states, "Since joining UNMC in 2016, I have had the honor of serving as the faculty advisor for SUN APTA, working alongside exceptional student leaders whose passion for service, advocacy, and community engagement continues to inspire me. During this time, we updated the organization's bylaws to support the expansion to two campuses, sustained long standing traditions such as the Joint Effort Volleyball Tournament, the annual Career Fair, and numerous community volunteer activities, and grew new initiatives—including our involvement with GoBabyGo! builds in partnership with the Monroe Meyer Institute, now thriving with participation from both Omaha and Kearney, and enriched by engineering student collaboration. I am also proud of SUN-APTA's continued commitment to supporting a wide range of philanthropic and professional causes, from the Nebraska Foundation for PT and the PT PAC to the Arthritis Foundation of Nebraska and the PT Program Innovation Fund. As of January 1, 2026, Brad Dexter has stepped into the role of faculty advisor and has already been closely engaged through his participation in meetings throughout the fall semester. I am confident that SUN-APTA will continue to flourish under his guidance."

Dr. Dexter notes of his new position, "For me, stepping into this role is about helping students see leadership as something they grow into, not something they wait for. I'm excited to support opportunities for service, professional development, and recognition that prepare students for the realities of the workforce. Making those connections to workforce development and sustainable, healthy careers is key. SUN-APTA becomes a training ground for how we stay involved in and give back to our profession across a lifetime."

On behalf of the SUN-APTA student body, President of the Class of 2027 Olivia Sattlefield, SPT stated, "Dr. Frazee has been a supportive and dedicated faculty advisor for SUN-APTA, generously lending her time and expertise to guide the organization and mentor our executive team. She also worked closely with Dr. Dexter to ensure a smooth transition from one advisor to the next. We are grateful for all that Dr. Frazee has done and look forward to seeing how Dr. Dexter's commitment to developing student leaders will continue to enhance the impact of SUN-APTA."



*Brad Dexter, PT, DPT and Megan Frazee, PT, DPT*



*A view of the Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex in Kearney, Nebraska.*

## **Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex Update**

The Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex is a joint venture between the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. The goal of the venture is “to be a national leader in rural health and health care through interprofessional health care workforce education, scientific discovery and community partnerships.”

The complex includes the Health Science Education Center I and II buildings. Together, these buildings offer 150,000 square feet of state-of-the-art classrooms, laboratories, simulation spaces and student health and wellness facilities.

The Kristensen Complex will host 12 health profession education programs from the UNMC Colleges of Allied Health, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Public Health; the UNK Department of Communication Disorders and the Central Community College Associate Degree Nursing program. These programs include diagnostic medical sonography, medical

laboratory science, medical nutrition, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, radiation therapy, radiography and speech-language pathology (UNK).

The UNMC physical therapy program has had faculty and students at the Health Science Education Center I building since 2016. The Health Science Education Center II building opened in January 2026. Currently, the Colleges of Allied Health Professions, Nursing and Pharmacy are conducting classes in the Kristensen Complex. The first College of Medicine cohort in Kearney will begin in fall 2026.

At full implementation, the Kristensen Complex will host approximately 625 UNMC students and 95 faculty and staff positions. By 2030, UNMC anticipates graduating around 250 health professionals annually from the Kearney location.



*Tessa Futey, SPT, Class of 2028 interacts with Carly Thomsen, PT, DPT, OCS and other vendors from Nebraska Medicine Rehab Services at the 2025 Career Fair.*

### Career Fair 2025

The Students of the University of Nebraska American Physical Therapy Association (SUN-APTA) hosted the 2025 Career Fair on Friday, October 10, in the Truhlsen Events Center. Fifty-two vendors participated in this year's event.

The PT Career Fair connects students with clinical partners, alumni, and regional employers in an interactive setting that expands their professional networks and exposes them to a wide range of practice opportunities. This event is an essential part of their training because it helps students build confidence, explore potential clinical placements, and begin shaping their future careers.

The Career Fair gives students an authentic, low-pressure environment to practice

professional communication, refine how they present themselves, and learn what different employers value in new clinicians. By engaging directly with clinical sites and alumni, students gain insight into workplace expectations, specialties they may want to pursue, and the diverse roles physical therapists play across settings. It also encourages early relationship building, which students consistently report helps them feel more prepared when entering clinical rotations and the job market.

The 2026 Career Fair is scheduled for Friday, October 9, in the Truhlsen Events Center. Those with questions may contact SUN-APTA representatives at [sunapta@unmc.edu](mailto:sunapta@unmc.edu).



*UNMC PT students pictured at Legislative Day 2026. Front row (l-r): Mallory Stone, Ella Hagen, Lauren Meyer; middle row (l-r): Brianne Gonzalez, Addison Weber, Campbell Mooney, Olivia Sattlefield, Peyton Hatcher, Taylor Ramaekers, Kelsey Larsen; back row (l-r): Trey Nelson, Ashley Dearmont, Andrew Lindemeier, Audrey Linzell, Sadie Powell, Jaidyn Garrett, Jessica Walter, Claudia Wilson, Katelyn Malick*

## **Legislative Day**

On Tuesday, February 3, 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 Mallory Stone stated, “I had breakfast with Senator DeKay and two staffers. We spoke about a bill that would allow PTs to place medical liens, providing security to the

provider, increasing access to care, and joining a list of many other medical care providers that can place liens. We also spoke about the recent ruling by the Department of Education, removing the professional designation from Physical Therapy, limiting student access to loans and creating a larger shortage of providers.”

Assistant Professor Brad Dexter, PT, DPT was also in attendance. He notes, “UNMC was well represented at Legislative Advocacy Day, with 20 physical therapy students participating and a strong presence at the breakfast with state senators.

The students carried themselves with a high level of professionalism and were clearly invested in the opportunity, representing both UNMC and the physical therapy profession with confidence and purpose. Their engagement and preparation helped create a positive impression and contributed to a productive and encouraging day overall.”

## Student Making an ImPacT: Porfirio Garcia-Hernandez, SPT

UNMC PT student Porfirio Garcia-Hernandez was awarded a Live Mas Scholarship by the Taco Bell Foundation. He was also selected to attend the related Summer of Connection conference in Coronado Island, California. There, he met an OT student, and together they decided to create an online platform for PT, OT, and SLP students to network, inspire undergraduate scholars, and share new intervention ideas on the scholar connect platform.

He also recently attended the Society of Student-Run Free Clinics conference in Chicago. He was invited by the SHARING clinic, where he served as the Physical Therapy Student Administrator from 2024 to late 2025. At the conference, he met with leaders of free healthcare clinics across the U.S. and discussed the importance of creating affordable healthcare, and shared effective methods to improve the quality of care provided.

### **As the Student Making an ImPacT, here is more information about Porfirio in his own words:**

I grew up in South Omaha, surrounded by some of the kindest people I've ever met including families who speak Spanish, Arabic, Creole, Pashto, Tagalog and various other languages. From a young age, I enjoyed learning anatomy, which led me to pursue several roles in the physical health field. I worked with P.S.G., a French professional football club, and later as a performance coach training D1 athletes. I also served as an Injury Prevention Specialist in meat-packing plants, educating workers on proper ergonomics, stretching warm-ups, and health practices to reduce injuries, as well as providing first aid care. These experiences solidified my decision to pursue physical therapy as a way to advocate for and serve my community.

I earned my bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from UNO, where I was a member and board leader of the Association of Latino American Students. We organized community service projects such as cleaning up 24th Street, building houses with Habitat for Humanity to support families facing housing insecurity, and attending the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute Conference in Chicago.

Now, as I near graduation with my Doctor of Physical Therapy degree, I'm grateful for the

experiences that have shaped me. Some of my favorite experiences include serving as the PT Student Administrator at the SHARING clinic, a student-run free healthcare clinic for the underserved. As part of the clinic's outreach committee, I also led initiatives to host tabling events at the Cinco de Mayo's and Fiestas Patrias' health fairs. I helped create bilingual pamphlets and connected the public with the clinic's resources. The festivals have an attendance of nearly a quarter of a million people, and it's always a fun time celebrating and supporting the vibrant culture. Other meaningful experiences during my time as a PT student include speaking to high school students during the Backstage Pass event and to the healthcare interns at the Latino Center of the Midlands about the PT profession.

Post-graduation, I will be founding a non-profit organization uniting bilingual, Hispanic professional and aspiring PTs, OTs, and SLPs. With the organization, I plan to create scholarships for bilingual students pursuing these careers; host free bilingual health workshops including education on physical health, navigating the healthcare system, speak at local schools and host networking events. All with the mission to address the language barriers often seen in the diverse city of Omaha.



*Porfirio Garcia-Hernandez, SPT*

Advocating for underserved communities is central to who I am. Growing up, I witnessed firsthand how vulnerable communities were denied the proper care they deserved, and my education is a form of protest. I will continue to listen, to serve, and to use my knowledge to expand access to affordable, equitable healthcare.

I am honored for this recognition and dedicate it to my parents, whose sacrifices made this journey possible. Earning this degree means far more than academic achievement. It's a testament to their never-ending support and resilience. ¡Gracias, papá y mamá, los quiero mucho!



*Pictured (l-r): UNMC Alumni Association associate director Kat Hamilton; Brad Dexter, PT, DPT; Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD; Sara Bills, PT, DPT; Sierra St. Clair, SPT; Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc; Kaitlyn Uwazurike, EdD, PT, DPT; Megan Frazee, PT, DPT; Dawn Venema, PT, PhD; Joseph Siu, PhD*

### **Student awarded Hageman scholarship**

On October 10, 2025, PT3 Sierra St. Clair 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.

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, St. Clair states, "It is truly an honor to receive the Hageman Award. Philanthropy has been a meaningful part of my experience in physical therapy school, and giving back has shaped both my personal growth and my goals as a future physical therapist. I'm grateful to be recognized for something that I care so deeply about."

### Dr. Becker to depart UNMC



*Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD*

Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD has been appointed as the next dean of the School of Health Sciences at the University of South Dakota. As Dean, Dr. Becker will oversee a range of departments that reflect the breadth of health sciences education at USD. These departments include: Addiction Counseling & Prevention, Dental Hygiene, Medical Lab Science, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant Program, Public Health & Health Sciences, Social Work. The School of Health Sciences is also home to the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment and the Interprofessional Education Health Center. She will remain at UNMC until July 3, 2026.

Dr. Becker graduated from the UNMC Physical Therapy Program in 1999 and later earned her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree from the University of South Dakota (2014). She joined the faculty of the UNMC Physical Therapy

Program in 2013. In 2019 she was appointed program director of the Physical Therapy program and in 2020 she was named chair of the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, overseeing the continued success of the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy programs throughout the pandemic.

The PT program has excelled under her leadership and is currently ranked in the top 15% of all U.S. Physical Therapy Programs. Recently the Physical Therapy Program received the full award for reaccreditation, and in 2025 the Occupational Therapy Program achieved full initial accreditation.

Dr. Becker has been recognized as a Distinguished Educator by the UNMC Interprofessional Academy of Educators, and in 2025 received the University of Nebraska President's Excellence Outstanding Teaching Innovation and Creative Activities Award.

Additionally, in 2024, the Physical Therapy Program was recognized with the University of Nebraska President's Excellence University-wide Departmental Teaching Award.

According to associate professor and associate director Sara E. Bills, PT, DPT, "We were incredibly fortunate to have Betsy Becker as our Program Director. Her leadership guided us through both growth and uncertainty, especially during COVID, with a constant focus on students, faculty, and quality education. Betsy challenged and inspired us to grow as educators, scholars, and colleagues, and her passion for innovation and social networks will be felt for years to come. We will miss her greatly at UNMC, but USD is truly lucky to gain her vision and leadership."

Kyle Meyer, PhD, MS, FASAHP, dean of the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions said, "I am immensely grateful to Dr. Becker for her considerable contributions to the CAHP and UNMC. She has had a stellar career at UNMC and I wish her well on the next phase of her leadership journey."

## Dean Meyer transitions to new role at UNMC



*Kyle Meyer, PhD, MS, FASAHP*

Kyle Meyer, PhD, founding dean of the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, has announced his decision to step down next summer, after 20 years of leading allied health at UNMC, and 35 years at UNMC. He will continue as interim assistant vice chancellor for health care workforce education and relations. In this role, he works to oversee and expand the team in the Office of Rural Health, ensure continuous leadership to bring the Kearney expansion project to fruition and continue to pursue the expansion and training of preceptors in UNMC's rural Nebraska communities.

In 1991, he was hired by his former UNMC physical therapy program classmate, Pat Hageman, PT, PhD, to return to his alma mater as a faculty member. In 2006, he was tapped to lead the School of Allied Health Professions, then a unit within the UNMC College of Medicine, as associate dean. Under his leadership, the former school eventually became UNMC's sixth college in 2015, joining medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and public health. That year, he was named founding dean by then-Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. [Read the full article.](#)

Physical Therapy Program Director Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD states, "I first knew Dean Meyer as a faculty member when I was a physical therapy student and later returned as faculty and program director under his leadership as dean. Seeing his impact from both perspectives, I can say his leadership shaped not only the growth of the PT program, but also a culture of excellence reflected in the many alumni who continue to be integral to the program's success." And according to Pat Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA, "Dr. Meyer clearly brings the talent, experience, skills and passion to advance the health of Nebraska in his new role as UNMC's Vice Chancellor for Office of Health Workforce Initiatives."

### In His Own Words . . .

I first set foot on the UNMC campus almost 50 years ago as a member of what was then a 16-person class of physical therapy students. I would never have imagined the evolution of the career that followed or how the network of the people I met would shape my future.

One of our faculty members – an Australian developmental pediatrician – who taught us about the treatment of children with special needs – would influence my decision to enter pediatric physical therapy and become a life-long mentor and friend.

One of my classmates would later become the director of the physical therapy program at our alma mater and invite me to join the faculty as the director of clinical education. That role, which I held for 16 years, provided me with a number of leadership opportunities, including serving as the President of the UNMC Faculty Senate. In 2005, I was invited to apply for the associate dean position (the CAHP was at that time a school in the COM).

Few people today know that I turned down the invitation because I was finishing my PhD. But a year later, after the then associate dean had determined to stay on, I was invited apply again... And, as the saying goes, "the rest is history."

What would become an amazing 10-year journey, with many starts, stops, and turns culminated in 2015 with the then School of Allied Health Professions becoming UNMC's sixth health professions college. Coinciding with this event was also the development of a second campus for the CAHP in Kearney.

Beyond becoming a physical therapist, I can say I never aspired to all the things that followed in my career. But as a life-long Nebraskan, I am so proud to be a UNMC and UNO alum and privileged to have witnessed what both institutions have become.

I am immensely grateful for my education in physical therapy at UNMC and the opportunity to have served on the faculty of the program. I have enjoyed a personally meaningful and rewarding career, one I would never have imagined 50 years ago. I am enormously proud of what we have created as the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, and am humbled to have had the opportunity to part of the rich history of allied health education at UNMC.

## Dr. Gossman transitions to more clinical practice



*Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT*

Kellie Gossman, PT, DPT will transition from full- to part-time faculty member effective July 31, 2026. She will stay involved in the program through teaching in labs and a few lectures. She also plans to assist on a weekly basis in the fall and spring semesters for Human Movement 1, Pediatric Physical Therapy, Cardiopulmonary and Integumentary Physical Therapy, TAP Anatomy, and Orthotics and Prosthetics.

Dr. Gossman plans to complement her faculty role with clinical time where she will service as a compression garment and mastectomy fitter as well as helping to fit cranial remolding orthoses. She will also provide physical therapy care, which will include her specialty areas of torticollis, seating and mobility evaluations and post-amputation care.

Dr. Gossman relays one of her best memories of her time as a faculty member at UNMC, “I always love being in the classroom and seeing the lightbulbs turn on when students start to understand the skills that have been taught. From being with the first year students learning mobility training to the second year students starting to put all of the clinical reasoning information together from multiple classes and then watching the third year students walk across the stage, there is such wonderful transformation that I never truly appreciated as a student but I am glad I could see it as a faculty member. My favorite memory is when I dressed up as Ted Lasso. The moustache and all really transformed me into the character, and I loved bringing his wisdom into PHYT 502 but my accents could still use a little improving.”

She concludes, “I have so much gratitude for all the people that I have crossed paths with due to this position. It really is the relationships gained that have been the true blessing and I don't think I can truly express how much I have learned from the time I started. I am forever thankful for the growth that I was able to do while in this full-time position and look forward to continuing to teach as much as I am able.”

[The program is accepting applications for this faculty position.](#)

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## Dr. Woodruff Jameson earns doctorate

Annie Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT, PhD earned her PhD in October 2025 from UNMC's Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area (MSIA) Patient Oriented Research PhD Program. Dr. Woodruff Jameson joined the UNMC physical therapy program faculty as an assistant professor on July 8, 2025. The title of her dissertation project is, “Facilitators of Routine Cervical Screening Receipt for Women With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Nebraska.”

Dr. Woodruff Jameson said, “After graduating from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program, I never thought I would go back to school. However, as I became more established in my clinical career, I started running into questions I could not easily answer. With strong mentorship and support both professionally and personally, those questions eventually led me to enroll in UNMC's MSIA Patient Oriented Research PhD Program. My time in the MSIA program was incredibly important in shaping my research skills and professional goals. It sparked a new excitement for research and, in partnership with



*Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT, PhD*

my dissertation committee, helped me choose experiences and coursework that directly guided the focus of my dissertation. I am very grateful for the opportunity and for the support I received throughout the program. Finishing my PhD has helped me grow as a teacher, researcher, clinician, and colleague, and I am excited to continue learning and building on this foundation.”

## Dr. Uwazurike earns doctorate



*Kait Uwazurike, EdD, PT, DPT*

In December 2025, Dr. Kait Uwazurike earned her EdD from Clarkson College. Dr. Uwazurike has been an assistant professor in the physical therapy program since January 2, 2023.

Dr. Uwazurike's dissertation was a phenomenological qualitative study titled "Investigating Clinical Instructor Experiences in Physical Therapy Education." She states, "Given the growth and development of new physical therapy programs and the resulting concerns about clinical education placement capacity, I wanted to investigate clinical education from the perspective of clinical instructors.

"The study's findings reflected many of the challenges currently documented in the literature, including time constraints, productivity demands, and issues related to professional behaviors. However, the study also revealed key

facilitators of clinical instructor roles, such as the intrinsic reward of fostering student growth and confidence, as well as the importance of supportive workplace environments."

### **How has completing the EdD influenced your teaching?**

My EdD coursework has had a profound impact on my teaching practice. Courses such as Learning Theories and Adult Education Methods and Curriculum and Program Development and Assessment deepened my understanding of how students learn and highlighted the importance of intentional curricular design and ongoing assessment. I also valued courses such as Outcomes of Health Care in a Global Society and Leadership and Diversity, which fostered continued growth in my perspective as both an educator and a health care professional. As a result of this program, I am significantly more confident in my teaching and leadership abilities than I was before beginning the EdD.

### **Is there anyone you'd like to acknowledge who supported you along the way?**

This accomplishment would not have been possible without my husband, Justice, whose constant support and many sacrifices made this all possible. I am also deeply grateful for the guidance of exceptional mentors, including my dissertation chair, Katherine Kirkpatrick, EdD, as well as the encouragement of friends near and far who support me throughout this journey.



*Stacie Christensen, PT, DPT delivers the first holographic box lecture at UNMC.*

### **Dr. Christensen receives award from iEXCEL**

On February 24, 2026, assistant professor Stacie Christensen, PT, DPT received the iEXCEL Teaching Technologies Award. The award is part of the annual iEXCEL Innovation Awards, which recognize faculty, staff, and learners who create and implement new ideas that advance teaching, research, and scholarship through the innovative use of iEXCEL technologies and the resources of the Davis Global Center.

The Teaching Technologies Award specifically highlights individuals who demonstrate leadership in adopting and integrating emerging instructional technologies in meaningful, learner-centered ways. Recipients are selected based on their ability to thoughtfully leverage technology to enhance learning experiences, promote engagement, and contribute to the evolving future of health professions education.

Dr. Christensen received the award for her work in delivering the first holographic box lecture. This lecture was delivered in her Neuromuscular Physical Therapy 1 course. She noted that, “The iWall fundamentally changed how students engaged with the activity. Instead of sitting at desks, students were up, moving, discussing, and actively interacting with content on a large, shared touch surface. The physicality of standing together at the wall promoted conversation, peer teaching, and real-time

decision-making in a way that more closely mirrors clinical environments than traditional classroom formats. The iWall also allowed students to receive immediate feedback during the session, rather than submitting written work and waiting for individualized instructor comments. Importantly, students could compare their reasoning with expert responses in real time, intended to deepen discussion and reflection during the activity.”

Dr. Christensen and associate professor Dawn Venema, PT, PhD have co-taught this content, which focuses on clinical reasoning for selecting functional outcome measures, for several years across both the Omaha and Kearney campuses.



*Jaxon Fagot, SPT and Joley Langford, SPT (Class of 2027) interacting on the iWall during a Hologram lecture.*

Upon reflection, Dr. Christensen states, “The holographic box allowed students at each site to experience us in the same way at the same time, rather than one group being local and the other remote. This created a more equitable and cohesive learning environment and allowed us to maintain our co-teaching dynamic regardless of physical location.

“While the core learning objectives and content of this activity were consistent with previous iterations, the technology enhanced students' engagement with the material and with each other.

“The holographic box ensured that all learners experienced the instructors equally, eliminating the common divide between “in-room” and “remote” participants. This consistency supported engagement and presence across locations and allowed us to explore new ways to facilitate live, distributed learning experiences.

“The iWall increased interactivity by enabling students to work through the clinical reasoning process. Seeing peer responses, discussing rationale aloud, and immediately comparing group thinking to expert reasoning promoted deeper reflection and refinement of clinical decision-making skills. The technology

supported a more active, social, and iterative learning process without changing the foundational goals of the activity. It also served as an important step in exploring future applications of immersive technology for live, interactive teaching.”

When asked what receiving this award means to her, Dr. Christensen replies, “Receiving this award is both affirming and motivating.

I genuinely enjoy educational technology, interactive learning environments, and any opportunity to help students actively develop clinical reasoning skills. This recognition reflects not just a single session but an ongoing commitment to active learning, collaboration, and continual improvement in teaching.

“It is especially meaningful because this work was collaborative, co-taught with Dawn, and developed alongside the iEXCEL team. The award reinforces my belief that thoughtfully integrated technology can enhance engagement without overshadowing pedagogy, and it encourages me to continue exploring innovative ways to create dynamic, learner-centered experiences that prepare students for clinical practice.”

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## Hologram technology further implemented in the PT Program



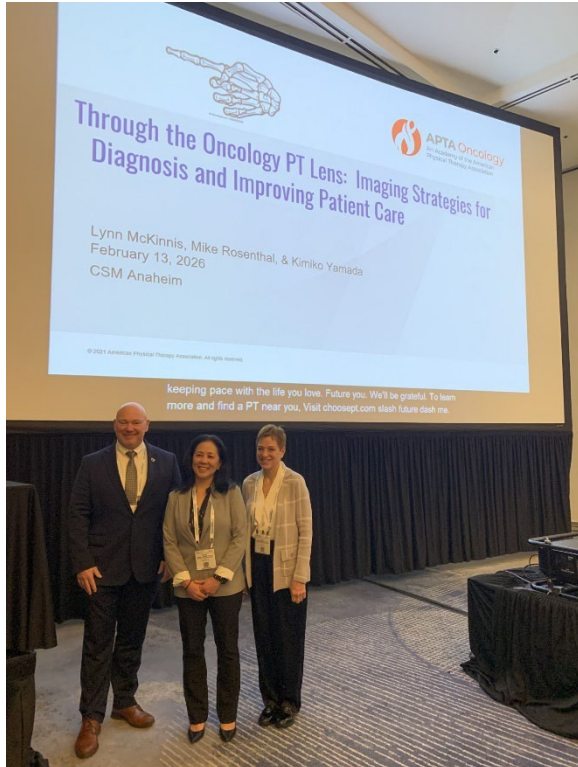
*Assistant professor Brad Dexter, PT, DPT delivers a lecture in Omaha via hologram technology to the Kearney campus.*

In January 2026, assistant professor Brad Dexter, PT, DPT implemented Dr. Christensen's innovation by delivering a lecture in his Neuromuscular Physical Therapy 2 course using hologram technology. The hologram technology

is available on the Omaha campus at the Davis Global Center. It was delivered to PT students on the Kearney campus.

According to Dr. Dexter, “Our physical therapy program serves students in both Omaha and Kearney . . . students noted that seeing the instructor's full body and being able to speak naturally without microphones made the classroom feel more like a live instructor was present. The hologram format allows for more natural communication through eye contact, gesture, and movement, which can enhance demonstrations and connection compared to traditional videoconferencing. This effort wouldn't have been possible without the incredible work of the team at the Davis Global Center, whose creativity and technical expertise made the experience seamless.”

## UNMC participation at APTA Combined Sections Meeting



Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC pictured with co-presenters (l-r) Kimiko Yamada, PT, DPT, OCS, ATC, CLT, CSCS and Lynn McKinnis, PT, DPT, OCS

In February, 2026, the UNMC Physical Therapy Program was well-represented by its faculty and students at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in Anaheim, California.

Dr. Liz Wellsandt was the mentor and senior author for two platform sessions leading one student researcher and one collaborator in the APTA Academy of Sports Physical Therapy.

Associate Professor Mike Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC presented a poster in the academy of orthopedic physical therapy. In addition, Dr. Rosenthal, in collaboration with faculty from the University of Southern California and St. Francis University, gave an education session titled: Through the Oncology PT Lens: Imaging Strategies for Diagnosis and Improving Patient Care.



Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS pictured with (l-r) Chris Johnson, PT, DPT, EdD, CSCS and Taylor Ramaekers, BS, SPT



UNMC PT students pictured at APTA 2026 (l-r): Katelyn Malick, Jaidyn Garrett, Taylor Ramaekers, and Peyton Hatcher

## 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 Fall 2025. Names in bold are faculty members in the Physical Therapy Program.*

### Publications

Romero-Padron MA, Fuentes-Rivera Tau L, Jorgensen A, Tao MA, **Wellsandt EA**. Body-Weight Changes and Physical Activity After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction. *J Athl Train*. 2026;61(3):223-230. doi: 10.4085/1062-6050-0124.25. PMID: 41822342; PMCID: PMC12978143.

Romero-Padron MA, Weldon N, Atteberry M, Werner DM, Kallman T, Tao MA, **Wellsandt E**. Muscle Performance But Not Biomechanics Associate With Second Knee Injury in a Matched Cohort of Athletes Who Passed Functional Return-To-Sport Criteria After ACL Reconstruction. *Knee Surg Sports Traumatol Arthrosc*. Published online December 26, 2025. doi: 10.1002/ksa.70245. PMID: 41451653.

**Sleddens N**, Beam E, Meyer K, Stamler LL, LaFramboise L, Sayles H, Wengel S. Examining the frequency, severity and associated factors of burnout in Nebraska physical therapists. *Physiother Theory Pract*. 2026;42(3):361-377. doi: 10.1080/09593985.2025.2571795. Epub 2025 Oct 15. PMID: 41090522.

**Sleddens NM, Christensen SML, Wells TM**. Done With "EASE" Implementing Curricular Quality Improvement for Acute Care Clinical Readiness in an Entry-Level DPT Program. *J Acute Care Phys Ther*. 2025;16(4):151-158. doi: 10.1097/JAT.000000000000266.

**Wells TM**, Scott-Bell D, Even T, **Venema DM**. Using Motivational Interviewing (MI) to Address Fall Risk - Published Audiovisual Materials. Published online November 2025. [Watch the video](#).

Werner DM, Conlin A, Murray P, Sanny W, Thomsen C, **Wellsandt M**, Weldon N, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Quadriceps Strength and Movement Patterns in Patients After ACLR Who Pass a Clinic-Based Return-to-Sport Testing Battery. *Orthop J Sports Med*. 2026 Feb 10;14(2):23259671251410098. doi: 10.1177/23259671251410098. PMID: 41685041; PMCID: PMC12891422.

**Woodruff Jameson A**, Kelley C, Westmark D, Willett S, Snyder K. Interventions to increase cervical screening rates for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities: a scoping review. *J Intellect Dev Disabil*. 2025;28:1-11. doi: 10.3109/13668250.2025.2567710. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41146585.

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### Presentations

Chinweze R, Johnson C, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Early Grit Assessment Predicts Knee Function At 9 Months After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction - Poster Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Anaheim, CA. 2025 Feb.

**Christensen S**. Management of Patients Post-Stroke: An Evidence Update - Invited Presentation. Minnesota Statewide Stroke Conference; Brooklyn Center, MN 2025 Nov.

Christian E, DeBruin C, Gonzalez L, Montemarano S, **Woodruff Jameson, A**. Self-Advocates as Sexual Health Educators: Benefits and Challenges - Platform Presentation. Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution Regional Conference; Omaha, NE. 2025 Oct.

**Cochran TM**, Naim-Ali HA. Through the Relational Lens: Examining Team Dynamics and Cohesion in Interprofessional Education - Virtual Symposium Presentation. International Relational Coordination Roundtable; Boston MA. 2025 Nov.

**Cochran TM**, Sourial M. AI: A 40K View of Effects on Team Dynamics and Workflow - Virtual Presentation. Fast Track to Teamwork Microlearning Event, American Interprofessional Health Collaborative. 2025 Oct.

**Dexter B**. Early Actions, Lifelong Impact: Practical Tools and Strategies for SCI Rehab Professionals - Platform Presentation. Rehab Week at Methodist Hospital; Omaha, NE. 2025 Oct.

Johnson C, Chinweze R, Pella L, Wimmer G, Almeida L, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Targeting Center of Pressure As a Biomechanical Alteration Following ACL Reconstruction - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Anaheim, CA. 2025 Feb.

Kinnison RL, **Christensen SML**, Goldman AJ, Spellman C. Neuro Rehab in Rural America: Interprofessional Strategies For Implementing Evidence-Based Practice - Educational Session. 5th Annual Conference of the Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy; Omaha, NE. 2025 Oct.

## Presentations continued

Ramaekers T, Jacobi A, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Sex Differences in Gait and Squat Biomechanics After ACL Reconstruction - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Anaheim, CA. 2025 Feb.

**Wellsandt E**. MRI Markers of Cartilage Health: The Effects of Biomechanics and Physical Activity - Invited Presentation. University of Iowa Annual Sports Medicine Symposium; Iowa City, IA. 2025 Dec.

**Wellsandt E**. Rehabilitation after ACL Reconstruction to Prevent Osteoarthritis - Invited Presentation. University of Iowa Annual Sports Medicine Symposium; Iowa City, IA, 2025 Dec.

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## Grants

### Joseph Siu, PhD

Grant Title: Using Machine Learning to Predict Fall Risks in Aging Agricultural Workers Across Farming Seasons.

Funding Agency: NIOSH CS-CASH Center Pilot Grant

Start and End Dates: 2025 – 2026

Role: Primary Investigator

### Dawn Venema, PT, PhD

Grant Title: CATCH RURAL Falls: Coordinated Action Toward Community Health: RedUce Risk And Limit Falls and CAPTURE Falls: Collaboration and Proactive Teamwork Used to Reduce Falls.

Funding Agency: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program.

Start and End Dates: September 2025 – August 2026

Role: Co-Primary Investigator (Co-PI: Victoria Kennel, PhD)

### Dawn Venema, PT, PhD and Michael Rosenthal, PT, DSc, ATC

Grant Title: Which Test Passes the Test? Using Validity Indices in Clinical Decision Making

Funding Agency: E-Learning Funded Awards Program; UNMC Office of Interactive E-Learning

Start and End Dates: November 2025 – April 2026

Role: Faculty Director

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## Patent

Nelson C, Oleynikov D, **Siu KC**, Zahir M. Camera Aided Simulator for Minimally Invasive Surgical Training. No. 12,154,455.

## Giving Day

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! [Donations are still being accepted.](#)

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