Two Physical Therapy researchers honored

Joseph F. Norman, PT, PhD, CCS, FAACVPR, professor and program director of the UNMC physical therapy education program received a 2016 UNMC Distinguished Scientist Award. The Distinguished Scientist Award, which is sponsored by the chancellor, recognizes researchers who have been among the most productive scientists in the country during the past five years. Dr. Norman’s research focus is chronic heart failure. Read about Dr. Norman’s research.

Laura Bilek, PT, PhD, College of Allied Health Professions’ associate dean for research, received a 2016 UNMC New Investigator Award. New Investigator Awards go to outstanding UNMC scientists who in the past two years have secured their first funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense or other national sources. New Investigators also had to demonstrate scholarly activity such as publishing their research and/or presenting their findings at national conventions. Dr. Bilek’s research focus is chronic disease prevention. Read about Dr. Bilek’s research.

Drs. Norman and Bilek were honored at a ceremony on January 17 in the Durham Research Center Auditorium at UNMC. Congratulations, Joe and Laura!

The National Academies of Practice (NAP) elected College of Allied Health Professions (CAHP) executive associate dean, Gregory M. Karst, PT, PhD, to Distinguished Fellowship in Physical Therapy.

“This is a tremendous honor for Dr. Karst and the College,” said CAHP dean, Kyle Meyer, PhD. “The recognition is particularly meaningful and deserving given Dr. Karst’s long-standing commitment to interprofessional education and practice.”

The NAP is a non-profit organization founded in 1981 to advise governmental bodies on our healthcare system. Peers from fourteen different health professions elect distinguished practitioners and scholars to join the only interprofessional group of healthcare practitioners and scholars dedicated to supporting affordable, accessible, coordinated quality healthcare for all.

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Recruitment as a Distinguished Scholar and Fellow within NAP is a very high honor that acknowledges outstanding achievements and leadership. It denotes recognition by colleagues in one’s own profession and those in other academies of NAP. The formal induction ceremony took place during the NAP Annual Meeting and Forum, March 17-18 in Philadelphia, PA, this year.

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**Faculty News**  
  
**Becker starts new year with a bang**

Betsy Becker, PT, DPT, CLT-LANA, assistant professor in the Division of Physical Therapy Education, started 2017 with a grant and a new book!

Dr. Becker was selected to receive a grant from the Education Section of the American Physical Therapy Association for her research project, Early Career Faculty LINK: Leveraging Individual Network Knowledge.

This study will explore early career physical therapy faculty in programs across the country about their perceptions of their professional network as it relates to their scholarly agenda. The project will use social network analysis to explore their network connections. More information about early stages of the project can be found on our website.

Additionally, Dr. Becker is co-editor, along with Lisa Marie Bernardo, PhD, MPH, RN, CER, CCET, at the University of Pittsburgh, of Integrating Physical Activity into Cancer Care: An Evidence-Based Approach. Dr. Becker also wrote four of the chapters on the topics of assessing motivation, readiness and physical considerations for physical activity, creating and evaluating physical activity programs, and resources and support groups for cancer survivors.

“Physical activity has many benefits, and integrating it safely into cancer care is essential,” said Becker. The book (available at this link) is a result of a cross-country collaboration of an interprofessional team of experts in physical activity for cancer survivors. This includes several UNMC faculty content experts: a chapter by Ann Berger, PhD, APRN, AOCNS, FAAAN, Professor and Dorothy Hodges Olson Endowed Chair in the UNMC College of Nursing, as well contributions from Sara Bills, PT, DPT, GCS and Grace C. Johnson, PT, DPT, MS, OCS in the Division of Physical Therapy Education, former DPT Students, Kelly McCormick, Olivia Huffman, and Kara Tischer, Fran Higgins, MA, ADWR, Communications and Media, CAHP, and Susanne Liewer, PharmD, BCOP, College of Pharmacy.
Kudos from NASA
Division of Physical Therapy Education associate professor, Ka-Chun “Joseph” Siu, PhD, and post-doc, Jung Hung “JC” Chien, PhD, attended the annual NASA Human Research Program conference with a few exciting successes!

“Our MOBILE MOtion CApture system (MO2CA) project poster received the highest recognition,” said Dr. Siu.

Dr. Chien also received special recognition with the NASA Space Biomedical Research Institute (NSBRI) Dr. David Watson Post-doc Fellow Poster Award.

“The college is thrilled for Drs. Siu and Chien for this prestigious recognition,” said CAHP dean Kyle Meyer, PhD.

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PT2 student, Melissa Parks, was also a part of the MO2CA project.

Associate dean for research, Laura Bilek, PhD, added, “This well-deserved recognition is the result of considerable dedication and hard work!”

Student News
Straube wins prestigious scholarship
Physical therapy student Jamie Straube was one of 12 students nationally to earn Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions Scholarships of Excellence. The awards go to students deemed to have significant potential to assume future leadership roles in allied health.

Jamie was chosen by the ASAHP scholarship committee because she epitomizes academic achievement, service to her school and to the community, leadership, diversity in activities, and evidence of strong communication skills.

PT student participates in forum
On March 4, PT2 Keriann Shaw presented her poster, “Filing the gap. Clinical skill acquisition with interactive online modules to supplement traditional instruction” at this year’s Midwest Student Biomedical Research Forum, hosted by the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University. Ms. Shaw will also present this poster in June at the APTA NEXT Conference in Boston, MA.
PT students awarded grants
Two first year physical therapy students have been awarded CAHP Student Research and Education Innovation grants.

Katelyn Hedlund will work with faculty advisor Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS, to develop a clinical test that can be used to detect movement asymmetries in patients after an ACL injury.

Emilie Hicks will work with faculty advisor Ka-Chun “Joseph” Siu, PhD, to determine the effectiveness of accelerometers in determining gait abnormalities.

Student Updates
Joint Effort
The 23rd annual Joint Effort Volleyball Tournament was held on February 10, 2017, at Nebraska Elite Sports and Fitness Complex in Omaha. The event, hosted by physical therapy students from UNMC and Creighton University, raised $5,235.00 to donate to the Nebraska Arthritis Foundation.

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APTA Combined Sections Meeting
San Antonio, Texas, was the site of the American Physical Therapy Association’s 2017 Combined Sections Meeting (CSM), February 15-18. Thirty-two second year physical therapy students from UNMC traveled south to take part in the biggest physical therapy conference in the United States. The schedule consisted of attending sessions by well-known practitioners, observing novel concepts, contemplating innovative treatments, and reviewing the latest research. Students also had the opportunity to network with physical therapists and students from around the country, while also taking time to explore San Antonio including the Riverwalk and the Alamo.
Alumni News

Embracing All Abilities

As a Physical Therapist at Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk, Nebraska, 2012 UNMC Alumnus Emily Afrank, PT, DPT, works with a wide range of ages and disabilities and specializes in pediatric physical therapy. She has helped children learn to roll, sit, crawl and eventually wheel or walk. Many of her pediatric patients need some type of assistive device, such as a walker or forearm crutches.

Emily watched her pediatric patients meet goals in therapy, but would hear their parents’ frustrations that their children were not able to enjoy the same parks as other able-bodied children in their hometown. This is where the dream of an all-inclusive park began to develop. Emily researched similar parks throughout Nebraska and began the journey of obtaining approval by the city. In late 2015, she secured land and embarked on fundraising.

“Kids who do have a disability were so limited in our community and couldn’t play with the equipment here. We wanted to bring a park here where they could play, and also keep in mind to have something there for their siblings and friends to play with, and that’s what Embrace Park does,” says Afrank.

Construction is planned for spring 2017 and will take approximately six to eight weeks to build, weather permitting. Embrace Park will have a fully accessible, multi-level playground with specialized equipment that allows children of all abilities to play together. This includes, but is not limited to, a slide for kids who use wheelchairs, adaptive swings, a merry-go-round with adaptive seats, accessible, large musical instruments and sensory boards. An all-inclusive, free splash pad will also be added for use during the hot summer days of Nebraska.

Over $600,000 has been raised through donations and grants and only $100,000 is needed to complete the project. The whole community has come together to make this dream a reality, and Afrank is pleased that the project has brought together a diverse population on such an important project. “It’s exciting to see that others share the same passion I have for these kids.”

To donate, go to the Norfolk Area Community Foundation Fund online and click on the Embrace Park Account (http://www.nebcommfound.org/affiliated-funds/donate/1937/).

Follow updates on the Embrace Park Public Group on Facebook. For more information, you may contact Emily Afrank at eafrank@frhs.org or 402-644-7396.

For her efforts in making Embrace Park a reality in Norfolk, Nebraska, Emily Afrank has recently been awarded a 2017 Philanthropy Award by the Philanthropy Council of Northeast Nebraska. Well done, Emily!

What’s it like to be a physical therapy student at UNMC?

Our physical therapy students want to show the world what it’s like to be a PT student at UNMC in this short video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4x2jN4OEIk

Emily Afrank
College of Allied Health Professions All-College Alumni Reunion 2017

Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future

June 10, 2017 | Omaha Campus

Mark your calendars and help us celebrate 45 years of educating allied health professionals! Continuing Education, Open Houses, Reception, and Distinguished Alumni Awards.

For more information and to register, call 402.559-4385 or visit unmc.edu/alumni.

Join us on facebook.com/groups/CAHPreunion2017.

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A total of 64 teams from around the Midwest began playing at 6:00 p.m. on Friday night and the champions were crowned at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday morning.

Joint Effort co-chair and UNMC SUN-APTA president Kenda Frenzel said, “Joint Effort has been an amazing and fun way to facilitate relationships between Creighton and UNMC PT programs, as well as promote physical therapy and arthritis research to the public. Arthritis is a disease that impacts so many lives, and as future physical therapists it’s a great feeling knowing that we are helping raise awareness by getting involved in the community.”

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