

MOVING

FORWARD

AHS YEAR IN REVIEW 2022



The Future is HERE

Chez Veterans Center director Andrew Bender is one of the new leaders blazing trails for AHS

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Message from the Dean



Nelson Mandela once said, “Our human compassion binds us to one another—not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”

As I write this in December, people around the world with diverse beliefs are celebrating Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and even Festivus, “for the rest of us.” Regardless of their religious, cultural, or comedic foundations, what all of these celebrations share in common is a sense of hope. The challenges and worries of the preceding year dim in the light of gatherings with friends and family, the sharing of traditions, and a belief that a new year will bring new

opportunities to make things better for ourselves and for others.

I believe hope goes hand-in-hand with vision, which Oxford Languages describes as “the ability to think about or plan the future with wisdom and imagination.” We have many visionaries among the faculty and staff of the College of Applied Health Sciences. Two whom we added recently are Andrew Bender, director of operations and services at the Chez Veterans Center, and Pedro Hallal, professor of kinesiology and community health and director of the Master of Public Health degree program. You will meet them in this issue of *Moving Forward*. Each has brought an abundance of creativity and energy to his position and a well-constructed strategic plan for making his program a national and international leader. I am so excited to see the realization of their hopes for the future.

Hope is not only about the distant future, however. Every day, tomorrow is the future. Every day, our research and academic programs focus on changing lives. Our students address current challenges and issues related to health and quality of life, such as access, chronic disease, disability, and aging, in classes that take them into

local communities and research labs. Our scholars pursue interdisciplinary studies that both advance theory and knowledge and translate into effective interventions and outreach programs. It is the immediacy of the work people are doing in our college that brings about individual and societal change. We’ll tell you about some of that work in this magazine.

By the time you receive this, we will have embarked upon a new calendar year. It is my fervent hope that 2023 is a year of peace and good health for all, a year in which we embrace our brothers and sisters around the world and grow in our understanding of and compassion for others. It will be my privilege once again to lead this outstanding college through another year of making a difference. On behalf of AHS, I’d like to thank you for your continued support. Please make sure to stop by and say hello if you are ever on campus.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl".

Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, Dean
College of Applied Health Sciences

Bender has a vision for the Chez Veterans Center

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

The theme of **Andrew Bender's** life—to this point—has been purpose. So it is no surprise that in his first few months as the director of operations at the Chez Veterans Center (CVC), his primary goal has been to build onto the existing purpose for his new professional home.

“When I think of my vision, the purpose of the Chez Veterans Center is to make student Veterans’ lives better. I have to convince a lot of people that that’s truly our purpose—or they have to convince me that the purpose is different,” said Bender, who was named to his post in July 2022.

“In the military, we always said, ‘Task and purpose.’ If I know that, I can accomplish anything you want. That’s what shapes me in terms of how I go about my life, and especially how I work in organizations. Why am I doing this, and what’s the benefit of it? What is the outcome that we want?”

Bender succeeded Reggie Alston, the associate dean of academic affairs for the College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS) who was interim director of the Chez Veterans Center for four years. Alston is not a Veteran; CVC lead benefactor Ron Chez, an Illinois alum, spoke to AHS Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell during the

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search for a permanent leader and stressed that it was critical to find someone with a connection to the armed forces to lead his eponymous center.

Chez’s \$6 million pledge was the lead gift in the fundraising project for the Veterans Center. In an interview with the *News-Gazette* in 2015, former AHS Dean Tanya Gallagher called Chez’s donation “instrumental in moving the project forward. Actually, essential.” So when AHS administration sought a new leader, Chez was consulted, and made clear what he thought made sense.

“We talked about the construct of whatever the capabilities would be of the next person who would lead operations,” said the philanthropist and owner of a financial management consulting corporation. “I thought it was important that he have a military background.”

Bender, who served in the U.S. Army and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel, fit the bill. He came to the CVC from the University of Illinois’ Career Center, where he served as the associate director for operations and strategic initiatives. Prior to coming to Illinois, Bender worked as a workforce development manager for the McLean County (Ill.) Chamber of Commerce, and as an operations manager and learning and development manager for Amazon.

Bender, who is 48, enjoyed his time at the Career Center, but when he saw the Chez job posting, he couldn’t deny the fit.

“It’s serving a population of people who I respect and hold in the highest regard and who I think are unique on a college campus. There is so much programming for different groups on campus, and very little for Veterans. If there’s ever been an underrepresented group on a college campus, it’s probably Veterans.”

Dean Hanley-Maxwell had no doubts about Bender’s abilities.

“The scope of [his] work was different from anybody else I had talked with,” she said. “He seemed to understand from a systems perspective as well as from the individual



perspective as well as from the student perspective. I think it has to do with the breadth of his background, and all the various groups he's had to connect with and manage over the years.

"There was something about Andy where, when I was interviewing him, I was able to say, 'Now, I want to make sure you know what the challenges are that are associated with the Center.' Andy was so clearly the right person that I felt like I needed to give him as

much information as I could, before he made his own decision."

Bender feels his military experience is as important as his shift to civilian life in terms of relating to the student Veteran population.

"My transition wasn't the easiest, and because of the experience I had and what I learned, I really feel like I could come back and say, 'OK, I've been there, and so we can work together with the students or with

the staff to create a transformative experience that lets their transition be easier and lets their life be easier," he commented. "That's really what it was, to continue to serve, to give back, and really, hopefully make a difference for these students that were trying to bring in and help."

Bender can also speak knowledgeably on the environments of working within a military structure, as well within a large corporation and an academic setting.

“

WE HAVE A CENTRAL PLACE WHERE WE CAN COMBINE THESE TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL. WE HAVE TO TELL OUR STORY, GET IT OUT THERE, ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE TO US, SO THAT WE CAN GROW AND DO THE THINGS THAT WE KNOW ARE IMPORTANT.”



“I think the huge difference is, again, the purpose,” he said. “In the military it’s easy. You become close to the soldiers and the mission. You believe in what you’re doing. I don’t know if corporate America has that. I worked at Amazon for two and a half years, and the purpose just wasn’t there. I didn’t believe in what they were doing or why they were doing it.

“Academia is completely different. I think the purpose is good. We’re here to make people better and further that knowledge and advance society. It’s got a stronger purpose.”

That said, he recognizes changes are needed—imperative, even—to set the CVC on the proper trajectory.

“I’m a firm believer in continuous improvement, as I think the dean is, and as I think the staff is. The Veteran population that we want to serve has changed. So what does our new Veteran look like? Do we understand what their needs are? The military has changed significantly in response to our current social needs. Their needs coming out of the military are going to be completely different than what I experienced.”

Bender grew up in northern New York, the son and grandson of Veterans and an Army brat himself. He knows one of the most important things to

I WANT TO HAVE IMPACTFUL CHANGE ON STUDENT-VETERANS’ LIVES, WITH THE GOALS OF BEING NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR OUR RESEARCH, AND BEING THE MODEL INSTITUTION FOR HOW TO SERVE, SUPPORT, PROTECT AND CARE FOR STUDENT VETERANS ON CAMPUS.”

track is whether the CVC is adapting to a new Veteran population.

“I think we really have to get better at people knowing us. We are the only institution of its kind in the country that I can find. No one does it like us. There are some institutions that are really, really good at research, and that’s what they do. There are some institutions that are really good at maybe the VA stuff, and that’s what they do.

“We’re really good at all of it, and we have it in a central place where we can combine these transformative experiences for the individual with our research, with our educational aspect. We have to tell our story, get it out there, attract more people to us, both students and supporters, so that we can grow and do the things that we know are important.”

Like any new administrator, Bender has short- and long-term goals. The short term, of course, involves

defining a purpose. The longer-term goal is more complex.

“I have to convince the administration, the campus, donors ... what the Center really, truly is. I want to have impactful change on student-Veterans’ lives, with the goals of being nationally recognized for our research, and being the model institution for how to serve, support, protect, and care for student Veterans on campus.”

Bender has a believer in his benefactor.

“I feel good about what he’s thinking about,” Ron Chez said. “I’m in favor of the center being a gathering place for Veterans, a constructive gathering place for Veterans with respect to any of the variety of problems that they incur.”

Healthy Ambitions

Hallal seeks international recognition for MPH program

By Anna Flanagan

Pedro Hallal has set an ambitious agenda for his first year as director of the Master of Public Health program within the College of Applied Health Sciences at Illinois.

First, he wants to energize the advisory committee. “I want external people providing us with good suggestions,” he said. “I want that peer review of our work, and people frankly telling us what we need to do to move forward.” He also will spend part of his time gathering the knowledge he needs to develop an online MPH degree.

Having an online presence will help Hallal—who in March 2023 was awarded the Alvin M. and Ruth L. Sandall Professorship of Kinesiology—achieve another objective he has set for the MPH program: Taking the program to an international audience. “Public health needs to be where people are,” he said. “A large proportion of the world’s population lives in low and middle income countries and they would benefit heavily from being connected to our MPH program.” Having an international reach will increase the diversity of the MPH student body, something else that deeply interests Hallal.

“Having students from different countries, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds will contribute to a

broader understanding of the public health issues that affect diverse people and communities,” he said.

With experience at the Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil, as both the director of the Master of Public Health program and university president, Hallal came to AHS uniquely qualified to take the helm of Illinois’ MPH program. The program in Brazil was consistently ranked first in the country and among the best in the world, and Hallal has every intention of leading the Illinois program to a similar ranking.

As he did in Brazil, Hallal will encourage students to “feel 100 percent free” to give feedback and constructive criticism about the program and its courses, believing that the more students engage, the more successful the program will be. He began reaching out to the public health community across the country at the November 2022 conference of the American Public Health Association, and plans to seek alliances in the coming months with other public health graduate programs as well. He is particularly interested in strengthening a partnership between the Urbana-Champaign program and the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois Chicago.



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“The University of Illinois system has one of the best public health programs in this country,” he said. “I want us to partner with Chicago so they can help us grow.”

With a combination of outstanding courses that prepare students to address real public health challenges—including mental health, global warming, chronic diseases, brain health and equity—an excellent faculty, and a diverse student body, Hallal believes Illinois’ MPH program will be among the best in the nation within the next five years. He credits kinesiology and community health colleague Laura Rice with doing an amazing job as interim director to set him up for success.

“She was fantastic at addressing past and present challenges so that when I began my term, we were ready to think about the future,” he said.



Q&A

Meet **Pedro Hallal**



Pedro Hallal completed an undergraduate degree in kinesiology and a Master of Public Health degree and Ph.D. in epidemiology at the Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil. A professor of epidemiology, he served as the university's president for four years and also directed both the MPH and Ph.D. degree programs in epidemiology.

Moving Forward spoke recently with Hallal about his research interests and what drew him to Illinois.

Q: What got you interested in physical activity as a research area?

A: Physical inactivity is an underappreciated risk factor for chronic disease—it's as bad as smoking is for your health. We have evidence that more than 5 million deaths per year are caused by inactivity.

My work goes into five main areas: the surveillance of physical activity, identifying what proportion of the population is physically inactive; the correlates and determinants of physical activity, or why some people are active and others are not; health consequences of physical activity; interventions to promote physical activity; and physical activity policy.

Q: You also were the principal investigator on the largest study of COVID-19 in Brazil.

A: We started collecting data in March 2020. The study covered 133 cities across all 27 Brazilian states, and the sample size over three waves of data collection was nearly 100,000 randomly sampled people, who were interviewed in their homes. We found

that there were three times more cases in Brazil at the community level than was reported in the official statistics, and that low-income individuals were twice as likely to be infected as high-income individuals. Indigenous populations were at a much higher risk of infection than their white peers. We also found that a symptom that few people were talking about at that time—the loss of smell or taste—was present in around 60 percent of the infections in Brazil.

Q: What attracted you to the position in AHS?

A: The environment. The Illinois approach is more personal. The environment seems to be really friendly. It's less individual and more collective. I think that is the one thing that made the difference. This is a place where there is room for improvement in the MPH program, the university infrastructure as a whole is fantastic, and I prefer small cities. I think the combination of the family environment and the size made me motivated to apply here.



Stodolska Named Brightbill/Sapora Professor

By Anna Flanagan

How does a scholar with a master's degree in geography and a Ph.D. in earth and atmospheric sciences end up teaching and doing research in leisure studies?

By pursuing the passion for understanding the relationship between culture and leisure that began in their graduate work.

At Warsaw University in Poland, **Monika Stodolska** focused her master's degree on tourism development in Peru and received a post-graduate diploma in Latin American studies. Her doctoral research at the University of Alberta investigated leisure among ethnic and racial minorities in Canada. Since completing her Ph.D., she has continued to pursue her passion as a professor of recreation, sport and tourism, building an outstanding record of scholarly and professional contributions over the last 23 years. In 2022, she was named the Brightbill/Sapora Professor in Applied Health Sciences.

"I have always been interested in Latinx cultures and issues of cultural change that are related to migrations," she said. "This merged with my interest in how leisure among diverse groups contributes to individual and community health and well-being."

Stodolska's research is guided by developing theory in the areas of leisure, culture, ethnicity and race and by pressing social issues such as lack of access to natural environments in urban areas and discrimination. She has investigated how leisure helps minorities to retain their culture, achieve socioeconomic advancement, adapt to host environments, develop a sense of belonging and improve their mental and physical health. She also has examined how crime, low socioeconomic standing and undocumented status impose constraints on leisure.

"Investigating factors that help underprivileged members of our society to live healthy and fulfilling lives is incredibly rewarding in and of itself," Stodolska said.

She cited two studies as among the most meaningful to her. In the most recent study, Stodolska returned to her homeland to examine the experiences of refugees, largely women and children, who fled to Poland after being displaced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In what she termed a "truly unprecedented refugee crisis," more than six million people have crossed the Polish border since February, and almost two million remain. Many of them are living with Polish families.



Through interviews with refugees, hosts and volunteers, Stodolska is investigating how the refugees are adapting to their new lives and the role of leisure in helping them deal with war-related trauma, as well as the Polish population's response to the crisis. Based on the findings of her study, she hopes to write a book and to contribute toward the design of refugee-centered recreation programs.

The other study, funded by the Call to Action to End Systemic Racism and the Urbana Park District (UPD), followed up on a study she and former RST professor Kim Shinew had done in 2017 that identified strategies for improving access to UPD programs and services for diverse communities.

The 2021-22 study evaluated the changes the district had implemented and resulted in a blueprint for serving these communities that will be distributed to other recreation agencies in the United States.

Until Shinew's retirement, she and Stodolska had a dynamic research partnership for more than 20 years. Of the partnership, Stodolska said, "We had different personalities but we worked together seamlessly. Our research interests are very similar, we have similar values, we care about communities and we care about underrepresented populations." They also collaborated on establishing the Diversity Research Lab in 2001, when scholarship on leisure and recreation among racial and ethnic minorities was in its infancy. Alumni of the lab now hold leadership positions in leisure education, research and practice. Stodolska's approach to mentoring graduate students is simple.

"I treat them like family. I expect them to form a non-competitive community and to support each other, and the relationships they form are incredibly strong," she said.

It is the same kind of environment Stodolska has found in RST, which she calls "truly my home." While she has received many honors during her time at Illinois—a Larine Y. Cowan Make a Difference Award for Teaching and Mentoring in Diversity, Fellow status in the Academy of Leisure Sciences, the King James McCristal Scholar Award for Excellence in Research—it is her work with students that gives her the most pride.

"At the end of our careers, we won't be remembered by the number of papers or the books that we've written but by the impact we've had on people and whether we've used this privilege of professorship to leave the world a slightly better place," she said.

With all the projects she has yet to complete, the end of Stodolska's career is far in the future. Wars, poverty and political instability all lead to migrations, and inequality is entrenched in U.S. and Western societies. Given leisure's critical role in helping underprivileged members of society live better lives, she anticipates being busy for many years to come.

A distinguished legacy

The Brightbill/Sapora Professorship honors two of the most important figures in the development of national and international consciousness of the benefits of recreation for individuals and communities: **Charles Brightbill and Allen Sapora.**

Charles Brightbill, the first head of the Department of Recreation, was at the forefront of the local, state, national and international parks and recreation movement. In his writings, still cited today, he demonstrates a deep understanding of the challenges of leisure and expresses a profound philosophy related to the recreation and park profession. Allen Sapora's service and leadership were critical to the development of countless park and recreation programs here in the United States and abroad. He was instrumental in establishing the Department of Recreation at the University of Illinois, and later served as head of the department.

Trailblazers

Physics Ph.D. student works with DRES to pioneer a paradigm shift in accessibility

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

As one of the few Deaf people working in physics, University of Illinois doctoral candidate **Colin Lualdi** understands the importance of being willing to blaze a trail by going first—something the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) at Illinois does every day.

Thanks to accessibility arrangements made by DRES and the organizers of last fall's Single Photon Workshop, Lualdi was able to engage in many extremely productive scientific discussions at the workshop held at the Korea Institute of Science and Technology in Seoul, South Korea.

DRES support enabled two ASL interpreters to accompany Lualdi to Korea for both the conference and visits to the laboratories of scientific collaborators. Lualdi said the American Sign Language interpreters (ASL) provided by DRES allowed him to have discussions that “have proved extremely helpful in furthering my professional career as my interactions with other scientists have opened up several opportunities for future collaboration.”

Lualdi arrived on the Urbana-Champaign campus in 2017 after completing his undergraduate work at Princeton. He was elated by the prospect of doing research in the physics program within The Grainger

Physics professor Paul Kwiat, left, and Ph.D. student Colin Lualdi pose in the laboratory at the Loomis Laboratory of Physics in Urbana. (Photo by L. Brian Stauffer)



IT'S AMAZING TO SEE HOW THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS HAS ADOPTED AND PIONEERED THAT PARADIGM IN PROVIDING ACCESS. FIGURING OUT HOW TO PROVIDE ACCESS AT THIS LEVEL CAN SOMETIMES BE A CHALLENGE, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS IS REALLY A LEADER IN THAT SPACE.”

College of Engineering, but found the lack of established approaches for communication access at the graduate level challenging.

“In an undergraduate (setting), communication access is relatively straightforward,” he said, through DRES staff interpreter Amy Kinser. “Student shows up to class, interpreter

shows up to class. Learning tends to take place in more structured and localized settings. But for a Ph.D. student, it's different. A lot of educational experiences take place through incidental learning from events like conferences where you're sharing research findings, networking, building career opportunities.



“The biggest difference between being an undergraduate and a Ph.D. student is that an undergrad student is generally focused on learning information that is already well-known.

“As a Ph.D. candidate—as a researcher—you are on the cutting edge of your field. There is no textbook with complete answers for your research. Learning often involves talking with other researchers—with other people in your field—to find out what they’re learning, and to do that knowledge generation together, which is a very different kind of educational interaction requiring a novel approach to access.”

ASL is Lualdi’s primary means of communication. Until working with Lualdi, the small number of ASL-English interpreters working with DRES had minimal physics exposure and limited experience working at the graduate level.

He stressed that what DRES is doing “really is a new paradigm. It’s amazing to see how the University of Illinois has adopted and pioneered that paradigm in providing access. Figuring out how to provide access at this level

I REMEMBER THAT WHEN I FIRST CAME TO VISIT AS A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT, I WAS REALLY IMPRESSED WITH DRES’ COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY, ESPECIALLY FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS.”

can sometimes be a challenge, and the University of Illinois is really a leader in that space.”

Lualdi chose Illinois because of his desire to work with professor Paul Kwiat, who is now his advisor.

Kwiat’s research group is working on fundamental research in quantum information science, a field poised to revolutionize computing and communications technologies. Although working with Kwiat was the primary deciding factor, Lualdi was aware of DRES and its services in choosing Illinois, and has seen DRES evolve in his time on campus.

“I remember that when I first came to visit as a prospective student, I was really impressed with

DRES’ commitment to accessibility, especially for wheelchair users,” he said. “Coming in as a Ph.D. student in physics, my access needs were a little bit different from those of an undergraduate. [DRES] seemed very motivated and very willing to provide the accommodations that I needed, and I was confident that we could work together to develop an entirely new paradigm to fit my needs. It was clear that we could figure out what access looked like for a Ph.D. student.”

Lualdi said arranging new accommodations was a learning process for both sides.

“It was new for me coming in as a Ph.D. student. It’s new for many of the staff at DRES. It would be new for almost any university, and DRES was clearly very willing to be open-minded, to consider new ways of providing access. That’s something that I think really says a lot about Illinois’ commitment to diversity and inclusion. This trip—this conference—is a perfect example of that mindset.”

SPEECH & HEARING SCIENCE



*SHS Associate Professor Pasquale Bottalico
visited the Illini Union to educate students about
the proper sound level for their headphones.*



Play it **By Ear**

Braun encouraged by FDA hearing aid decision

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

A decision by the Food and Drug Administration that permits hearing aids to be sold without consulting a medical professional could be a positive development, Speech and Hearing Science audiologist **Sadie Braun** said.

But, as she's fond of saying, consumers might have to "play it by ear."

The FDA ruling, which took effect on Oct. 17, 2022, allows adults with mild or moderate hearing loss to purchase a hearing aid without prescription. The ruling will create more competition and lead to quick technology advancements and lower device costs, but without FDA approval a company cannot classify its product as a "hearing aid."

Per the FDA, the devices covered are air-conduction hearing aids, which fit either in the ear canal or sit behind the ear. While there are plenty of positives to the new rule, it is important to stress that hearing aids are not a one-size-fits-all proposition, Braun said.

"I am a little nervous about the idea that some people who are self-diagnosing may not actually have a mild-to-moderate hearing loss," she said. "More importantly, I'm worried

that by removing audiologists and ear, nose and throat doctors from that process altogether, that patients might not get the care that they need for some of those more significant auditory and medical conditions that can be related to the ears and can be very serious if left untreated, such as acoustic neuromas and Ménière's disease, to name a couple."

While Braun recommends that anyone who is considering trying an over-the-counter device make an appointment with an audiologist, she believes the ruling will end up being a good thing for "our patients, for audiology, and for the hearing aid industry on the whole."

The average price for a pair of prescription hearing aids is \$4,600, but OTC hearing aids are expected to cost far less.

The federal government estimates Americans could save up to \$3,000 on hearing aids by choosing OTC brands rather than prescription devices. If that's the case, the average cost for a pair of OTC hearing aids would be around \$1,600.

One wrinkle is that there are now several different devices that can be used to amplify sound for a multitude of purposes. These include hearing

aids and Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs), and it can be difficult for consumers to differentiate between them.

"The big difference with PSAPs is that they are not meant to treat hearing loss," Braun said. "They are actually for normal-hearing individuals only. And they're therefore not classified as medical devices. Instead, they're considered electronic products. Because of this, they are not regulated at all by the FDA."

Braun cautions that we are in the early stages of the understanding of the rules, and she stresses the need for professional guidance.

"Each person has a different and unique set of needs," she said. "Some individuals can navigate that process on their own and potentially be successful with over-the-counter devices. I think that other individuals really need that guidance of a professional to help them through the entire process from start to finish and to be there for support and assistance the entire way. Over-the-counter hearing aids cut out the service component, and that professional service component is what a lot of patients really rely heavily on."



Q&A

Hearing loss expert Fatima Husain 'delighted' by over-the-counter hearing aids

By Jenna Kurtzweil | Beckman Institute

Fatima Husain is an associate professor of speech and hearing science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and an expert in the physical, social, and emotional aspects of hearing loss. She's also a researcher at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, where she uses magnetic resonance imaging to understand how hearing loss and tinnitus impact the brain.

In this Q&A, Husain explains how access to affordable hearing aids could offer unique opportunities for individuals with tinnitus, turn the tide on social stigma, and contribute to a competitive industry and a collaborative research frontier.

Q: As a scientist studying hearing loss, what was your initial response to this news?

A: I have been looking forward to this for a long time! I would have been happy to see OTC hearing aids in stores 10 years ago, and I am delighted they're available now.

Q: According to the FDA's final rule on OTC hearing aids, "only about one-fifth of people who could benefit from a hearing aid seek intervention." Will OTC hearing aids help users overcome barriers to access?

A: Cost is a significant barrier to hearing aid access in the U.S. and globally. OTC hearing aids are meeting

a pressing need for assistive technology that's inexpensive while also remaining safe and reliable. If we have close to 1 billion people with hearing loss around the world, it's just not feasible for everyone to purchase \$6,000 hearing aids. I hope that access to OTC hearing aids will make it more feasible and more doable for people to get the assistance they need.

Q: Audiologists don't just write prescriptions. They can help people who use hearing aids find the best fit for their ears—and their brain signals. Are there challenges associated with skipping that consult prior to purchasing an OTC device?

A: To answer this one, I like to use the metaphor of vision. When I buy a pair of glasses, I go to an optometrist first to receive a clinical exam and determine not only my prescription, but if I have any associated conditions like astigmatism, glaucoma, or diabetes. With OTC hearing aids, I worry that

if individuals are self-evaluating their degree of hearing loss and purchasing hearing aids based solely on that evaluation, they might not account for other conditions.

Q: As OTC options become more widely adopted, where is the future of hearing aid technology headed?

A: OTC technology can be incredible, but it can also be inflexible and not adaptive. I hope that OTC hearing aids will create a disruption in the industry and an opening for inexpensive, innovative hearing aid technologies. And not just in the U.S.; this one notch of progress from a single country could have a global impact. Imagine the world just five years from now, when about 2 million people have adopted OTC hearing aids. So, we'll have data from 2 million people in the U.S. alone to figure out what's working, what's not working, and how we can keep improving the technology.



McCristal Distinguished Scholar has personal connection for her research

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

Most researchers have an inspiration for their research line. It might be an experience, something they read, or even a TV show or movie. For **Fatima Husain**, it was more personal.

Dr. Husain, a professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science in the College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS), uses a combination of computational modeling, brain imaging experiments and behavioral experiments to research hearing and speech perception, as well as the disorders associated with them, such as hearing loss and tinnitus.

When she was a Ph.D. student at Boston University, Husain said she had a family member who was dealing with a sudden hearing loss.

“I was already thinking about the brain and sounds, and yet I had not come across tinnitus. I remember being in this [ear, nose and throat doctor’s] office and asking questions. ‘And could it be this? Could it be that?’ And you know how some physicians can be, and he said, ‘Why don’t you find out for yourself?’”

So she did.

“I was always trying to find out more about tinnitus,” she said. “I think it took me another five years after that to come to a place where I could start doing research. I started studying in

my own time little by little and asking questions. What stood out to me was how little people knew about it. I hope we know more about it now, but still very little is known; compared to even hearing loss, it is very much more challenging and more complicated, which also allows a space for someone like me who is not a clinician, to provide answers and help people.”

That combination of inquisitiveness, persistence and hard work is one of the many reasons Husain is the 2022 recipient of the King J. and Marjorie R. McCristal Distinguished Scholar in the College of AHS, the most prestigious recognition of scholarly achievement given by the college.

Husain joined the Department of Speech and Hearing Science as an assistant professor in 2008. She earned her Ph.D. in cognitive and neural systems at BU and joined the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, part of the National Institutes of Health, first as a postdoctoral fellow and then as a research fellow.

At the NIDCD, Husain worked with a researcher who had worked in aging research and was coming to deafness and communication disorders. She enjoyed her time at NIDCD, but she missed being in an academic

setting. She knew leaving would mean uprooting her family—she had a young child at the time—but took the plunge.

“Academia is high risk, high reward, because of the potential of losing it all if you don’t get tenure. In academia, you have more control over your research direction. But it comes with the risk that you can lose your job too if you don’t get tenure, and then what will you do? I kept telling my husband that, after five or six years, we might have to move. He said, ‘That’s fine, really.’ I’m like, ‘If I don’t get tenure, I’m just going into industry. That was my plan B.’”

Fortunately, Husain didn’t need Plan B. She wanted a university with an MRI on campus and stellar imaging facilities.

“[Illinois] had good access to a tool [the MRI] I needed to advance my research agenda. And then it was the fit of the department and the college. So that mattered too. I needed to work with audiologists. I needed to work with clinicians and other individuals who were ready to partner with me. I wanted to study disorders, and I wanted to do science that did not wait to see outcomes 30 years later. I wanted to see the immediate impact of my work on people’s lives. I don’t know if I achieved that, but that was the goal.”

Mudar Honored by ASHA Fellowship

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

In the summer of 2022, Speech and Hearing Science Associate Professor **Raksha Mudar** was elected a Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Fellowship is one of the highest forms of recognition given by ASHA and is a public declaration of an individual's outstanding contributions to the discipline of communication sciences and disorders.

"I am delighted to receive this honor from the association. To get recognized by the association for these efforts is really personally and professionally fulfilling," said Mudar, who joined the University of Illinois in 2011. "My journey as a faculty member in communication sciences and disorders has been so much fun. I enjoy what I get to do each day, from training the next generation of

clinicians and scientists to conducting research examining intriguing questions about the aging brain and neuroplasticity."

According to Dr. Mudar, an ASHA Fellow is expected to support and promote scientific and clinical leadership, interdisciplinary services and an inclusive culture committed to supporting the needs of those with communication and swallowing disorders.

"[ASHA] offers a great community for members to connect with each other, learn and build scientific and clinical excellence," she said. "Furthermore, ASHA's advocacy in promoting the needs of individuals and families with communication disorders is critical to supporting communication as a basic human right."



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OTHER ASHA NOTES

Megan-Brette Hamilton, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, and SHS alumna is now the Chief Staff Officer for Multicultural Affairs at The American-Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA).

SHS Alum **earns ASHA honor**



“THERE WAS A NEED. ALL OF MY WORK HAS BEEN WITH PEOPLE IN THEIR ACTUAL LIVES BECAUSE I REALIZED THERE’S BEEN A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THERAPISTS, AND WHAT GOALS THEY ACHIEVED...”

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

Travis Threats had a clear inspiration for what he wanted to study: his brother.

Threats, who earned his master’s degree from the Department of Speech and Hearing Science in 1984, said he first observed speech therapy when he was eight years old.

“My younger brother, three years younger than me, is autistic,” Threats said. “Autism directly affects communication. Now, some people think, when they hear this, that it’s some beautiful inspirational story, and all of the speech therapists were great, and that’s why I wanted to be like them. Well, it’s the opposite. All the speech therapy in its early years was bad. The social work was bad. The teachers were bad. Even though [my brother] didn’t have any overt behavior issues, my parents would go to the doctor’s office, fill out the information, and the [pediatrician’s] nurse would come out to the waiting room, saying ‘He doesn’t see autistic children.’”

That interaction led Threats to the conclusion that “there was a need. All of my work has been with people in their actual lives because

I realized there’s been a disconnect between therapists, and what goals they achieved, and what people with disabilities actual lives are like. For me, it’s a clear-cut [reason to study speech pathology].”

For his work and dedication to the profession, Threats—now professor and department chair of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at Saint Louis University—earned Honors of Association from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in 2022. It is the national organization’s highest honor. He understands its significance.

“Three of my professors at U. of I. have honors from the association. I do remember—as a Ph.D. student [at] Northwestern—going to the first ASHA conference and going to the awards ceremony. And these were the people who wrote the books that I was studying from. These were some of my alums at Northwestern—three or so of those people eventually got honors, too. My own advisor got honors the year I graduated. ... I certainly didn’t at the time think that I would be one of those people.”

Coming together to expand **voice recognition**

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

The University of Illinois in October 2022 announced the Speech Accessibility Project, a new research initiative to make voice recognition technology more useful for people with a range of diverse speech patterns and disabilities. The project launches with cross-industry support from Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta and Microsoft, as well as nonprofit organizations whose communities will benefit from this accessibility initiative, to make speech recognition more inclusive of diverse speech patterns.

“The option to communicate and operate devices with speech is crucial for anyone interacting with technology or the digital economy today,” said **Mark Hasegawa-Johnson**, the Illinois professor of electrical and computer engineering leading the project. “Speech interfaces should be available to everybody, and that includes people with disabilities. This task has been difficult because it requires a lot of infrastructure, ideally the kind that can be supported by leading technology companies, so we’ve created a uniquely interdisciplinary team with expertise in linguistics, speech, AI, security and privacy to help us meet this important challenge.”

Today’s speech recognition systems, such as voice assistants



and translation tools, don’t always recognize people with a diversity of speech patterns often associated with disabilities. This includes speech affected by Lou Gehrig’s disease or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson’s disease, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. In effect, many individuals in these and other communities may be unable to benefit from the latest speech recognition tools.

In addition to Hasegawa-Johnson, the Speech Accessibility Project team includes **Clarion Mendes**, a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science and a speech-language pathologist.

Mendes said the project is one of a kind and has high hopes for this partnership, which has support from

“**THE OPTION TO COMMUNICATE AND OPERATE DEVICES WITH SPEECH IS CRUCIAL FOR ANYONE INTERACTING WITH TECHNOLOGY OR THE DIGITAL ECONOMY TODAY.”**

local organizations that focuses on Parkinson’s disease and ALS.

“By making speech recognition more accessible with individuals with speech differences, we’re improving quality of life as well as promoting independence for individuals.”

DISABILITY RESOURCES & EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (DRES)



Paralympic gold medalist Susannah Scaroni won the Chicago and New York City marathons in 2022.



Illinois honored for Paralympic success

In December 2022, the University of Illinois was inducted into the Team USA Collegiate Impact Award Class of 2020. This induction by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee honors the top-performing schools represented on Team USA at the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. Illinois was one of four schools inducted into the inaugural class, which was recognized during the Team USA Collegiate Recognition Awards as part of the National Football Foundation's 64th Annual Awards celebration in Las Vegas.

"It's an incredible honor for our student-athletes—our Paralympians—to be recognized as members of the inaugural class for the Team USA Collegiate Impact Award," said Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, dean of the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. "The dedication—and resulting accomplishments—of our athletes, coaches, and others cannot be understated. I'm so proud of this team."

Team USA Collegiate Impact Award Class of 2020

In Tokyo, 122 U.S. Paralympians and 475 U.S. Olympians competed collegiately during their journey to Team USA. Together they hailed from 223 schools across the country. The inductees into the Team USA Collegiate Impact Award Class of 2020 together helped lead to the success of 20 U.S. athletes at the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 and 70 U.S. athletes at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. These four schools had 52 athletes bring home medals for their school communities and country. The Class of 2020 is comprised of:

- Paralympic Gold Award: University of Illinois; 20 U.S. Paralympians and nine U.S. medalists.
- Olympic Gold Award: Stanford University; 35 U.S. Olympians and 19 U.S. medalists.
- Olympic Silver Award: University of California, Los Angeles; 21 U.S. Olympians and 14 U.S. medalists.
- Olympic Bronze Award: University of Florida; 14 U.S. Olympians and 10 U.S. medalists.

"The collegiate athletics system is essential to growing and keeping sport strong in our country," said USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland. "Athletes who competed collegiately were the foundation of Team USA's success in

Tokyo and Beijing. We're excited to honor the leaders who foster these sport opportunities and support student-athletes on campus."

At the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo—the most recent Summer Games—athletes who train at the University of Illinois won 11 individual medals, while team sports, such as men and women's wheelchair basketball, also took home medals.

- The first-ever U.S. Paralympic gold medalist was a former Illinois student, **Jack Whitman**, who won the gold medal in archery at Rome 1960.
- Disability Resources and Educational Services Founder Dr. Tim Nugent was inducted into the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame in 2019 for his contributions as the father of accessibility.
- Paralympian stars such as **Jean Driscoll**, **Linda Mastandrea**, **Daniel Romanchuk**, **Susannah Scaroni**, **Steve Serio** and others all trained at Illinois.
- Wheelchair track coach **Adam Bleakney** is a three-time U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee Paralympic Coach of the Year and a Paralympic medalist himself.



Beckman, DRES collaboration launches **(dis)Ability Design Studio**

By Jenna Kurtzweil | Beckman Institute

Chirping birds mark the passage of time in the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology's newest addition, the (dis)Ability Design Studio. The source of the sound, a strategically placed cuckoo clock, was selected for accessibility and atmosphere, two of the studio's hallmarks.

The studio is a product of a partnership between Beckman and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES). It supports interdisciplinary design research centered around the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

Deana McDonagh, the chair of Graphic Design in the School of Art + Design in the College of Fine & Applied Arts, co-directs the (dis)Ability Design Studio alongside **Adam Bleakney**, a research affiliate in Beckman and DRES and the head coach of the UIUC men and women's wheelchair track and road-racing team and coach for the U.S. Paralympic Team.

"This partnership will have a very real impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities," he said.

The studio is located on Beckman's first floor and will complement the Human Performance and Mobility

Maker Lab within DRES, which Bleakney leads in developing assistive tools and technologies for individuals with disabilities.

The "sister spaces" prioritize user involvement across every stage of the design process for assistive tools and technologies, from brainstorming to development to testing. User-centered design often comes as a second thought in the disability space, Bleakney said.

"Creating an intentionally immersive environment of disability is impactful for all involved. It drives research and innovation that's closely connected to the disability experience," he said.

Joey Peters, a postdoctoral researcher advised by Bleakney, will use the space to investigate the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities to better understand the impact of assistive technology on their lives.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to research and innovate out of both DRES and Beckman, leveraging the resources of both sites to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities," said Peters, who also works with Bleakney as the assistant head coach of the wheelchair track and road-racing teams.

UIUC is the first postsecondary institution to offer accommodation to students with disabilities and remains one of the most accessible campuses in the world. The late Tim Nugent, who founded the organization now known as DRES, was one of campus's earliest and strongest accessibility advocates from the late 1940s until his passing in 2015.

"I consider the University of Illinois a gold standard for access, and a best-practice model that other institutions can emulate," Bleakney said. "Ensuring that students on campus have equitable access to research and innovation spaces is an extension of Dr. Nugent's legacy and the almost 75-year tradition of DRES on this campus. I feel fortunate to be a part of that," he said.

Every element within the space is primed to host creative collisions between abilities, disciplines, perspectives, and personalities.

"Design can save lives because design thinking can save lives, and that's what this space is all about," McDonagh said. "I would really love for some serious, playful design thinking to happen here."

Navigating accommodations at Illinois

***Mia Vavaroutsos** is currently a sophomore studying Spanish and English. In her free time, she enjoys baking (her current favorite thing to bake is a triple chocolate brownie) and watching movies with friends.*

As a student with a disability, entering college is both difficult and intimidating: Between struggling to find a new support system, figuring out a new routine, and navigating the various accommodations one might need, balancing a challenging academic avenue on top of it all seems impossible. This was exactly how I felt upon entering my freshman year; having an anxiety disorder myself, one can imagine that as my move-in date grew closer, the stress of this new beginning felt like a terrifying monster that I would have to face alone. However, I soon learned that the University of Illinois makes it so no one has to face things alone.

At the suggestion of my parents and my sister, I decided to register with Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES) on campus. Even the prospect of registering with DRES was intimidating to me, but upon meeting my advisor, Dr. Teresa Davenport, much of my anxiety was put at ease. Teresa and I worked together to create a letter of accommodations, which outlined a plan of action in case I suffered a severe anxiety episode, and

I review this letter with Teresa each academic year to make sure that it still best suits my needs.

Despite having my letter in place, I was still stressed about discussing my accommodations with my professors—I was worried that they would be rude, or treat me differently than my peers, as if I needed to be handled “delicately.” Upon having those conversations, however, I was pleasantly surprised! Each and every one of my LAS professors has been beyond kind, and many have made efforts to reach out to me before assigning any projects or exams that I might need accommodations for. Beyond that, my advisors within LAS, Anna Ivy (English) and Brady Hughes (Spanish), have been extremely supportive. During my meetings with them, they always take care to ask how I’m doing, make sure that my accommodations are still working for me, and help me create course schedules that best suit my routine.

Coming to Illinois, I never expected to have so much support with my disability, especially since mental illness is often not always recognized as



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a disability. Being enrolled in both the College of LAS and DRES, however, I have felt more academic and emotional support than I ever thought I would. I am extremely grateful for how wonderful the staff at UIUC has been as I continue my academic career!

KINESIOLOGY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH



*A newly renovated exercise and study
space is a key feature of Freer Hall.*

Janus 2.0:

Physical education looks back—and ahead

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

For **Kevin Andrew Richards**, the Janus Conference 2.0 that was held on the campus of the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in October 2022 was long overdue, and not just because the previous one was held more than two decades ago.

“We had to delay it twice [because of the COVID-19 pandemic] before we finally did it. We had two failed launches before we finally got it off the ground,” said the Kinesiology and Community Health associate professor.

For the previous conference in March 2000, 10 physical education professors from across the country gathered at the University of Nebraska. The conference organizers adopted the name “Janus” as a reference to the Roman god of good beginnings. Janus is also depicted as having two faces, with one looking to the past and one to the future, which also fit the conference theme. The organizers felt the gathering was necessary because while physical education had the potential to make key contributions to education and public health, disciplinary leaders in the field had been unable to come to a consensus in addressing key areas of research and practice.

The conference was considered a success, but a followup took two

decades to transpire. The story of how, a full 20 years later, Janus 2.0 came to be was part serendipity and part inspiration, Richards said.

“One of our disciplinary stewards—a member of our field who is very prominent—in the process of retiring, reached out to me and asked if I wanted some of the different books and other items he’d collected throughout his career. As I was going through that pile of materials, I found a book which was the proceedings from the first Janus conference that took place in Lincoln, Nebraska,” he said.

“One of the co-authors on the book is Phil Ward [who was a presenter at the Janus 2.0 conference]. Phil’s a close friend of mine, so I gave him a call. It sparked the idea that to understand where you’re going, in part, you need to know where you’ve been. And that’s the origin of the first conference, there at that pivotal moment point, we’re thinking, ‘What’s next?’”

Janus 2.0 was designed to bring together 20 scholars to discuss the future of American physical education. Organizers paired a senior scholar with an emerging researcher to explore the history of and future directions in 10 topics identified as critically

important for the field. The 10 topics were identified based on a review of key disciplinary journals, relevant review articles, and the identification of emerging topics seen as potentially transformative. The aim: addressing ways to improve P-12 physical education.

That aim dovetails with what Richards sees as the foundation for KCH.

“I think that the roots of our department go back to physical education,” he said. “So there’s that history and tradition that’s there. [But] if you look at us now, we have three strong nationally and internationally recognized faculty. We have more specialized faculty that support our efforts. Physical education remains a prominent component of what we do in the department. I think that being able to host the conference reaffirms our position, our stature in the community and it helps to draw some positive attention to the department and college as well.”

Asked which of the presentations had the most impact, Richards stressed that they all had impact. But when pressed to choose, he selected two that focused on social challenges:



“Changing the Conversation: Social Justice in USA-based Physical Education Research,” presented by Dillon Landi, from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, and Sue Sutherland from Ohio State University; and “Transformative Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Education,” by Michael Hemphill of North Carolina-Greensboro and Paul Wright from Northern Illinois University.

“These are both indicative of the times to some extent—indicative to broader social, cultural, political issues that have been circumventing our society over the last five to 10 years, things like the pandemic, and racial injustice, and violence against the Black community, and all of these social challenges that we face,” Richards said.

“I think that that’s how you grow. If you just live in the status quo, then there’s no movement. The social justice presentation was angled in a way that asked us to consider many of our social institutions—some of our journals, some of our conferences, and our professional organizations and to look at them from a social justice perspective. And that was really moving.”

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“The second one was the presentation on transformative social and emotional learning. I think that has really risen to the surface as something that schools are now coping with. I think that there were new issues raised. [Co-authors] Michael Hemphill and Paul Wright really pushed us into thinking about social and emotional learning through a different lens, to think about it more through an empowerment lens, and how young people can help to kind of define, cultivate, and engage in social and emotional learning on terms that they actively negotiate, instead of always kind of using adult language and adult definitions.”

In terms of results, Richards hopes collaborations can be built from the conference.

“I hope folks who came to the conference take the lessons that they’ve learned, the thinking that has changed as a result of this and use that to spur additional work that aligns with the conference themes and it looks at overlaps and intersections among the themes. That would, I think, be a real sign of success if we are able to identify partnerships and collaborations that spurred off of this.”

One thing is certain: 20 years is too long between Janus conferences.

“I don’t think that this is an every-year situation, but I also don’t think it’s another 20 years,” he said. “I think that these types of events can be used intentionally to bring together targeted, selected people within the broader community. And each time an event is held, there are some returning people and some intentionally-selected new people. I would love to do this every five years or so. I think that the University of Illinois will always be well-poised to host an event like this. But I also think that there are other great universities out there that have notable physical education programs and faculty who would also be eager to host something as well.”

Team gets \$15M to study emerging tech for older adults

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

The University of Illinois was part of a consortium that was awarded a five-year, \$14.7 million grant from the National Institute on Aging (National Institutes of Health) for the Center for Research and Education on Aging and Technology Enhancement (CREATE).

Kinesiology and Community Health professor **Wendy Rogers** is the principal investigator for the Illinois site. Co-investigators include **Raksha Mudar** of the Department of Speech and Hearing Science, Dan Llano of the Department of Molecular & Integrative Physiology, and Avinash Gupta and R.S. Sreenivas, both of the Department of Industrial & Enterprise Systems Engineering.

“One of the most exciting aspects of the Illinois engagement is the breadth of our involvement, representing four departments across three colleges,” Dr. Rogers said. “Such interdisciplinarity is critical for advancement in technology designed to support older adults.”

Weill Cornell Medicine, Florida State University, and Illinois are the lead universities on CREATE, a multi-institutional, interdisciplinary center. The research will focus on employing emerging and existing technologies to promote wellbeing, quality of life and independence for diverse populations

of older adults, and to provide support for older adults with cognitive impairments.

Initially funded in 1999, the goal of CREATE is to ensure that older adults can use and realize the benefits of technology for improving daily living. Through the four previous funding cycles of CREATE, the landscape of aging and technology has changed dramatically.

Given that age is a significant risk factor for cognitive impairments such as mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and Alzheimer’s Disease/Alzheimer’s disease–related dementias, CREATE will expand its target populations to include older adults with MCI and involve three integrated cross-site projects. With a focus on enhancing cognitive health, social engagement and preventing cognitive impairment, the first study will look at how virtual reality technology can be used to foster cognitive and social engagement among aging adults.

It will be one of the largest randomized controlled trials of virtual reality in home settings. Preliminary development and testing will be conducted at the McKechnie Family LIFE Home on the Illinois campus.

“

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Less screen time recommended for toddlers



By Diana Yates | Illinois News Bureau

A new study explored whether adherence to American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for diet and physical activity had any relationship with toddlers' ability to remember, plan, pay attention, shift between tasks and regulate their own thoughts and behavior, a suite of skills known as executive function.

Reported in *The Journal of Pediatrics*, the study found that 24-month-old children who spent less than 60 minutes looking at screens each day and those who engaged in daily physical activity had better executive function than those who didn't meet the guidelines.

"Executive function underlies your ability to engage in goal-directed behaviors," said Kinesiology and Community Health professor **Naiman Khan**, who led the study with graduate student **Arden McMath** and food science and human nutrition professor Sharon Donovan. "It includes abilities such as inhibitory control, which allows you to regulate your thoughts, emotions and behavior; working memory, by which you are able to hold information in mind long enough to accomplish a task; and cognitive flexibility, the adeptness with which you switch your attention between tasks or competing demands."

WE FOUND THAT TODDLERS WHO ENGAGED IN LESS THAN 60 MINUTES OF SCREEN TIME PER DAY HAD SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER ABILITY TO ACTIVELY CONTROL THEIR OWN COGNITION..."

"We wanted to test the hypothesis that healthy weight status and adherence to the AAP guidelines for diet and physical activity would extend to greater executive function in 24-month-old children," McMath said.

Through its Bright Futures initiative, the AAP recommends that children spend less than 60 minutes looking at screens each day, engage in daily physical activity, consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables and minimize or eliminate the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Previous studies have linked adherence to guidelines for physical activity levels, screen time and diet quality with executive function in school-aged or adolescent children, McMath said.

"We focused on an earlier period in child development to see whether and

how early in life these relationships begin," she said.

The families of the 356 toddlers in the new research are participants in the STRONG KIDS 2 cohort study at the U. of I., a long-term look at the interdependent factors that predict dietary habits and weight trajectories of children who are followed from birth to 5 years old. The study uses parental surveys and data on the children collected at eight time points over the five years, including when the children are 24 months old.

"We found that toddlers who engaged in less than 60 minutes of screen time per day had significantly greater ability to actively control their own cognition than those who spent more time staring at phones, tablets, televisions and computers," McMath said. "They had greater inhibitory control, working memory and overall executive function."

Toddlers who got daily physical activity also did significantly better on tests of working memory than those who didn't, the researchers found.

"The influence of engaging in healthy behaviors on cognitive abilities appears to be evident in early childhood, particularly for behaviors surrounding physical activity and sedentary time," Khan said.

Q&A

A different direction

Megan [last name omitted by request], a recent graduate of the Kinesiology and Community Health program who is now attending medical school in St. Louis, shared what she learned about herself and about her chosen field along the way.

Q: Tell us about your experience volunteering with Carle Foundation Hospital.

A: I enjoyed it because I was able to see different aspects of the hospital. I liked being able to interact with both patients and patient families. Even though most of the work we were doing was just helping out the nurses, it did allow me to see the relationship between healthcare workers, patients, and patient families, which I really appreciated. It was a little hard just because it pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and try something new, so I really appreciated it overall.

Q: Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of?

A: There are two. [The first was] doing so well academically as an undergrad and being a Bronze Tablet winner. Looking back on that, I really pushed myself in undergrad and stepped out of my comfort zone and chose different classes. [By majoring in kinesiology] I wasn't necessarily doing what a

stereotypical pre-medical student was doing with their coursework; it wasn't biology, it wasn't chemistry. And even the minor I chose was just a personal interest of mine. So that academic accomplishment coupled with the fact that I did [a nontraditional major] and still got into medical school—I really enjoy that.

And then [I'm proud of] the fact that I've focused on my wellness. I think oftentimes in college, and in secondary or post-secondary school, we focus so much on the stressors. And I make sure to take time for myself. In the bigger picture, I can't take care of patients unless I take care of myself. So I really am proud of myself for doing that.

Q: Is there anything you want to say to someone who's torn between going the traditional pre-med school route or a more non-traditional route?

A: Yes, [in my kinesiology major] I was 100% happy going to class and I felt like I didn't have to force myself to



learn. I liked chemistry, I liked bio. But sitting and doing organic chemistry was not interesting to me, and I wasn't going to use it ever again. But I've used my kinesiology classes not even just in academics, but in my personal life. Take what's interesting to you.

Q: What advice would you give to students who might be struggling to meet their goals or want to make a difference, but aren't sure where to start?

A: I think a lot of times we plan too much for ourselves. You can take a breath. Setting even the smallest goal—like getting out of bed and deciding to make your bed every morning—that is an accomplishment. You're already in a high-stress situation. Setting little goals and being proud of achieving those little goals is huge.

RECREATION, SPORT & TOURISM

*RST Clinical Associate
Professor Michael Raycraft
(far right) was able to bring
back his RST 180 Hall of
Fame tour class after a two-
year hiatus due to COVID.*

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



Q&A

'You interview for
your next job everyday'

Joe DeLuce, a Recreation, Sport and Tourism graduate [M.S., 2001] and former visiting instructor, retired in December 2022 after 43 years in the park management industry, including his final 25 at the Champaign Park District, where he was executive director at the time of his retirement. DeLuce is not someone who likes the spotlight, so we sought out a couple of longtime colleagues and alumni who were more than happy to talk about working with him.

Elliott Bortner

*Superintendent of Recreation
Geneva Park District*

Bortner got his bachelor's degree from RST in 2011. He met DeLuce in 2007 as a freshman when he was a kinesiology major.

Q: When did you first meet Joe?

A: I learned in my first semester that this field of study was not my passion and I met with my advisor in AHS. After asking a few questions about my interests, where I had worked in the past, and more, she let me know about RST and suggested I take a couple courses second semester. The first class I took was instructed by Joe and, by semester's end, I felt confident this was the field of study I wanted to



pursue. Fast forward to my senior year, I was fortunate enough to intern at the Champaign Park District while Joe was serving as the director of recreation.

Q: What has Joe meant to Urbana-Champaign?

A: I only lived in town a couple years following graduation, but those two years I was able to see the profound impact Joe had on the community. The way he interacted with people and everything he was involved in are two things that stand out to me when I think back to those times. Seemingly every place we went he knew someone,

asked about their family or how their job was going, talked Illinois athletics and more.

Q: What was Joe's main contribution to the parks department?

A: During my time at the Champaign Park District [2011-2013], I think one of his biggest contributions to the district was how the Virginia Theatre grew under his leadership, including its renovation/restoration. Since that time, I think one of the most impactful contributions is the new Martens Center in Champaign.

JOE DELUCE

Q: Do you have a funny story to share?

A: I knew Joe played racquetball and I had played a few dozen times at CRCE [Campus Recreation Center East] and the ARC [Activities & Recreation Center] when I was a student. During my time working at the Champaign Park District, I challenged Joe to racquetball many times—challenges that were often met with chuckles and “Are you sure?!” He finally took me up on the challenge one day. He beat me three straight games and I don’t think I scored a single point. But, being the teacher/mentor he has always been for me, we then went to a different court where two others were playing. He and I teamed up for doubles and, after a few quick pointers, I improved enough to where we won a game.

Q: What has Joe done to make an impact on your life?

Following my internship and graduation, Joe asked if I would stay on and work under him as the recreation intern. In the following year, I had the opportunity to lead the District’s effort for Illinois Park and Recreation Association’s (IPRA) Distinguished Agency award and

projects related to the District’s ADA Transition Plan. Joe brought me along to staff meetings, involved me in project planning meetings, encouraged me to make connections throughout the community, etc. A new full-time position was created at the Douglass Community Center and I was fortunate enough to be hired into that role. A year later, I became the special events and volunteer coordinator. In 2013, I moved back to my hometown of Batavia and began working at the Geneva Park District. In the fall of 2022, I applied for the Superintendent of Recreation position at the Geneva Park District and Joe spent over an hour on the phone with me prepping me with things to think about, ideas to prepare, and questions to consider. About a month later, outside of my family, he was the first person I called to tell I was named the new superintendent. One of Joe’s aphorisms is “You interview for your next job every day”—I have tried to keep that in mind throughout my career. Joe has truly shaped my career in recreation and as a professional—ultimately his biggest impact has been being a mentor and a friend.

Sue Grey

President and CEO

United Way of Champaign County

Grey is a 1983 RST graduate and serves on the AHS Board of Visitors. She worked with DeLuce at Champaign Park District, and has known him for more than two decades.

Q: What has Joe meant to Champaign-Urbana?

A: Joe has been a quiet, steady leader. He has brought innovative and fun ideas to the community—helping our park district be the best in the area and across the state, and country.

Q: What was Joe’s main contribution to the parks department?

A: Joe has brought consistency, stability and strong leadership. He carefully managed the budget, and worked to make necessary improvements to facilities and parks.

Q: What has Joe done to make an impact on your life?

A: I appreciate that Joe was always a good listener. He took the time to make sure you were heard. That is an important quality that we could all use!

Q&A

'You learn so much'



Allison Buckley was an All-American gymnast in her time at Illinois [2008-13], and is an alum of the College of Applied Health Sciences in both Kinesiology and Community Health [B.S. in 2011] and Recreation, Sport and Tourism [M.S. in 2013]. An Illinois native, Buckley was destined to become a gymnast, as her parents own a gym in Hanover Park, located in northwest suburbs of Chicago. She now works there, both in coaching and business roles. She spoke to *FightingIllini.com* about her time at Illinois.

Q: What have you been up to since graduating from Illinois?

AB: Fresh out of school, I went into the corporate world for a little while. Still in college sports, I actually worked

with Illinois, my company worked with Illinois. My parents have owned a gymnastics gym, so that's how I became a gymnast. I was a gym rat from the

time I was born. They opened their gym in 1975, so it is very closely coming up on 50 years. I was just kind of ready for a change, for something different, and so I went back and started working for my parents a couple years ago.

Q: How did your time at Illinois impact your life after college and currently?

AB: I think in every experience, you learn so much. It teaches you a lot of things. Obviously, like perseverance and adversity. Not everything is going to go your way, but if you can learn how to adapt and adjust, whether it be in the gym, whether it was at school, that obviously teaches you those life lessons for later on. There was so much good that came out of being able to have that culture of success and of wanting to be around each other.

Q: How did the Illinois gym shape you as a person?

AB: We wanted and we expected the best of ourselves, and we push each other to do that. That leads into everyday life now. You don't do things just to do them; you do them to do them well, and if you don't, then you work harder to get there. That definitely was a big part of my experience and something I definitely took away from it. As I already touched on, the culture and the family atmosphere. That culture and environment that I talked about is so much of what I want our athletes to experience as well. I would love for them to go on to college and do gymnastics.

Q: What is your fondest memory from your time at Illinois?

AB: I have so many really good memories. I think it probably would be like the first time we made it to Nationals. I know we were competing in Seattle, but just that experience with our teammates, with our coaches, the competition that we had, all of our families being there. It was one of the best experiences that we've probably ever had in Illinois.

Q&A

‘I felt like I finally had some sense of direction’



A lumni of the College of Applied Health Sciences have myriad career options thanks to the tremendous diversity of programs. We will periodically put the spotlight on an alum to find out what they’re doing now, what experiences they had and what AHS means to them. This time, we talk to **Kelsey Beccue**, an RST alum who is development manager for the Urbana Park District.

Q: Which professors had the most impact on you?

A: This is kind of a toughie, but I’ll go with Professor [Cindy] Wachter. I was in the second semester of my sophomore year and still undecided. I had registered for a host of classes, attended them all my first week and promptly dropped them and registered for new ones. One of the classes I registered for was an Intro to Recreation, Sport and Tourism class taught by Professor Wachter, and I LOVED IT! Once I was in there, I felt like I finally had some sense of direction and selected RST as my area of study. I still had some figuring out to do career-wise, but was finally taking classes that resonated with me.

Q: What course did you most enjoy?

A: I can’t remember the official course title anymore, but I did take a recreation programming class with Lori Kay Paden that was outstanding, and a great “real world” type of experience.

Q: Did you enter AHS knowing your career path, or did AHS help you decide?

A: I definitely did not know my career path when I headed into AHS, but with help from my RST advisor, I got a push in the right direction. When I first came into RST, I thought I wanted a concentration in Tourism Management, but after working through things with my advisor, it became quite obvious that Recreation Management was the right direction for me, and that set me on the course that brought me to where I am today.

Q: Did your AHS experience lead to your current job?

A: Yes—thanks, required internship!

Q: What is your current job?

A: I am currently the development manager at the Urbana Park District.

Q: What was your favorite on-campus experience?

A: I worked in the concessions division of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics during college, and getting the opportunity to work the different sporting events was really cool. I attended a lot of sporting events I might not have attended otherwise. The football game days were fun, too. Long, but fun—great crew to work with! Seeing Sara Bareilles perform at Foellinger with some of my best pals ranks highly, too!

Q: What would you say to recommend AHS to a prospective student?

A: I’d say that it’s a great college—it’s smaller so you don’t get lost in the crowd as much, and the faculty and advisors are great!

CHEZ VETERANS CENTER

New Chez Veterans Center director of operations Andrew Bender says he wants 'to create a better place for our Veterans and military-affiliated students.'



Warrior-Scholar Project shows Veterans that college is within reach

By Vincent Lara-Cinisomo

For **Tizoc Rubio**, the prospect of college seemed far-fetched. Then he happened upon the Warrior-Scholar Project.

“When you’re enlisted, you’re kind of bottom of the barrel. And you’re of that mindset that you’re not meant for much, you know?” said the Air Force airman.

But Rubio, who is still on active duty as a cyber systems operator stationed at Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., knew the military would not be his career, and that he wanted to study nursing. He searched the Internet for “Veterans going to Ivy Leagues” and found the Warrior-Scholar Project. The program aims to build service members’ confidence to pursue and complete four-year undergraduate programs at elite colleges and universities by orienting students to the challenges facing student Veterans as they transition from military service to college.

The Warrior-Scholar Project launched its first program at Yale University in 2012 with nine participants, expanding to 20 of America’s top schools since then and helping more than 215 Veterans get a head start in higher education. For the first time, the program in July

2022 was held at the University of Illinois, with the Chez Veterans Center facilitating programming for the week-long training.

“I was lucky that they had a spot here,” Rubio said. “The fact that I’m able to be [here] in person, and take in the campus environment, and actually feel what it’s like to be a student is just super amazing.”

The WSP, a non-profit, gives service members a bridge from the battlefield to the classroom. The organization helps enlisted military personnel, those transitioning out of active service, and Veterans by providing them with academic training and helping them become “informed consumers of education,” as WSP describes its attendees.

Dustin Lange, assistant director of the Chez Veterans Center, saw the WSP in action at the University of Chicago and thought the program would be a great fit on the Urbana-Champaign campus.

“We are honored to be partnered with Warrior-Scholar Project this summer, as we believe the program can improve a Veteran’s overall confidence and help them be successful in higher education,” Lange said.

Count Noah Bishop as one of those Veterans. Bishop, who is from Solon,



Above: The Warrior-Scholar Project aims to build service members’ confidence to pursue four-year undergraduate programs

Iowa, enrolled at the Naval School of Music to train as a musician in the U.S. Marine Corps Music Program.

He decided to enter the military out of high school.

“When I was in high school, I decided between going to college and studying music and getting a job,” he said. “I thought it was better to have the actual experience of performing for four years. I wanted some actual, in-person experience with that. I definitely got it, along with the desire to grow up before going to college.”

The workshops also touch on life transition skills, called “degreening,” to help service members succeed in civilian life, classrooms and campus communities.

Bishop, who wants to stay in the Midwest, agreed, citing the services UIUC has for Veterans.

“The most impressive thing I’d say was the [Chez] Veterans Center. I’ve never seen anything like that, that level of Veterans support. That’s a huge selling factor. The overall quality of the university matters, too. And I know it has that.”

(Re)framing the Student Veteran



For the 2022-2023 academic year, Dr. **Michael Lotspeich-Yadao** and the Office of Research and Educational Programming (OREP) were awarded a grant by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to explore with a team of graduate students and faculty how the Chez Veterans Center may more appropriately consider the diversity of student Veterans and military-connected students in higher education.

Student Veterans, as a subpopulation, carry additional identities (race/ethnicity, gender identity/sexual orientation, disability status, first generation, et al.) that may hinder psychosocial adjustment, well-being, and academic performance. Through this project, Lotspeich-Yadao hopes to engage dynamic voices and intersectional theory to offer a fresh perspective on how barriers in higher education may hinder transitional adjustment for all student Veterans.

The Chez Veterans Center is interested in constructing a portfolio of funding and research that strategically positions the CVC as the national

THE CENTER IS A PLACE TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE TRANSITIONAL METHODS, DEVELOP NEW TECHNOLOGIES, TEST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS, AND DISCOVER TREATMENTS FROM VARIOUS DISCIPLINES.

center for research on student Veterans in higher education. This project represents the model of research that the Chez Veterans Center has been founded on. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has had a long history of supporting access for military Veterans to higher education. Disruptive research by faculty in the College of Applied Health Sciences has led to nationally adopted architectural accessibility standards, including the first comprehensive program of disability services in higher education. Within the Chez Veterans Center, OREP continues this legacy through the independent facilitation of a visible program of Veteran-focused research, application, and outreach.

The Center is a place to explore innovative transitional methods, develop new technologies, test

important questions, and discover treatments from various disciplines. This initial funding will allow the Center to more closely examine how intersectionality can contextualize physical, mental, social and financial stressors for student Veterans. This project will also support theory development as it relates to programming and services for military-connected students.

Results will be shared through traditional channels of academic dissemination, as well as a strategic plan for the Chez Veteran Center to use for future programming and services. In addition, the CVC hopes to pilot launch a continuing education opportunity for practitioners that represents Chez's role on the national stage.

Student Highlight: Air Force Veteran **Jay Estes**

The Chez Veterans Center (CVC) is honored to share the achievements and character of our military-connected students.

Jay Estes is one of those students. The C-U Sunrise Rotary Club invited military-connected students to a Veterans Day dinner, where he was praised for his service work and networking ability; he immediately took opportunities to serve the community as a volunteer, including a stint with Rotary members at the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen in Champaign.

We asked Estes to share a little more about himself and his journey to the University of Illinois.

“When I first separated from the Air Force in January 2021, I knew I wanted to go back to school but I had no clue on where I should go. I served 8½ years of active duty in the Air Force where I was stationed in Charleston, S.C. and Boston. I served as a Security Forces member for five years then switched over to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations for my last three years. I never could imagine all the great things I would see and accomplish in the Air Force. I got to travel the world and be a part of some great teams and missions. I’m originally from Chicago so attending the University of Illinois was one of my top choices.



Air Force Veterans Jay Estes (left) credits the Chez Veterans Center with helping him transition from the military to college and civilian life.

“As I conducted my research on U. of I., I discovered they had a high rating for a Veteran-friendly institution. However, I know some things can be exaggerated so I decided to reach out to the CVC months before I made my final decision to attend the university.

“Before making my final decision, I had to chance to speak to a handful of staff members who were welcoming and very helpful with answering all my questions about attending the university. When I took my first visit to U. of I., I met with Jason [Sakowski]

**I CAN'T EXPLAIN HOW
LIVING AT THE CVC HAS
HELPED ME TREMENDOUSLY
DURING MY TRANSITION.”**

and Garret [Anderson] who had a wealth of information to share that helped me prepared for my transition. From day one, the CVC made it clear that their main mission was to help support and guide me as I embarked on this new journey. I think one of the most important things I have benefited from interacting with the CVC is connecting with other military connected students. I know at some point I would have connected with other military connected students, but the Chez made this process easier.

“I can’t explain how living at the CVC has helped me tremendously during my transition. Sometimes I can’t believe how fortunate I am to live in a place like this. The CVC aided in introducing me to the C-U Rotary Club this semester. The C-U Rotary Club performs a lot of service work in the community, which is something I was looking to get into to interact more with the C-U community and give back.”

AHS honors **three outstanding alumni**

The three University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign graduates who received this year's alumni awards from the College of Applied Health Sciences have amassed impressive accomplishments.

AHS Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Trevor Bates is the president of Wilmington College in Wilmington, Ohio. While completing his master's degree in kinesiology at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, he served a pre-doctoral fellowship in athletic training [a program in the Department of Kinesiology at the time] and provided clinical athletic training to student-athletes in the wheelchair athletics program of the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES). Of his time in DRES, he said, "It was exactly what I was looking for. I learned that the impact of an injury on the life of a person who uses a wheelchair is a lot different."

On receiving the AHS Distinguished Alumni Award, Bates said, "When I received the notification, I was quickly reminded of my mother's advice. She said, 'Make a difference. Work hard when no one important is watching.' I feel truly blessed to be the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient."



Harold Scharper Award

Michal Nowicki is an associate attorney with Marashlian & Donahue, located in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. He completed his law degree in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Law in 2018. He recalled his law school days fondly. "I was very fortunate to be part of a law school class that bonded closely, especially during the first year when there is no flexibility in choosing schedules. I developed several lifelong friendships as a result."

"DRES really topped things off very well," he continued. "They consistently provided reliable accommodations so that I could focus on academics and not have to fight for what I needed, as too many people I have known, unfortunately, have had to do in their academic endeavors."

AHS Young Alumni Award

Manu Edakara majored in community health as an undergraduate because his parents wanted him to be a doctor, and he thought it would be the best avenue for preparing for that role. He did not become a doctor, however. Instead, he now directs UIUC's iVenture Accelerator, one of the top educational entrepreneurship programs in the country. He firmly believes his education in AHS prepared him well for his entrepreneurial role.

"I credit my discipline, positive outlook and holistic approach to leadership and management to my deep understanding of health and wellness and how much it matters," he said. "I've accomplished everything that I set out to do when I graduated college. I'm very happy and fulfilled where I am. I'm very grateful for where I am and very humbled. I'm doing what I want and every day is really good."

New faculty



Hallal



Hanks



Hernández-Saavedra



Kraay

Department of Kinesiology and Community Health

Pedro Hallal

Director of Master of Public Health Program and Professor

Ph.D. Epidemiology, Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil

Research interests: physical activity and public health.

“As a Brazilian researcher with connections in many countries, I have visited hundreds of universities and schools over the past 20 years. ... the warm welcome I received in Champaign-Urbana was special on the two occasions I visited the College of Applied Health Sciences.”

Matthew Hanks

Assistant Professor

Ph.D. Kinesiology, Auburn University

Research interests: the role of physical activity and exercise on shoulder biomechanics, pain, and pathology across the lifespan of manual wheelchair users.

“I decided to join the faculty of the College of Applied Health Sciences to conduct collaborative, impactful research to improve health and quality of life in our community and to mentor the next generation of allied health professionals and clinical researchers.”

Diego Hernández-Saavedra

Assistant Professor

Ph.D. Nutritional Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Research interests: beneficial effects of exercise to understand the adaptations in key metabolites and lipids in health and disease; the epigenetic mechanisms associated with exercise that improve metabolism and bioenergetics; the transgenerational effect of sedentarism and exercise on metabolism and cardiac function.

“The College of Applied Health Sciences offers a wide variety of research concentrations and opportunities for community engagement as they span the whole gamut of health promotion and disease prevention.”

Alicia Kraay

Assistant Professor

Ph.D. Epidemiology, University of Michigan

Research interests: enteric pathogens and COVID-19; the environmental transmission of infectious disease pathogens; the impact of public health interventions such as social distancing and vaccination; changes in infectious dynamics over time in response to ongoing pathogen evolution.

“I decided to join the faculty here at UIUC because of the strong support for interdisciplinary research across

campus and for the opportunity to help build the MPH program and teach undergraduate students about public health.”

Joshua Leonardis

Assistant Professor

Ph.D. Kinesiology, University of Michigan

Research interests: shoulder pathology and manual wheelchair propulsion in children and adults with spinal cord injury; the prediction of shoulder injury for disease prevention in children and adults with spinal cord injury.

“Joining the College of Applied Health Sciences was an easy decision. The University of Illinois is among the best institutions of higher education in the world, which would give me the opportunity to teach the brightest minds and work alongside international leaders in their fields.”

Aline Lamas

Coordinator of Global Affairs and Instructor

Ph.D. Sociology, Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil (expected 2023)

Research interests: fostering connections with universities in the Global South; recruiting graduate and undergraduate students from other countries; implementing study abroad experience; building international relationships that facilitate online certificates and coursework.



Leonardis



Lamas



Pearson



Fernandez



Pitas



Endres



Fredericks

Sara Pearson

Teaching Assistant Professor
DVM, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Research interests: improving human, animal, and environmental health; zoonotic disease transmission and prevention in both companion and agricultural animals.

“Teaching was not something I ever expected to do in my career. I joined UIUC as a part-time veterinarian and on a whim, applied for an adjunct lecturer position in KCH. I quickly discovered that I LOVE teaching. I am truly honored to be part of the College of Applied Health Sciences.”

Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism

Mariela Fernandez

Associate Professor
Ph.D. Recreation, Sport and Tourism,
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Research interests: environmental injustices affecting Latinx urban communities, with primary focus on limited access to greenspaces such as community parks; improving engagement with and representation in communities for Latinx residents.

“As an alumnus of UIUC, I have tremendous respect and admiration for the university. I decided to join the faculty ranks at UIUC given its reputation as a cutting-edge research institution.”

Nicholas Pitas

Assistant Professor
Ph.D. Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, Pennsylvania State University

Research interests: the benefits of parks and recreation services; innovative methods for financing and delivering these services.

“The Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism was instrumental in the establishment of recreation management as an academic area, and it’s one of the oldest in our field. Today, it has a strong reputation, and is regarded as a one of the best places to be a student and alumni.”

Renata Endres

Teaching Assistant Professor
Ph.D. Economics, University of Ljubljana in Slovenia

Research interests: the adoption of renewable energy technologies and environmental support instruments; sustainable tourism initiatives as a form of economic development, especially in the context of agritourism and food-based tourism.

“AHS is a dynamic community of scholars where I can connect my passion for recreation, sport and tourism with my training as an economist to engage in new research opportunities and inspire students to explore careers in this exciting industry.”

Jacob Fredericks

Teaching Assistant Professor
Ph.D. History and Philosophy of Sport, Pennsylvania State University
Research interests: histories of race, sport, and culture.

“I joined the faculty of AHS and RST because I love working with students. I am very passionate about the impact sporting and recreational activities have on a community and the potential these activities have to promote a healthy lifestyle.”

Department of Speech and Hearing Science

Michael Brown

Teaching Assistant Professor
Au.D. Audiology, University of Florida
Research interests: teaching and mentoring clinical audiology students.

“I just completed my 40th year as a clinical audiologist. During that same timeframe, I was also involved with teaching. This year I was offered the opportunity to increase my instructional load in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences. I was happy to accept this new challenge in the hopes that my clinical experiences could add perspective to my new and existing course offerings.”

AHS *by the numbers*

32%

OF AHS
STUDENTS ARE
FROM UNDER-
REPRESENTED
GROUPS



Fall 2022 Enrollment

2,573 // Total Students

UNDERGRADUATE



382 // Freshmen



516 // Sophomores



590 // Juniors



696 // Seniors



2,184 // TOTAL

GRADUATE



240 // Masters



149 // Ph.D.s



389 // TOTAL

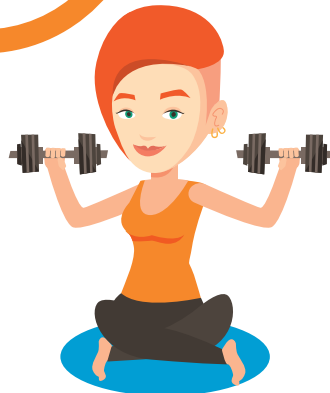
65%

OF AHS STUDENTS ARE WOMEN

Women: 1,684

Men: 888

Information not available: 1



86%

Illinois

OF AHS
STUDENTS ARE
FROM ILLINOIS

2,213 students

AHS Administration

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Associate Dean for Academic Affairs: **Reginald Alston**

Associate Dean for Administration: **Suzanne Rinehart**

Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs: **Amy Woods**

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Recreation, Sport and Tourism: **Carla Santos**

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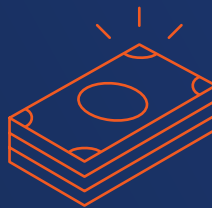
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– Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell | Dean, College of Applied Health Sciences