The summer is moving along quickly for the students, faculty and staff in the Physical Therapy Department at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences. The main campus is fairly quiet, but in the PT Department, the students are diligently completing summer courses and anticipating upcoming clinical experiences in the fall.

On May 16, the Class of 2015 received their doctoral hoods and celebrated graduation. The hooding ceremony is a special time for graduates, providing the opportunity to be recognized for their accomplishments while sharing the stage with family and friends. It is a rare experience among university settings. Typically students in a professional program would walk across the stage with the hood already placed over him or her. Family and friends would see the graduate cross the stage and could meet them at a later time after the ceremony. When the UND PT program began offering the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree, the Department initiated a hooding ceremony on the same morning as the UND Commencement Ceremony. The graduates select family, significant others or friends to participate in the hooding ceremony. As the graduate takes his or her place in the center of the stage, family and friends place the doctoral hood onto the graduate to recognize the graduate’s accomplishments. Having friends and family involved in the ceremony symbolizes the caring support of family and friends who have offered encouragement, a listening ear and maybe some tuition money to help the graduates achieve their first professional goal. Photos from the 2015 hooding ceremony can be viewed here.

One group of individuals who are integral to the success of the graduates is the clinical faculty. The students in the graduating class had many opportunities in the clinic, and we greatly appreciate the support and assistance of clinical coordinators, clinical instructors and clinical sites in developing this class of physical therapists.

In other news, Tom Mohr, PT, PhD, associate dean of health sciences, Chester Fritz Distinguished Professor and past chair of the PT Department, was recognized by the American Physical Therapy Association with the Catherine Worthingham Fellow Award for education, advocacy and research. The Catherine Worthingham Fellow award is the highest recognition from the APTA. Tom’s accomplishments now include the highest honor from the APTA, the Richard McDougall Long Term Service Award from the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy, and the Chester Fritz Distinguished Professorship at UND. Learn more about Tom’s award here.

The new School of Medicine and Health Sciences building remains on budget and on time. We have had opportunities to tour the site with more visits to follow. The new building will bring together the medical, basic sciences and health sciences departments under one roof. The building structure will facilitate collaboration between professions as students will be assigned to four different multidisciplinary learning communities. The learning communities will provide opportunities for students to learn about similarities and differences among the various professional programs. At the same time, the learning communities offer lounge and study space for the students to focus on mastering the knowledge and skills of their separate professions. The Physical Therapy faculty will be located in a suite of offices on the third floor of the building. The suite of offices will contain faculty in Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Athletic Training and Medical Laboratory Sciences. It will be an exciting year as we make final preparations for the move to the new building and seek out opportunities to capitalize on the new structure and classroom options the building will provide. You can follow the building progress here.

Finally, as I come to the end of my first year as chair, I want to thank the faculty, students, clinical faculty and alumni for your dedication to improving the UND PT program, support of clinical experiences and clinical sites, and contributions of professional and financial resources. I hope that you enjoy this alumni newsletter and your summer.

David Relling, PT, PhD
Chair, Department of Physical Therapy
UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences
Focus on Alumni

Holly (Power) Bommersbach, MPT ’93

Holly received her Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy degree in 1987 and her Master of Physical Therapy degree in 1993 from UND. After graduation, she was employed in small hospital settings in rural Minnesota. She said those experiences were a great way to start her career and provided a wide variety of treatment areas including occupational medicine, pediatrics, geriatrics, home health, orthopedics and acute care. She is currently a physical therapist in outpatient services at Altru Health System in Grand Forks, N.D.

Holly said she enjoys the outpatient practice because it allows her to see a wide variety of diagnoses. Her special interests are women’s health and pelvic floor issues. “Working in Grand Forks provides the opportunity for frequent collaboration with PT students from UND and with PTA students from Northland Community College in East Grand Forks, Minn.,” she said. In addition to working with students in the clinic, she said she has enjoyed the opportunity to guest lecture on women’s health topics.

When asked how the PT profession has influenced her life, she said she has come to realize how fortunate she is to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of so many people on a daily basis. “It can be truly gratifying and fulfilling,” she said.

One of Holly’s favorite sayings is, “Your patient doesn’t care what you know until they know that you care.” She said that a sincere and caring attitude, without arrogance, goes a long way in cultivating a productive relationship with patients.

Holly and her husband Scott live in Grand Forks where they have raised their three children. Tanner is a medical student at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.; Shelby is a nursing student in Moorhead, Minn.; and Bryce will begin his freshman year at UND this fall.

Beth Helgerson, BSPT ’87, MD ’94

Beth is a 1987 graduate of the UND PT Program. After graduation, she was employed as a staff physical therapist at the Rehabilitation Hospital (now Altru Rehabilitation Center) in Grand Forks, N.D., for three years. She then attended medical school at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences and received her degree in 1994. Beth is employed as an Ob-Gyn at Women’s Care of Wisconsin, a private practice in Neenah, Wis.

Beth says the physical therapy profession has given her a respect for the medical field in general. For new practitioners starting their professional career, she encourages them to always strive to learn more and improve in their service to others.

Beth and her husband have two daughters, ages 25 and 17.

LuAnn Herkstroeter, BSPT ’86

LuAnn is a 1986 graduate of the UND PT Program. She was first employed as a PT at Penrose Hospital in Colorado Springs, Colo. LuAnn said Penrose was a great facility for learning about specialty areas of practice, with many mentors available for a new graduate. She then moved back to Laramie, Wyo., and worked at Ivinson Memorial Hospital (IMH), primarily in outpatient and work hardening–performing Key Method Functional Capacity Assessments, on-site jobsite assessments–and inpatient as needed.

At IMH, she enjoyed conducting back schools one to two times a month for several years–some in-house, and some on-site for Medicine Bow and Routt National Forest employees in Colorado and Wyoming. Scattered through both of these jobs and some home health work were opportunities to provide body mechanics education for hospital employees, home care staff and nursing students.

In January 2004, LuAnn established Homestead Physical Therapy in Laramie. She started as the lone practitioner and has seen her practice grow to as many as 10 therapists and staff. Her goal in opening her own clinic was to make physical therapy feel safe, accessible and friendly so that people would not be afraid to seek the care they need and deserve. Homestead’s motto is “Quality, Dignity, Results,” reflecting the expectations that patients should have for their care.

LuAnn said her education at UND gave her confidence to be able to practice safely and well. “This empowerment has carried forward since, professionally and personally,” she said. “It’s such a joy to be able to truly make a difference in people’s lives. In return, this enriches mine as well.” She enjoys designing functional exercises that incorporate and respect the patient’s lifestyle and work instead of sticking to calisthenics-style exercises. Her focus is orthopedics, manual therapy including FAKTR, McKenzie evaluation and treatment, work injury management, and other areas as needed. LuAnn said there are currently several therapists, a great support staff and the most awesome patients in the world at Homestead!

LuAnn’s research interests include finding more uses for infrared and laser technologies. She is greatly interested in quantifying manual therapy benefits to fascia and circulation. Her goal is to be able to justify early physician referral to PT after mastectomy, major trauma, and surgery for scar and lymphedema intervention.

LuAnn served on the Wyoming Division of Workers’ Compensation Rehab Advisory Panel for 19 years. Her duties on the panel included assisting their administrative RNs and claims analysts by clarifying documentation, educating them about the purpose and appropriate uses of various treatments, and determining progress of rehabilitation for their injured employees. The four-therapist panel, operating from 1993 to 2012, helped develop a structure to foster communication between therapists and the state for the benefit of injured employees in the system and the therapists (PT, OT and speech).

When asked what advice she would give to new practitioners, LuAnn recommended remaining open to new ideas, always accept mentoring and never stop brainstorming with other therapists. “Choose continuing education well, and be sure to use it once you get it,” she said. “Pay attention to the details, like quality documentation. Never ‘publish’ anything you wouldn’t want to stand behind in court ... because you just never know.”

LuAnn and her husband Hank live on 77 acres outside of Laramie and share their space with horses, dogs and cats. Their daughter Lindsay has returned to Laramie after living out of state for several years, and they feel blessed to see her often. Before starting her own practice, LuAnn and her husband took time to run an independent rodeo event for speed horses, including barrels and pole bending. She also enjoyed team roping for a few years as a member of the U.S. Team Roping Championships and barrel racing with the National Barrel Horse Association.

(Continued on page 3)
Denise (Merkel) Kroke, BSPT ‘86

A 1986 graduate of the UND physical therapy program, Denise (Merkel) Kroke is employed at Sanford Health Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Fargo, N.D. From 1986 to 1988, she worked in rehabilitation and outpatient therapy at the Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Forks, N.D. Since 1988, she has worked in outpatient orthopedics and sports medicine at PT-OT Partners, HealthSouth and Orthopedic Associates, all located in Fargo. In addition, she has been a clinical coordinator of student education since 1988.

Denise said that working as a physical therapist has taught her compassion and patience, and has given her the motivation to practice a healthy lifestyle. She said she has been inspired by her colleagues through their dedication and strong work ethic, as well as their generosity. “I consider it a privilege to be able to work with patients and assist them in obtaining a better quality of life,” she said.

As new practitioners begin their professional careers, Denise would encourage them to expand their knowledge through consulting with colleagues and attending continuing education courses. She said one of the exciting aspects of physical therapy is the challenge to continually learn and improve skills. She added that listening to the patient will help in gaining valuable insight as to the best approach in treating that individual.

Denise feels the emphasis toward an evidence-based practice has never been stronger and that the possibility of more outcome-based reimbursements may be a reality in the near future. With these factors in place, she hopes to see more research specific to the field of physical therapy. However, she still believes the field is a mixture of both science and art, and successful outcomes related to clinical experience should never be discounted.

Denise’s husband Mike is a self-employed physical therapist and partner at PT/OT Partners. They have two sons: Jacob is 21 years old and majoring in Biology at North Dakota State University; Jared is 18 and will be attending NDSU for engineering. In her spare time, Denise enjoys attending her sons’ sporting events, exercising, and spending time with family and friends. She is also an active volunteer at church and with her sons’ high school activities.

Tyler Jepson, DPT ’06, recently accepted an academic position in the Physical Therapy program at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse.

Forty-eight physical therapy students, members of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Class of 2017, ceremoniously began their clinical studies at the Entrance Into Professional Service Ceremony in Grand Forks on July 16.

The students in this class, 29 women and 19 men, range in age from 21 to 36 years, with the average age of 23. Many are from North Dakota, and most completed their pre-PT coursework at UND. Students and their hometowns are listed at http://www.med.und.edu/news/2015/07/dpt-class-of-2017-begins-clinical-studies.cfm.

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Judy Siegle; she is a speaker, author, two-time Paralympian, and disability advocate. Siegle is a highly decorated healthcare professional with over 20 years of experience. As a young adult, her life was dramatically changed after a car crash resulting in a spinal cord injury. She turned personal tragedy into a platform for a life of success and deep significance.

Bev Johnson, associate professor and assistant director of clinical education, was recently appointed to the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) Physical Therapy Panel. She serves on the PT Panel as the academic administrator. Members of the commission must have served as on-site reviewers to be eligible for appointment. Johnson has been an on-site visitor for physical therapist programs since 1997.

As a commissioner, Johnson reviews physical therapy education programs to assure the programs meet quality education standards developed by the commission.

Johnson earned her Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy, Master of Science in Sport and Exercise Science, and minor in Education from UND; she earned her Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy (Geriatrics) from Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions in Provo, Utah. She received certifications as a geriatric clinical specialist (GCS) through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties and as a certified exercise expert for the aging adult (CEEA) through the Academy of Geriatric Physical Therapy, a component of the American Physical Therapy Association.
Carter, Quinn, Bailey, Charley and Mattea, children of Leslie (Haugen), MPT ‘01, and Torin Berge, MPT ‘99

Conner, Chloe and Olivia, children of Heather (Phillips), DPT ‘05, and Chris Lundeen

Dylan and Blake, sons of Collin, DPT ‘05, and Amanda Wiggins

Eli and Liam, sons of Lacey (Groniger), DPT ‘11, and Luke Wilcox

Leah, Katie and Ben, children of Jessica (Nelson), MPT ‘02, and Matt Strand

Caleb and Henley, children of Jessica (Woehl), MPT ‘02, and Mike Dorrington

Haley, Hunter and Heaton, children of Andrea (Vagle), MPT ‘00, and Jason Brodina, MPT ‘00

Jocelyn and Keegan, children of Beth (Enerson), DPT ‘03, and Aaron Millage

Brayden, Jonah and Nora, children of Emily (Hassenstab), DPT ‘04, and Chris Kuhn, DPT ‘04
Cameron and Abby, children of Mandy (Schumacher), DPT ’03, and Jason Runyan

Caden and Cara, children of Chris, DPT ’03, and Georgette Huravitch

Bella and Evan, children of Heather, DPT ’07, and Dustin Martinson, DPT ’07

Blake, son of Alyssa (Carignan), DPT ’12, and Jon Rollness

Anaya, Elsie, Ian, Caleb, and Micah, children of Lisa (Koel), MPT ’00, and Tony Schneider

Bentley, son of Kaylee (Rundquist), DPT ’14, and Jason Breidenbach

Eva, Halle and Harmon, children of Jess (Holicky), DPT ’08, and Matt Price


Cayden and Sierra, children of Tia, DPT ’11, and Cody Weckerly
Emma, Amryn, Anistyn and Elyse, daughters of Lynae (Jost), DPT ’05, and Mike Heringer

Max and Cole, sons of Ember (Bopp), DPT ’07, and Eric Ingebretson

Easton and Embrey, children of Nolan, MPT ’03, and Kelly Lubarski

Joey, son of Laura (Glassman), DPT ’11, and Tim Fugleberg

Zachary and Benjamin, sons of Michele (Brien), MPT ’00, and Jon Morse

Sawyer, son of Tera (Bahl), DPT ’05, and Greg Paulson

Ella, Kate and Jack, children of Lisa (Caspers), MPT ’93, and Don Martin

Cade, Keegan, Cara and Cody, children of Celeste (Hansen), MPT ’98, and Ryan Kostohryz

Mya and Noah, children of Heather (Alderson), MPT ’95, and Keen Chan
Focus on Clinical Instructors

Beth Millage, DPT ’03

Beth Millage is a 2003 graduate of the PT Department at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and is currently employed at an adult outpatient neuro-rehabilitation clinic with Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids Minn. She specializes in working with patients with neurological diagnoses or complex medical conditions. She is certified in LSVT BIG and Parkinson’s Wellness Recovery to help those with Parkinson’s disease through evidence-based interventions, and Neuro-IFRAH-certified for interventions for those with stroke and brain injury diagnoses. Beth is also STAR-certified (Survivorship Training and Rehabilitation) through Courage Kenny to complete rehab with patients having a cancer diagnosis. Her diverse background and experience includes acute care, inpatient rehab, rural settings, and being an instructor for a PTA program.

Beth said she enjoys being a clinical instructor (CI) for UND physical therapy students because it allows her to meet new therapists who will be entering the profession. “It keeps me more easily connected to UND when I can be a CI to their students and have an understanding of their coursework from my past experience,” she said. “I always learn a great deal from every student I work with and love the energy that they bring to each patient session.” Some of her patients return to therapy years later, inquire about particular students who worked with them and are genuinely interested in hearing about the student’s success post-graduation. Beth said she enjoys staying in touch with the students to pass along a hello or to be able to update the patient on where a student has started his or her career.

Beth added that having a student allows her to think back to her own clinical affiliations, and the good experiences and memories that she has from that time. From a professional standpoint, Beth said she learns new techniques and new ways of looking at a problem by having that student perspective. “All of my clinical instructors were key in shaping me to be the therapist I am today,” she said. “They each showed me a variety of interventions within PT, and different personalities and approaches that can be used when working with people of all backgrounds.”

Beth said clinical education remains critical for the future of the profession. “While the academic curriculum is necessary, it is the clinical application that best teaches us how to take that background, utilize it in the real world and see the modifications often needed,” she said. She added that while evidence-based practice has always been important as a clinical instructor, she feels most therapists would agree that it is increasingly more important in the PT setting to provide clinical “best practice” guidelines. “Having this allows us to have a more streamlined approach and allows patients to maximize their functional abilities with the best outcomes,” she said.

Diana (Dierker) Palm, DPT ’09

Diana (Dierker) Palm is a 2009 graduate of the PT Department at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and is currently employed in outpatient neurology at Sanford Health on South University in Fargo, N.D. She works with a wide variety of neurological diagnoses but said that her personal passion is working with patients having spinal cord injuries. Diana is certified in LSBT BIG for people with Parkinson’s and movement disorders. She also participates in clinic for people having ALS, Huntington’s disease, and muscular dystrophy.

Diana said that as a clinical instructor (CI), she is able to take a step back and think about the “why and how” for techniques that she performs every day. “Being a CI keeps me from getting in a rut and keeps me on my toes,” she said. “It makes me reflect on my practice and how I can be more effective and efficient.” She especially enjoys getting to meet students with different backgrounds and experiences, and feels that each one has a different approach to life and work, therefore providing opportunities to learn from each other.

Diana said it can be very challenging to keep up with evidence-based practice in a busy clinic setting. Therefore it’s also beneficial to work with students who can search out the latest evidence and provide in-services about newer evidence, techniques, functional assessments and more. She hopes that clinical education will continue to focus on specialization for students who are ready for it in their final clinicals. She would also like to see more early exposure to the clinic as a first-year observation.

Diana remembers her own clinical instructor who constantly challenged her to look for the “why” during patient interactions. She said that looking beyond “decreased ROM” and into what was causing the limitation really made her focus on evaluation and critical thinking. “I love when students and patients share a moment of accomplishment,” she said. “A moment when a patient is able to get some independence, perform a task or gain mobility because of therapy, and they both realize they did something great … that’s the reason I love my job, and it’s exciting when a student gets to experience that success.”
Stork Report

Prairie Joy was born to Tia, DPT ’11, and Cody Weckerly on Aug. 9, 2014. She weighed 6 lbs. 10 oz. and was 19 inches.

Savannah made her debut Aug. 18, 2014, to the home of Alishia, DPT ’11, and Kyle Daily. She weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 19.5 inches.

Sasheen, DPT ’13, and Justin Laducer are the proud parents of a baby girl born March 30, 2015. Embry weighed 7 lbs. 9 oz. and was 19.5 inches.

Laura (Glassmann), DPT ’11, and Tim Fugleberg welcomed baby Oliver to their family April 21, 2015. He weighed 8 lbs. 14 oz. and was 21 inches. Joey is very excited to be “big” brother!

Heather (Sletten), DPT ’07, and Jon Studsrud, and big sister Kenley announce the birth of their baby girl Tatum, born May 22, 2015. She weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 21 inches.