



Physician Assistant SPOTLIGHT

For alumni and friends of the University of
Wisconsin-Madison Physician Assistant Program

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

Program Director
Ginny Snyder Retires 1

New Faculty Member
Kelsey Henriquez 3

2024 Commencement . . . 3

Class of 2024 4

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University of Wisconsin–Madison
Physician Assistant Program

Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue, Room 1278
Madison, WI 53705

Phone: (608) 263-5620
Toll-free: (800) 442-6698
Email: paprogram@wisc.edu
physicianassistant.wisc.edu

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PROGRAM DIRECTOR GINNY SNYDER RETIRES

A lot changes in any field over 20 years. But when it comes to physician assistant (PA) studies, the past two decades have been nothing short of revolutionary. Among these changes: the ever-evolving scope and autonomy of PA practice, the proliferation of advanced degree programs and introduction of medical specializations, new team-based approaches to health care delivery, educational and online technology, global health initiatives, distance degree programs, and the growing need for primary care providers, particularly in rural and other underserved communities.

As director of the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) Physician Assistant Program, **Virginia “Ginny” Synder, PhD, PA-C ‘01**, steered the PA Program through each of these changes, and more.

Snyder was named full-time director of the PA Program in 2008, after serving as interim director for two years prior. But she began her career as a biology professor, and later department chair,



Ginny Snyder celebrating retirement

at UW–Platteville. What led her to change course? “I received my doctorate at the Medical College of Ohio,” Snyder explains, “most of my classes were with medical students.” Having developed her own “heart tug” toward medicine, therefore, Snyder left her tenured professorship and enrolled in the same program she would one day direct. “It was the right decision,” Snyder says.

In 2003, Snyder joined the PA Program as faculty associate while practicing in neurosurgery nearby. When she

(Continued on page 2)



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Program Director retires... (Continued from page 1)

assumed full-time directorship five years later, her commitment to instruction simply changed scope, moving from the classroom to the program's curriculum as a whole.

In fact, as employers increasingly sought graduates with advanced degrees, Snyder turned the entire ship. She first oversaw the program's transformation to granting the advanced Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree, launched in 2010. Five years later, in partnership with the Masters of Public Health (MPH) program, the PA Program also matriculated its first cohort of MPH-MPAS dual degree students. Throughout, Snyder oversaw the integration of data-driven methods and competency-based measures to demonstrate improvements in learning.

With a constant eye toward meeting the PA profession's evolving scope, Snyder also saw to it that the program's faculty, eager to integrate cutting-edge course content and innovative teaching methods, received substantial support (often with successful Title VII HRSA grants). Soon, the number of case- and simulation-based training modules increased. Interprofessional coursework and training opportunities multiplied. Clinical rotation options expanded to include more rural clinics, urban health centers, Native American reservations and even rural Belize. Of course, Snyder also spearheaded two thriving distance campuses designed to address the inequitable access to health care across the state.

"That part was fun," Snyder says of the many curricular advances she facilitated over the past two decades. It also sharpened the program's competitive edge, even as accredited PA programs proliferated (from 150 in 2000 to more than 350 in 2024). Today, *U.S. News & World Report* ranks the SMPH PA



*Snyder, Bucky and Jerry Noack,
a previous Program Director*

Program among the top 30 programs in the country.

Snyder's contributions to PA education have not gone unnoticed. Named a Faculty Fellow by the UW-Madison Teaching Academy in 2020, Snyder has also received an SMPH Dean's Teaching Award. The Department of Family Medicine and Community Health (DFMCH) awarded Snyder both a Faculty Excellence Award and, in 2024, the DFMCH Chair's Award. Snyder also received national recognition for her exemplary contributions to PA education with the Master Faculty Award from the Physician Assistants Education Association.

"An outstanding education is a great gift," Snyder says. "It lasts far beyond the classroom or clinic. It improves countless lives."

Academic Director Amanda DeVoss, MMS, PA-C, has been named interim PA Program director. Director of Research and Professional Development Kevin Wyne, MPAS, MSc, PA-C, will serve as interim assistant program director.

Snyder with Rich Dhyanchand from UW-Platteville campus, which recently welcomed its first cohort of students.



New Faculty Member Kelsey Henriquez

Kelsey Henriquez, MPAS, PA-C '18, has joined the PA Program's teaching faculty. Her primary role will be course coordinator for the Women's Health and Pediatrics courses. She will begin teaching in the fall.

After graduating from the PA Program six years ago, Henriquez practiced at Access Community Health Centers, a non-profit organization that serves patients in and around the greater Madison area. There, most of Henriquez's patients were un- or under-insured. Many were experiencing homelessness. Some had recently immigrated from countries in Central and South America, Africa or East Asia. "Being bilingual was an integral part of my practice," Henriquez says, estimating she communicated primarily in Spanish with about half of her patients.

Now Henriquez is eager to prepare future PAs to care for equally diverse patient populations. "I loved being in the PA Program, so I am excited to get to be a part of that journey for other students."



2024 COMMENCEMENT



On May 10, 2024, the PA Program recognized 56 students for completing the Master of Physician Assistant Studies, and honored many award recipients. Congratulations Class of 2024!

L-R, Top-Bottom: PA Program Class of 2024; Kevin Wyne presented Capstone Awards to Kastyn Hebbe, Hannah Zenkovich and pictured Ifunanya Chris-Ukah; PA graduates from the Wausau distance campus celebrate the day; Beverly A. Hutcherson PA Program Lecturer of the Year; Amanda DeVoss with graduate Tasneem Amro; Joel Hill presents Revered Peer

Award to Douglas Marks; Graduate Emma Zalog with PA Program Alumni parents Phillip Zalog, '94 and Kelly Zalog, '92; Erin McCarthy presents Jerry Noack Friend of the Program Award to Melissa Metoxen; Bev Speece presents Preceptor of the Year to Craig Kilroy-Sikkema, PA-C; Medical Director Dipesh Navsaria congratulates Samantha Powell.



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750 Highland Avenue, Room 1278
Madison, WI 53705

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Marissa Block
Maya Botomani-Mposi
Emily Ann Bottiani
Caroline W. Butts
Zach Byington
Ifunanya Chris-Ukah
Alexandra Christian
Meredith DeCent
Emily Diep
Delaney Doering
Samantha Fedorowicz
Alyssa Ann Fibison

Rebekka Gallardo
Laura Gildersleeve
Jaclyn Green
Kastyn Hebbe
Emily Heinen
Kaylee Jensen
Nathan Glen William Johnson
Holly Keddington
Allison Kornelly
Levi Lawry-Shefchik
Nathan Lesnick
Vanessa Loe
Mya Amalie Lonnebotn
Stephan Mance
Douglas M. Marks
Bri Matundulo
John McCarthy
Makayla Melvin
Maureen Nwozo

Daniel Obi
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