

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #12

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2023

## HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL IOWANS

How can PTs improve healthcare access for all Iowans? Thoughts from the 10th annual Iowa Educational Summit. p.5

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DR. GEORGE SOPER

1966 PTRS graduate Dr. George Soper ushered in PT clinical specialties and transformed healthcare systems. p.6

## PTRS COMMUNITY MILESTONES

Faculty promotion, publications and grants, PhD conferral, Foundation for PT PODS II award, DPT graduation. p.7-11



## A New Home for Iowa Physical Therapy

Construction is underway at the Health Sciences Academic Building (pg. 4)

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Staffing shortages threaten quality patient care - but high-value PT education can make a difference.

## 4 Construction Begins on Health Sciences Academic Building

Our new Department home will feature student-focused learning spaces and world-class research laboratories in the heart of the UI Health Care campus.

## 5 Iowa Educational Summit: Healthcare Equity for all Iowans

Physical therapists are key players in the effort to create health equity for patients from every background.

## 6 Alumni Spotlight: Dr. George Soper

Meet an Iowa PT alumnus who steered the evolution of PT practice and became a health-systems leader.

## 7 PTRS Department Milestones

Faculty promotion, PhD conferral, and Foundation for Physical Therapy Research PODS-II Award

## 8 DPT Commencement

We congratulate the 2022 DPT class and thank the many donors who provided student scholarships.

## 9 Faculty Grants and Publications



**Alumni, we want to hear from you!**

Scan the code or email us (physical-therapy@uiowa.edu) to keep us posted on all your latest personal and professional milestones!

## UI PTRS Reception at CSM 2024

University of Iowa PT alumni and friends are invited to a reception at the 2024 APTA Combined Sections Meeting (CSM) in Boston.

If you'll be at CSM, please plan to attend!

**February 15, 2024**

7:00 - 9:00 PM

Westin Boston Seaport  
Marina Ballroom I,  
Harbor Wing Lobby Level



*In February 2023, the DPT2 class attended CSM in San Diego, CA. As part of their professionalism development training, they attended poster and platform sessions and engaged with APTA career resources.*



## AMIDST CHALLENGE IS OPTIMISM

An attention-grabbing headline, “Physical Therapists Face Staffing Shortages, and Kids Are Paying the Price”<sup>1</sup>, hit my inbox last week. Factors contributing to these shortages are increased student debt, stagnant clinical starting salaries, and reduced insurance reimbursement rates in healthcare.

Students today have a conundrum: Do they fulfill their dream to care for those who need their services, or do they look for more lucrative landscapes to secure their personal financial health? Importantly, if they stay in healthcare, but disengage and eventually burn out, then the staffing shortage challenge escalates in the future.

We recently published a paper entitled “Healthcare Educational Debt in the United States: Unequal Economic Impact within Interprofessional Team Members”<sup>2</sup>, which highlights the net present value of various medical specialties and health-related professions, including physical therapy. As the title suggests, healthcare is a “team sport,” and a team’s success relies on the health of its various partners. I believe that students who have a positive academic experience, at a reasonable cost, are more likely to become a resolute partner with a commitment to the success of their healthcare team.

Despite the physical therapist staffing challenges we face; academic leaders are already initiating goals to improve the value of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Over 125 academic programs nationwide are participating in the University of Iowa’s Benchmarking in Physical Therapist Education study. By monitoring benchmarks like educational quality, student experience, and student debt, we can assess novel interventions to understand the value of the DPT degree (Quality/Cost). Coupled with the excellent work from our American Physical Therapy Association, we know the economic cost savings that physical therapists bring to the care of several high impact patient populations.

We have much to be optimistic about as we close out this year. Enjoy our newsletter and I wish you all happy holidays and a peaceful and productive New Year!

**Rich Shields PT, PhD, FAPTA**  
Chair and Department Executive Officer  
Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science

1. <https://nypost.com/2023/12/03/lifestyle/physical-therapist-face-staffing-shortages-and-kids-are-paying-the-price/>  
2. Shields et al. BMC Medical Education (2023) 23:666 doi:10.1186/s12909-023-04634-1

# A NEW HOME FOR IOWA PHYSICAL THERAPY



Student-focused learning spaces and state of the art research in the heart of the UI Health Care campus

On October 31, PTRS faculty attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Department’s future home, the Health Sciences Academic Building. This state-of-the-art learning and research facility is being built at the northeast corner of Melrose Avenue and South Grand Avenue, just steps from the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. This new facility will offer flexible spaces and technology resources that instructors can use to seamlessly integrate lecture, hands-on practical training, and patient simulation. Student well-being is a priority in the building design, with dedicated spaces for study and



The groundbreaking ceremony was led by University President Dr. Barbara Wilson (3rd from left), Iowa PT Chair Dr. Rich Shields (center) and dignitaries from the University and academic departments.

team learning and with nearby access to greenspace and exercise facilities. Research laboratories will feature collaborative spaces that facilitate discovery, as well as convenient access for research

participants with mobility impairments. The building is scheduled for occupancy in 2026. We look forward to carrying forward our Department’s rich history of excellence in this new space.

# IOWA EDUCATIONAL SUMMIT: HEALTHCARE EQUITY FOR ALL IOWANS

On September 15, students, faculty, and members of Iowa's PT clinical community attended the 10th-annual Iowa Educational Summit. This year's event focused on "Healthcare Equity: Are We Meeting the Needs of All Iowans?"



Dr. Paul Gilbert

**Paul Gilbert, PhD, ScM**, from the University of Iowa College of Public Health opened the session with a discussion of key principles from public health research, including the distinction between health equality and health equity (See Figure). He described how public health research distinguishes between health differences, which are caused by biological factors (eg. the much higher rate of breast cancer in women than in men) and health disparities, which are "a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage."

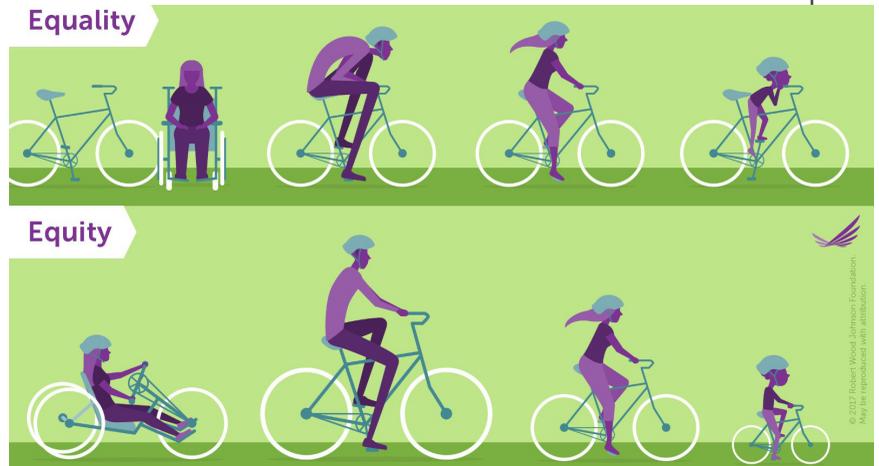


Photo: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Dr. Katie Imborek

**Katie Imborek, MD** from the Carver College of Medicine Department of Family Medicine described the work of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics LGBTQ+ clinic to address health disparities experienced by members of sexual and gender minority communities throughout Iowa.

Dr. Imborek described barriers to health care access that are especially steep for the transgender community, such as uncomfortable clinic environments, providers with insufficient knowledge and expertise, legislation that limits access to care, and electronic medical records that perpetuate mis-gendering. She highlighted the importance and effectiveness of allyship, in which providers can use their position and voice to support their LGBTQ+ patients.

The session concluded with a panel discussion led by Iowa PTs whose clinical work addresses issues of equity in rehabilitation care. **Charlotte Bailey BS, MPT, DPT** described a systems-level approach to increasing equity, focused on forging relationships and trust across health systems, communities, and interprofessional teams. **Mary Hausler, DPT** described major barriers to pelvic healthcare access in Iowa, emphasizing that access to pelvic PT is essential for populations of any gender, across the lifespan, and across all activity levels. **Marcie Becker DPT, GCS** highlighted ways to reduce barriers to healthcare equity for Iowans living in rural areas, emphasizing the power of reflective PT practice that examines and regulates unintentional biases and that addresses cultural barriers to exercise among rural populations.

## Save the Date!

The next Iowa Educational Summit will be held on **Friday, October 4, 2024**.

A golf outing supporting student scholarships will follow in the afternoon. Mark your calendars!

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# DR. GEORGE SOPER

A high-impact career doesn't always begin with a master plan.



George and Sandra Soper

Over the past 45 years, Iowa PT alumnus **Dr. George Soper** witnessed some of the most momentous changes in our profession's history, and he played a pivotal leadership role in several. But his career followed anything but a conventional path.

As a native of Mason City and growing up near Hampton, Iowa, George Soper excelled as an athlete but not as a student. He laughingly relates that his high school principal advised his parents not to bother sending him to college. But after setting a state record in the 440-yard dash, he received a scholarship to the University of Northern Iowa, where he thrived, earning a degree in Physical Education. A mentor suggested that he'd make a great PT. He joined Iowa's program and completed a certificate in PT in 1966, just a year after the inception of Medicare.

### Ushering in Change at UIHC

Dr. Soper practiced briefly in Harlan, IA and then returned to The University of Iowa to take a leadership position at the Hospital School, the forerunner of today's Center for Disabilities and Development. It was there that he met his wife Sandra, an occupational therapist, with whom he has celebrated 53 years of marriage.

He continued his education by completing a Master's degree, then became the director of rehabilitation services at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC). Charles Tipton, a professor in Exercise Science, encouraged him to seek PhD training, which he completed while employed full-time at UIHC. Former Iowa PT chair and current Professor Emeritus Dr. Gary Soderberg was a member of his dissertation committee.

Dr. Soper estimates that at the beginning of his leadership tenure, the UIHC rehab department

consisted of fewer than 12 staff, all of whom practiced as generalists seeing inpatients and a small number of outpatients. Over the next 9 years, Dr. Soper instituted changes that permitted staff to practice in chosen specialty areas, an uncommon arrangement for the era.

### Applying Iowa Lessons Nationally

Dr. Soper was satisfied with the effect of promoting specialized practice at Iowa and he believed this approach would benefit patients and clinicians if applied more broadly. He was elected to the APTA National Board of Directors and in 1975 became a founding member of the Task Force on Clinical Specialization (photo below).

This group, which included other profession leaders such as Stanley Paris and Sandy Burkart, recommended four initial areas of specialization: cardiopulmonary, neurology, orthopedics, and pediatrics – and developed guidelines for



1975: Task Force on Clinical Specialization members Dr. Stanley Paris (left) and Dr. George Soper (right).  
Photo: APTA

specialist certification. Dr. Soper served as a founding member of the Commission for Certification of Advanced Clinical Competence, which today is known as the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS). Dr. Soper looks back with satisfaction on this era and views his contributions to the genesis of clinical specialization, both in Iowa and nationally, as among his proudest professional achievements.

### New Directions as a Leader

In 1980, Dr. Soper received an invitation to come to South Bend, IN to develop a Rehabilitation Institute at Memorial Hospital and Health System. He went on to have a long and productive career as a hospital executive at Memorial, noting that it was very unusual for someone in this field to have roots in PT. Over the next 31 years he became Senior Vice President and helped to found heart and cancer institutes within the Memorial system. In the final 5 years of his career, he oversaw Memorial's Human Resources department, enacting many changes that improved services for employees. He became a Life Fellow of the American College of Health Care Executives, and upon retiring in 2011, this group conferred on him its Regents Award, one of their highest honors.

Dr. Soper's career provides a vivid illustration of how a career in physical therapy can follow unexpected paths, including leadership far beyond the traditional bounds of the profession. Our program is proud to recognize Dr. Soper's leadership contributions and the impact he has made to the practice of PT and to vital healthcare systems that benefit tens of thousands of patients.

## PTRS FACULTY PROMOTED



Dr. Carol Vance

We are proud to announce that Carol Vance PT, PhD was recently promoted to Clinical Associate Professor of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science.

Dr. Vance has been a member of the faculty since 1995 and is the director and primary instructor for three courses in the DPT curriculum: Differential Diagnosis in Physical Therapy, Physical Therapy Management of the Integument System, and Therapeutic Physical Agents. She teaches in the PhD curriculum in the Scholarly Integrity and Responsibility of Research course sequence.

Dr. Vance is a long-standing team scientist within Dr. Kathleen Sluka's Neurobiology of Pain Laboratory. She currently contributes to two NIH-funded clinical trials: the "Fibromyalgia TENS in Physical Therapy" study and the "Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures" multi-site trial.

## PHD DEGREE CONFERRED



Dr. Brady Hanson

Brady Hanson was awarded the PhD degree in Physical Rehabilitation Science in August of 2023.

His dissertation was entitled "Impact of Intermittent Elevations in Shear Rate on Peripheral Endothelial Function." Dr. Hanson was mentored by Dr. Darren Casey and is pursuing postdoctoral research training at the University of Utah Department of Internal Medicine.

## PODS II SCHOLARSHIP



Adam Janowski

The Foundation for Physical Therapy Research has announced that Iowa PhD student Adam Janowski, DPT, has been selected to receive a Promotion of Doctoral Studies II (PODS II) award. The highly competitive PODS awards recognize the potential shown by PhD students to make important contributions as future rehabilitation researchers.

Adam is mentored by Dr. Kathleen Sluka. Dr. Sluka's Neurobiology of Pain Laboratory works to improve the management of pain for people with musculoskeletal conditions by discovering the underlying mechanisms that lead to chronic pain, discovering new therapies for pain management, and improving the use of currently available treatments for pain. Janowski's research project is entitled "The development and validation of a translational model of Myalgia Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome using animal and human designs."

# CLASS OF 2022 COMMENCEMENT



Commencement exercises for our department's 81st graduating class took place on December 15, 2022. Dr. Brooks Jackson, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean of the Carver College of Medicine (former), provided the keynote address.

Thanks to the generosity of many individual and corporate donors, each student in the class received Departmental scholarship support during their studies. Recipients of these awards are:

**Alumni Scholarships:** Nathanael Seaberg, Emma Van Meeteren

**Boldt Family Professional Service Award:** Emma Van Meeteren

**First in Family Honor:** Dana Bailey

**Frank and Marion Hazelton Memorial Scholarships:** Caitlin Purpi, Hannah Van Roekel

**Global Interprofessional Scholarships:** Sara Dekkers, Jacob Dupre, Ben Martin, Emma Van Meeteren

**ILEND Trainee Scholarship Award:** Kylie Kelchen, Louisa Schweigel

**Jean Hammill Scholarship for Physical Therapy:** Jacob Carey

**Kepros Physical Therapy Scholarship:** Ben Martin

**Kincart Family Rural PT Scholarship:** Melania Torchalski

**Louis & Dorothy Laubenthal Memorial Scholarships:** Zoe Hicks, Haley Keller, Zoe Kienenberger, Louisa Schweigel

**Marilyn M. McCoid Scholarships:** Katrina Grevengoed, Caitlin Purpi, Makenzy Schick

**Mary Lou Fairchild Clinical Excellence Award:** Nicole Colonna

**Norman and Ruth Goldman Scholarships:** Sara Dekkers, Kylie Kelchen, Adriana Printy

**Rock Valley Physical Therapy Scholarship:** Tristan Brown

**Team Iowa Physical Therapy Award:** Melania Torchalski, Kayli Torok

**Tracy Dahl Memorial Scholarships:** Dana Bailey, Tristan Brown, Jacob Dupre, Michelle Hafner, Jordan Hoyman, Alexandra Kallner, Carly Langhurst, Nicole Lata, McKenna Llyod, Gabriella Pederson, Emily Sagstetter, Makenzy Schick, Taylor Schiebout, Louisa Schweigel, Morgan Straight, Hannah Van Roekel

**Experiential Scholarship Awards:** Jacob Carey, Nicole Colonna, Jacob Dupre, Anna Fletcher, Katrina Grevengoed, Zoe Hicks, Jordan Hoyman, Kyle Juhl, Kylie Kelchen, Haley Keller, Zoe Kienenberger, Jonathan Klein, Carly Langhurst, Nicole Lata, McKenna Lloyd, Ethan Patterson, Gabriella Pederson, Caitlin Purpi, Emily Sagstetter, Makenzy Schick, Taylor Schiebout, Nathanael Seaberg, Ciera Stitz, Megan Stitz, Morgan Strait, Melania Torchalski, Kayli Torok, Emma Van Meeteren, Hannah Van Roekel, Nicholas Yencer

**Leadership Recognition Awards:** Reilly Bertram, Cassandra Kerkman, Jonathan Klein, Elaina Peterson, Benjamin Schuff, Ciera Stitz

**Outstanding Student in Anatomy:** Megan Stitz

**W.R. Ingram Award for Superior Achievement in Functional Neuroanatomy:** Nathanael Seaberg

**Professional Development Awards:** All members of the class received scholarship support to attend CSM 2022.

In addition, several special scholarship awards were announced at the graduation ceremony:

**Judy Biderman Professionalism Scholarship:** Anna Fletcher, Cassie Kerkman

**Byron E. Bork Dedication to Education & Service Scholarship:** Kyle Juhl

**David G. Gerleman DPT Applied Engineering Award:** Ethan Patterson

Congratulations to all our 2022 graduates, and best of luck in your PT careers!

# RESEARCH GRANT SUPPORT

Principal Investigators

## Ruth Chimenti DPT, PhD

Assistant Professor  
Johns Hopkins University/NIAMS: \$263,067 (Multi-PI)  
*A Sequenced-Strategy for Improving Outcomes in Patients with Knee Osteoarthritis Pain*

## Laura Frey Law, MPT, MS, PhD

Professor  
National Institutes of Health: \$1,501,709 (Multi-PI)  
*Metabolic Biomarkers for Fibromyalgia*

National Institutes of Health: \$14,367,913 (Multi-PI)  
*Clinical Coordinating Center for the Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures Program*

National Institutes of Health: \$406,693 (Multi-PI)  
*Novel Insights into Osteoarthritis, Pain, and Function: MOST 4*

## Richard K. Shields PT, PhD, FAPTA

Professor  
Permobil, Inc: \$52,116 (Multi-PI)  
*Post-Meal Positioning in a Power Wheelchair: Impact on Insulin-Glucose Levels, Muscle Cell Signalling, and Sympathetic Vagal Tone Among People With and Without Spinal Cord Injury*

## Kathleen Sluka, PT, PhD, FAPTA

Professor  
National Institutes of Health: \$2,546,756 (PI)  
*Role of Macrophages in Activity-Induced Pain and Analgesia*

National Institutes of Health: \$1,501,709 (Multi-PI)  
*Metabolic Biomarkers for Fibromyalgia*

National Institutes of Health: \$9,307,793 (Multi-PI)  
*Fibromyalgia TENS in Physical Therapy Study (TIPS): An Embedded Pragmatic Clinical Trial*

National Institutes of Health: \$14,367,913 (Multi-PI)  
*Clinical Coordinating Center for the Acute to Chronic Pain Signatures Program*

## Jason Wilken PT, PhD

Associate Professor  
Department of Defense: \$349,225 (PI)  
*OP210037 - Carbon Fiber Orthosis Cuff Design*

Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs: \$3,969,294 (PI)  
*From Opinion to Evidence: Multi-site Evaluation of Custom Dynamic Orthosis Best Practices*

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acute bout of ischemia-reperfusion. *J Appl Physiol*. 2023 Sep 28. PMID: 37767553. doi: 10.1152/jappphysiol.00314.2023.

Hanson BE, **Casey DP**. Intermittent vs. continuous handgrip exercise and peripheral endothelial function: Impact of shear rate fluctuations. *J Appl Physiol*. 2023 Oct 1;135(4):892-901. PMID: 37650140. doi: 10.1152/jappphysiol.00362.2023.

Post AA, Rio EK, **Sluka KA**, Moseley GL, Bayman EO, Hall MM, de Cesar Netto C, **Wilken JM**, Danielson J, **Chimenti RL**. Efficacy of telehealth for movement-evoked pain in people with chronic achilles tendinopathy: A noninferiority analysis. *Phys Ther*. 2023;pzac171. doi: 10.1093/ptj/pzac171

Hall MM, Kliethermes SA, Henning T, Hoffman DF, Mautner K, Obunadike E, Onishi K, Pourcho AM, Sellon JL, **Chimenti RL**. Three-month complication rate of ultrasound-guided soft tissue surgical procedures across six sports medicine clinics. *J Ultrasound Med*. 2023. PMID: 37376744. doi: 10.1002/jum.16298.

(Continued next page)

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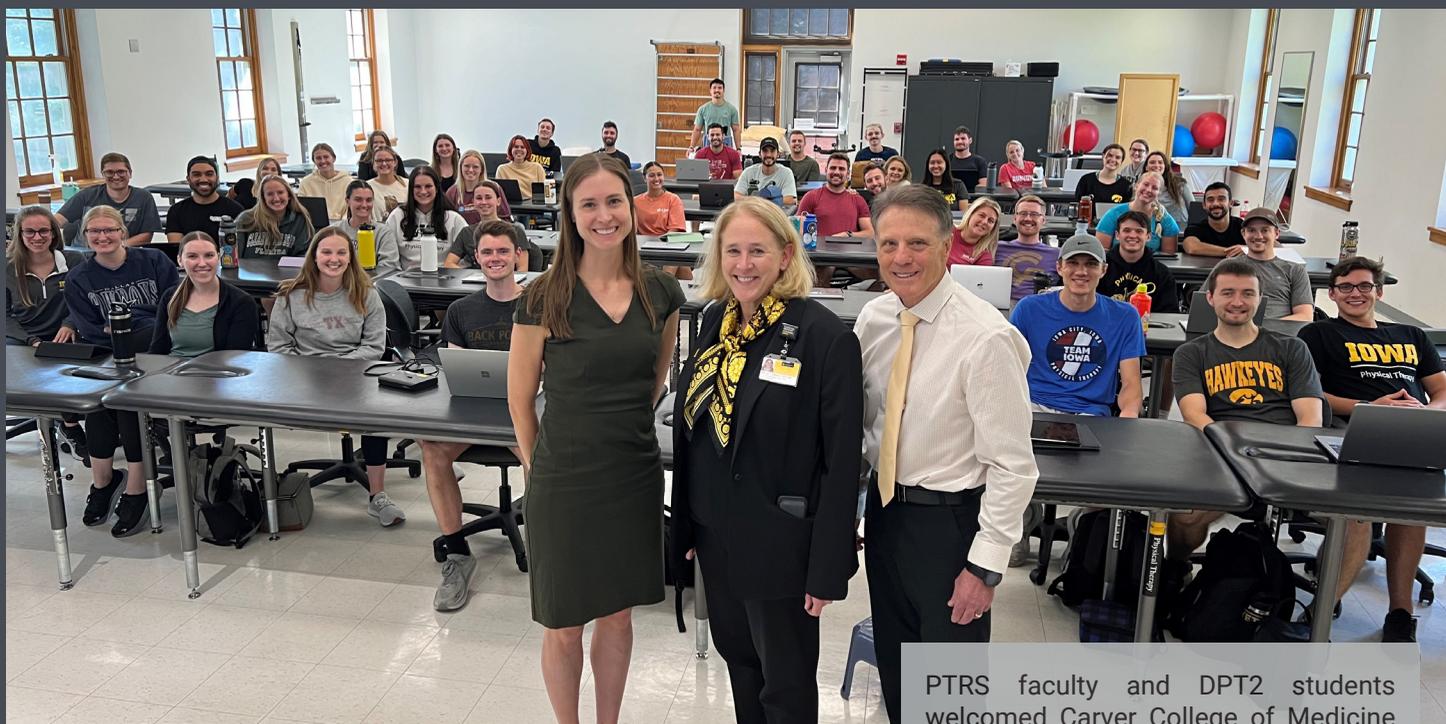
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*Physical Therapy and  
Rehabilitation Science*



PTRS faculty and DPT2 students welcomed Carver College of Medicine Dean Dr. Denise Jamieson (center) to Dr. Ruth Chimenti's Critical Inquiry I: Evidence-based Practice class.

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