Looking back on the past 6 months, the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences has continued to have a presence in the University Community and Southwest Florida through all of our programs, Athletic Training, Exercise Science, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy.

With Hurricane Irma taking a bullseye on the local community, the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences’ laboratories were used as a shelter for local individuals with health care needs. Our students provided many hours of service in the community volunteering to help restore activities.

In this newsletter, we have our alumni spotlights of a few of our graduates. Two of them are graduates of both our department’s undergraduate and graduate programs. Our website has spotlights from many other of our alumni. Heather Roka, Physical Therapy alumni, swam the English Channel this summer. See her story.

Two of our Physical Therapy faculty have received the Marieb College awards for scholarship and teaching. Congratulations to Dr. Arie van Duijn and Dr. Jacqueline van Duijn. Our students have also received awards for their research at the Florida Occupational Therapy Association Conference. Student research has been a focus of our department and the University has placed an emphasis on undergraduate research. Megan Gallagher, an Exercise Science student, received a Honors College Development Grant for a research project with Dr. Dennis Hunt in the area of sarcopenia.

This is FGCU’s 20th anniversary. We look forward to what our new President Dr. Mike Martin and new Provost Dr. James Llorens have in store for the University.

We hope that you enjoy reading about the exciting things happening in our programs! We look forward to the upcoming semester and more news to share.

Eric Shamus, PT, DPT, PhD
Chair, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences
Marieb College of Health & Human Services
Florida Gulf Coast University
5. ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
See what our students and alumni have accomplished!

6. AWARDS AND HONORS
Teaching awards, professional honors and more.

8. ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL
FGCU alumnus, Heather Roka swims the English channel. Read her story.

10. HURRICANE IRMA
Hurricane Irma changed the face of Southwest Florida for years to come, see how FGCU gave back.

12. FGCU AT 20
FGCU celebrates 20 years!

13. FGCU IN THE COMMUNITY
FGCU students volunteer in the Special Olympics and participate in fundraising walks.
15. SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY
See new scholarly activity from the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.

16. DONATE NOW
Make a difference, donate now.

17. SOCIAL MEDIA
Check us out on social media: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

18. DEPARTMENT SERVICES
Body composition, training, performance measurements, visit our page for more information!
Colby Revers, MSOT
Colby earned her bachelors degree from FGCU in Human Performance (now Exercise Science) and graduated from the Masters in Occupational Therapy Program in 2014. Colby is currently working at SPOT Therapy Associates, a pediatric outpatient clinic, where she completed her Level II fieldwork experience. In her current position as an occupational therapist, Colby works with children ranging from 6 months to 16 years of age. Her favorite part of working with this population is seeing patients master a skill after weeks or months of work and practice.

Bridgett Klemz, DPT
Bridgett attended FGCU for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. She graduated from the Human Performance (now Exercise Science) Program and the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. Currently, Bridgett serves as the Clinic Center Manager of Select Physical Therapy, located within a performance gym in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Through her job, Bridgett works with ballerinas at a ballet studio as well as collegiate football players who are preparing for the NFL draft. She encourages future graduates to find a place of employment that provides outlets for mentorship and that encourage employees to pursue their interests.

Alex Wann, DPT
Alex graduated from FGCU’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program in 2016. After graduation Alex accepted a job in Houston, Texas, working for Select Physical Therapy. Alex currently works as a travel PT exploring different areas of the country. This opportunity affords Alex the opportunity to work in a variety of settings and experience different practicing philosophies.
Congratulations to Dr. Arie van Duijn and Dr. Jacqueline van Duijn for receiving the Marieb College Scholarship Excellence Award and Marieb College Teaching Excellence Award. The Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes faculty within Marieb College of Health & Human Services who provide outstanding teaching performance to the college. The Marieb College Health & Human Services Scholarship Excellence Award recognizes a faculty member in the college who has provided outstanding performance to the college with a sustained record of scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals and participation in conferences.

Dr. Maria Colmer (far right), along with Occupational Therapy students (left to right), Karlen Geldmaker, Amanda Erwin, Danielle Chini, and Katelyn Kidwell (not pictured: Tara McKenna, Director, and Thor Parrish, student from the Professional Golf Management Program) standing alongside their award-winning poster, “Golf Swing Analysis for Discussion and Education Relating to Occupational Performance.” The research group won the award for Best Student Poster at the Annual Florida Occupational Therapy Association Conference in Orlando, Florida. Congratulations!

Occupational Therapy students (left to right), Grace Stoner, Victoria Spaziani, Angelo Cruz, and Emily Garcia worked alongside Dr. Brigitte Belanger on their research titled, "Operation Teamwork: FGCU." This research was awarded Honorable Mention at the Annual Florida Occupational Therapy Association Conference for Visually Engaging Poster. The FGCU Veterans 5K is a direct outcome of this research.
The University is making efforts to facilitate undergraduate research at FGCU. Dr. Dennis Hunt will be working with Megan Gallagher, one of our Exercise Science students, to pursue research in the area of sarcopenia. Her Honors College Development Grant was awarded based on the quality of her application, the project’s connection to a Honors College requirement or activity, how her project supports her intellectual development and the significance and scope of her proposed activity.

Thank you to Dr. Kathy Swanick for her service as FPTA President. Under her guidance, FPTA membership has grown and the Florida Physical Therapy Association has continued to advocate for the Physical Therapy profession on the state and local levels.
What made you choose the English Channel as your next challenge to overcome?

During my entire swimming career I always liked to try and find the hardest challenge and tackle it. As a pool swimmer, that usually revolved around pool sets that coaches gave with the plan of trying to cause failure. I thrived off either finishing the set or trying to be the last person going. When I started getting into open water swimming, especially marathon open water swimming, the one swim that seemed to be consistent among all swimmers as the one that really defined you as an open water swimmer due to its challenge was the English Channel. It is almost a rite of passage into the marathon swimming world. The more I looked into the swim the harder it seemed, especially the cold water aspect, as I am from south Florida but that all made the swim more inciting.

What does training to swim across the English Channel entail?

In short, lots of swimming. I tried to swim 4 days a week in the pool aiming for 25,000 yards and anywhere between 2 to 6 hours Saturday and Sunday. The weekend days were the most important, as once I got to Connecticut, they provided the cold water training and practice with rougher and unpredictable conditions. In addition to swimming I had a dry land routine with emphasis on core and shoulder strengthening to decrease risk of injuries.

Did your time at FGCU influence your training for the EC swim?

What I learned in the PT program made a huge impact both in my training and knowing how to deal with injuries that came up as my training intensity increased in the year leading up to the EC. In a way, the most important part it played was in a swim I did to prep for the English Channel. I did the swim across Tampa Bay (24 mile swim) in April. I was grossly undertrained and ended up with severe supraspinatus tendonitis. However, everything I learned from PT school allowed me to stay calm and immediately develop/start on a very successful rehab plan and when I did the English Channel 4 months later I was able to swim it without any shoulder pain.
Has becoming a Physical Therapist changed the way you approach fitness/training?

I don’t think being a physical therapist has changed my basic approach to training or fitness; however, it certainly reinforces the importance of maintaining a fitness level rather than trying to work on your fitness level after an injury or illness. I use patients both as an inspiration to train harder and a reminder about what can happen to people who were elite athletes in their youth but allowed the daily pace of life to encourage bad habits and resulted in deteriorating health at relatively young age.

In terms of swimming career what’s next?

Well, the English Channel certainly has fueled my love for open water swimming, specifically cold water swimming. My most immediate goals include completing the Triple Crown (English Channel, Catalina Channel, and the Swim around Manhattan) but beyond that, I am just looking for challenging, but fun races. I have loved meeting many fellow open water swimmers and am always looking for fun suggestions.

Do you have any advice for people looking to achieve new benchmarks?

Simply find other people who are smarter/more experienced/ willing to share advice. You don’t even realize how lacking your knowledge is until you really listen to that person who is smarter/better than you. In the beginning, I was hesitant to accept too much advice because I really wanted to feel like I was doing everything myself, as I thought that would make my accomplishments more meaningful. Thankfully, after a few humbling swims, I realized accepting help and advice didn’t make me weaker. At the end of the day, I had to take that advice and actually put in the work. No one else could swim for me. Accepting advice allowed me the opportunity to achieve success, but only if I still put in all the work. When I stood out of the water in France, I realized that the accomplishment was actually enhanced when thinking of all the people who so willingly helped me achieve my dream.
**Right:** FGCU DPT students from left to right– Nicholas Larghi, Evann Dickerson, Justin Nessel, David Penly, Jake Alexsuk, and Steven Franks volunteering in Everglades City, Florida with hurricane cleanup. Many homes were devastated by flooding and cleanup efforts were underway to assist with recovery.

**Left:** First year DPT students from left to right– Claire Heller, Allee Stelogeannis, Jake Alexsuk, Logan Halbritter, and Emily Goldman help with water and food distribution post-Hurricane Irma.

**Left:** DPT student Nicholas Larghi overseeing and helping with cleanup at the Naples Botanical Gardens.
Right and below: Occupational Therapy students helping the Lighthouse of SWFL with hurricane cleanup. The Lighthouse of SWFL has been assisting those in the area with visual impairments for years, helping empower and enable them.

Right (left to right): Dr. Edwin Myers, Hannah Jauregui, Victoria Spaziani, and Kayla Harrison.

Below (left to right): Brenda Escutia, Sharena Jean-Baptiste, Hannah Jauregui, and Victoria Spaziani.

Bottom: Occupational Therapy students spent their time at the Naples Botanical Gardens to clean up the damage from Hurricane Irma.
"It started with land and a grand plan..."

In fewer than 20 years, FGCU has made an indelible impact on Southwest Florida. We are a catalyst for the area’s economy and a cultural hub for the community. Our students enjoy one of the highest graduate employment rates among the state’s universities. Learn more about the amazing moments and accolades our university has celebrated during the past 20 years by visiting our website here: https://fgcuat20.com/

Contribute “20” at “20” by donating today! http://www.fgcu.edu/donate
Right: A group of FGCU Physical Therapy students and Dr. Ellen Donald attended the Special Olympics Florida Fall Classic and participated in FUNfitness. FUNfitness was developed by the American Physical Therapy Association as the comprehensive physical therapy component of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Initiative. This program is intended to assess and improve upon various fitness measures, educate participants, families and coaches, and to provide an opportunity for participants to learn more about physical therapy.

Left: Exercise Science students had an opportunity to volunteer with the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation. The students assisted children to improve fundamental baseball skills and served as coaches for scrimmage games. Our students always strive to give back to the community!

Right: Dr. Ellen Donald and the Doctor of Physical Therapy students participated in the 2017 Southwest Florida Walk & Roll on November 18th at Lakes Regional Park. This walk increases awareness and supports the mission of the GBS CIDP Foundation (Guillain Barré syndrome and chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy). The foundation assists in early diagnosis, affordable treatments and dependable support.
Right: The Department of Rehabilitation Sciences had a great showing at the Lee County American Heart Association Heart Walk this year. Students and faculty were joined by Dean Cordova (an event organizer) in this walk to encourage a heart healthy lifestyle and raise funds to fight heart disease and stroke in our community.

Left: FGCU Physical Therapy students participated in the Arthrex Ultrasound Imaging Course. It was a great opportunity to learn and experience Ultrasound Imaging.

Right: The 2nd year Occupational Therapy students and Dr. Edwin Myers went to Sugden Regional Park in Naples, FL to get a hands-on experience with adaptive sailing. Patricia Rosen instructed on boating safety and designing boating programs to meet the challenges of a variety of populations with disabilities. The program is sponsored through Collier County and Freedom Waters, a non-profit organization that provides boating experiences for individuals with disabilities. (Pictured: Ali Sabella and Joan Howell).


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DEPARTMENT SERVICES

The Department of Rehabilitation Sciences offers metabolic testing, VO2 Max testing, and other performance measurements. Additional services include unweighted walking and running in the Alter G treadmill or in the Hydroworks pool. Training sessions can be purchased for different levels of customized exercise training.

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