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Salud y Saludos: The E-News of the College of Health Sciences

College of Health Sciences

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College of Health Sciences

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

Salud y Saludos

The E-News of the College of Health Sciences

Salud y Saludos

December 2012

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From the Dean's Desk



This time of the year is marked by celebrations on every corner of the campus and the promise of exciting new opportunities for our graduates in the coming months. As we recognize the outstanding achievements of our students, this semester marks several important milestones for the [UTEP College of Health Sciences](#).

Most notable is the graduation of our inaugural class in the [Doctor of Physical Therapy program](#).

These 21 students, who entered the program in May 2010, are the first cohort of students to complete this 99-semester credit hour, 31-month program. They are well-equipped to excel in our changing health care environment, with skills in evidence-based practice, wellness and prevention, cultural proficiency and Spanish language, as well as advanced clinical skills for people with musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiopulmonary and integumentary system disorders. Many intend to specialize in one of these areas in their post-graduate training. These graduates received the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree on Saturday evening, December 15, 2012 at the [University Commencement](#) ceremony at the Don Haskins Center.

We are extraordinarily proud of this first class of graduates who have distinguished themselves already as leaders within the physical therapy profession, raising thousands of dollars to support physical therapy research, participating in community service and establishing a high bar for future classes to follow. Best of all, we expect that over 75% of these students will remain in our under-served region and insure a bright future for the physical therapy field in our community.

We also celebrate the success of cohorts of 14 graduates in the Master of [Occupational Therapy program](#) and 12 Master of [Social Work](#) students. These newly-minted professionals will not only advance practice in our region but also join our previous graduates as uniquely qualified bicultural, bilingual health professionals that will serve as models for 21st century practice, both in our region and beyond.

Our faculty's commitment to excellence has been affirmed in the outstanding outcomes of these professional programs and the well-prepared graduates who will help to make our region healthier. We share our pride and excitement with family, friends, mentors and future employers of these talented graduates.

Congratulations to all of our graduates! Go Miners!

First Class of Doctor of Physical Therapy Students Graduates

The [Physical Therapy Program](#) marked a new milestone on Saturday,



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December 15 when the first cohort of students was granted the Doctor or Physical Therapy Degree (DPT). UTEP is proud to join 210 other DPT Programs nationally in granting the Doctor of Physical Therapy. This is in accordance with the [American Physical Therapy Association's Vision 2020](#) that states that by 2020 all physical therapists will be doctors of physical therapy and "practitioners of choice in patients'/clients' management, prevention and wellness services."

During the 31 month program, the 21 graduates were prepared to practice in a variety of settings through rigorous course work including basic sciences, psychosocial aspects of care and advanced patient clinical management courses. Courses such as biomedical imaging, differential diagnosis and evidence-based practice, prepare graduates to practice in the 46 states in which physician referral is not required for physical therapists to evaluate and treat patients. In addition to rigorous didactic courses, the students completed three separate 8-week clinical experiences in acute care, neurology and orthopedics. Their clinical experience culminated in a final 12-week internship that advanced the student's skills in a specific area of practice. In accordance with the DPT Program's Pillars, professionalism, autonomous practice and evidence-based practice were emphasized. Concurrent with this final internship, they completed a Capstone Project in which they used evidence based practice to solve a patient problem encountered on a prior clinical experience. Through a poster presentation on December 13, the students demonstrated clinical decision making commensurate with doctoral training.



In order to prepare graduates well equipped to meet the unique needs of the border region, the [UTEP DPT Program](#) students study and practice medical Spanish terminology throughout the curriculum. Of the 21 graduates in the class of 2012, 16 will remain in the El Paso area. Seven DPT graduates have accepted positions in hospitals and clinics which specialize in acute care, orthopedics and pediatrics.

Four graduates were honored from the class of 2012. Marcos Lopez received the *Outstanding Doctor of Physical Therapy Student Leader* award for his work in fundraising for UTEP and the Texas Physical Therapy Fund to support research. Abby Cano was named the *Outstanding Student Clinician* for consistently performing above expectations in clinical education and the *Outstanding Scholar* for achieving the highest grade point average. JT Killings was voted on by his class and awarded the *Most Valuable PT (MVPT)* as the individual who best represents an ideal physical therapist.

Program Director, Dr. Deborah Diaz and the rest of the DPT Faculty and Staff wish to congratulate the inaugural DPT class of 2012



Abigail Cano, DPT, recipient of the DPT program's *Outstanding Student Clinician* and *Outstanding Scholar* awards, hooded in University Commencement ceremony by DPT Program Director Dr. Deborah Diaz and Dean Kathleen Curtis.

Outstanding Student Award for MSW Students

Two graduates from the inaugural class of the Master of Social Work program were honored with *Outstanding Student Awards*.

Sarah O'Keeffe was admitted into the inaugural Master of Social Work (MSW) class of 2010, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. In addition to her studies, she maintained her involvement with and her commitment to social justice. She was a volunteer at [Annunciation House](#) for several years, including while in the [MSW Program](#). She also co-chaired a committee to organize a Forum on Immigration designed to raise awareness in the community for immigration and human rights issues that drew activists from all over the U.S. and Mexico. She participated in the development of the [Masters of Social Work Student Organization \(MSWSO\)](#) and completed two internships in the MSW program at the Opportunity Center for the Homeless and the Family Service of El Paso. In 2012, she received the *Outstanding MSW Student Award* from NASW- TX Chapter, Rio Grande Region.

Katherine Giovas

is a native El Pasoan. Ms. Giovas was admitted into the inaugural class of the MSW Program in 2010 where she maintained a 4.0 GPA. She was the first recipient of the Society of Social Work Leaders in Healthcare-Texas chapter scholarship for students pursuing social work in health. Her internships included the UMC Infusion Center, and Family Service of El Paso. While in school, she actively participated on various committees and boards including: Crime Victims' Resource Council, Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence Coalition, and the board of the Society of Social Work Leaders in Healthcare-TX. She also served on the board of the MSWSO.

Congratulations to both of these talented graduates!



From left to right: Department Chair, Dr. Candyce Berger, Katherine Giovias, Amanda Morales, Sarah O'Keeffe, Dean Kathleen Curtis.

MSW Students Present Research



Graduating MSW students presented their research projects in the lobby of the Health Sciences and Nursing building on Tuesday, December 11, 2012. A research project is part of the requirements of the MSW degree. Pictured is Sarah O'Keeffe who has been selected as the *Outstanding MSW Student* for the graduating class

of Fall 2012. In addition to Sarah's, presentations were also made by Jose Escobar, Nallely Suarez, Erick Fontanez, Jena Rhodes, Katherine Giovias, Laura Marquez, Melissa Padilla, and Michelle Alvarado. Their research was supervised by Assistant Professor Kathryn Schmidt.

Master of Occupational Therapy Class of 2012

Congratulations to the graduating Master of Occupational Therapy class of 2012! Fourteen MOT students completed their 2nd of two Level II clinical fieldwork rotations across the state of Texas before returning to UTEP for a certification exam review course and graduation festivities last week. More than half of this graduating class already has a job offer



on the table from one of their clinical fieldwork sites, and historically, 75% of them will have offers within 3 months of graduation! Their next step is successful completion of the NBCOT certification examination which will allow them to pursue state licensure in the state in which they choose to practice. On behalf of the faculty of the UTEP [MOT Program](#), congratulations to the MOT Class of 2012 and best wishes on your future endeavors!

Kinesiology Honor Students

The [Department of Kinesiology](#) was represented by two honor students at the Fall 2012 Commencement ceremony.



Kathryn Jimenez served as the College of Health Sciences *Student Marshall of Students*. A high school graduate from Smiths Station High School in Alabama, Kathryn was involved in athletics and cheerleading. In 2009 she and her family moved to El Paso where she completed her Associates Degree from EPCC. She then enrolled at UTEP and majored in Kinesiology with a minor in Education. Kathryn also graduates with Cum Laude

honors. She plans to become a Physical Education teacher as well as to begin a Master's degree program.

Shannon Soto served as the *Undergraduate Banner Bearer*. Shannon began her Kinesiology program after receiving an Associate's Degree as a Physical Therapist Assistant. Her dreams of becoming a physical therapist led her to UTEP where she is now receiving her degree in Kinesiology with a minor in Biology. Shannon is graduating with *Magna Cum Laude* honors. Throughout her time at UTEP Shannon has been



involved with organizations and activities ranging from helping with the El Paso Community Response Team to judging science projects for local high schools. Through all of this she has made the time to be involved in research and present at the Real Live Physics Event in the UTEP Physics Department.

The [Kinesiology Department](#) faculty is proud of Kathryn and Shannon as they exemplify what it takes to be honor students and we wish them well in all future professional endeavors.

Faculty Corner



Dr. Yok-Fong Paat joined the [Department of Social Work](#) as an Assistant Professor in the Fall of 2012.

Dr. Paat received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Oklahoma in May 2012. She holds a MSW from the University of Oklahoma and a BSW from Western Michigan University. Prior to completing her doctoral work, Dr. Paat has worked as a statistical research specialist, child welfare worker, clinician and social service worker in Oklahoma. She is a licensed clinical social worker

and has published in various areas related to children's well-being. She is actively involved in research endeavors on children's welfare, mental health, community health, family violence, education, social justice, migration and immigration issues. Dr. Paat is trilingual in English, Chinese, Malay and proficient in four different Chinese dialects. She is learning Spanish to better understand the needs of immigrant population in the border region as well as those from the Spanish-speaking countries.

Dr. Samuel Terrazas joined the [Department of Social Work](#) Fall of 2012

at the rank of assistant professor. He earned his MSW and Ph.D. from Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida. His dissertation, *An Exploratory Descriptive Study of Farmworker Human Providers: Stigma, Empathy and Immigration Attitudes*, examined the professional attitudes of human services professional providing direct services to farmworkers. His research focus is on farmworker mental health, access and use of human services, prevalence of anxiety and depression among farmworkers and their children, mental health stigma among human service professionals, acculturation as a psychosocial stressor and the process of "deepening" involvement in community organizing movements.



Dr. Terrazas has over 16 years professional practice experience in mental health, community organization, administration, and private practice. He has practiced social work in both urban and rural settings in not for profits agencies, for profit organizations and county government. He has held an uninterrupted professional license (LCSW) in the state of Florida since 1998.

