Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions celebrates its heritage as the public are welcomed to the new campus.
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Cover Photo by Dr. Terrell Boothe

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Rules to Fly By; Rules to Live By

Retired General Roland Wright was a WWI fighter pilot credited with downing a number of enemy planes. In a video message, General Wright shares the commonalities between flying an airplane and traveling along the journey of life. He talks about vertigo which is a state of disorientation that pilots often experience which could throw their flight path off course and if not corrected, could result in disastrous outcomes. Like pilots who experience vertigo, General Wright talks about how easy it is for us to experience daily vertigo where, a little bit at a time, we can fall off course or out of the habit of doing good things such as serving others or putting forth effort necessary to rise above our weaknesses and life’s challenges. If we allow ourselves to fall into a state of life’s vertigo, we could crash just like a pilot who does not protect himself or herself from entering into vertigo which could have fatal consequences.

General Wright talks about the small rules that govern the ability of a plane to fly above the clouds including engine and fuselage maintenance and changing the engine coolant, that if not MAINTAINED will result in engine failure and potential disaster. Small and simple things. If the “right stuff” is not put into these planes, they will fail. And, says General Wright, if we don’t put the “right stuff” into our lives, we will fall victim to entrapment obstacles of life. Planes, like us, must have the right level of oil and the temperature must be exact in order for the plane to function at its fullest potential and in order to not fail during flight. If a plane is expected to function at full capacity on a mission, it needs to be prepared so that it can navigate through the perils it may come up against during flight. Such is the case with our lives. Our focus on things that matter most and on ways we can better serve humanity as healthcare providers, educators, researchers or just everyday neighbors will better prepare us for our journey and the “flight” ahead. We must pay close attention to and prepare ourselves for the things we will encounter on our “life flight” in an effort to keep us distanced from life’s vertigo. A plane needs to push the envelope for maximum performance but a good pilot will always stay away from the “edges” that may push the limits of the plane beyond its ability to perform. We, likewise, must stay away from the edges that will throw us off the flight path and work hard every day to right the course of our flights through service to others, focusing on things that matter most and through self-control and mastery.

We have rules that govern how a plane can fly and we have rules that govern our lives. And, if we are not focused, we will find our physical fuselage on a course leading to devastation. When flying in an airplane a position change by just one degree at a time cannot be detected by the inner ear. In our personal lives as we change our positon away from the good things that matter most, usually by only one degree at a time, the negative forces can overpower and entrap us and lessen our effectiveness in our families, our communities and in the work place and could place us in harm’s way as we head for disasters in our lives. And this can happen little by little and literally can go undetected until it might be too late.

To avoid vertigo in our lives we need to stay focused on positive things, learn to live outside of ourselves in selflessness versus selfishness and take every opportunity we can to lift and serve others. We don’t have to go out of our way to lift a hand of help, we can simply do it on our way. As healthcare educators and providers, our roles are critical as servants to those who need our services. Even more critical is the way we govern our lives by avoiding the perils of “vertigo” in our journey through life and in our service to humankind.

I wish you the best as you strive to keep distance from the vertigo situations of life.

Richard P. Nielsen, PT, DHSc, ECS
President
Celebrating
RMUoHP celebrates its new facility with

“This structure will provide means whereby tens and hundreds of thousands of people in this country and throughout the world will live more productive and healthier lives.”
-Dr. Richard P. Nielsen

Photos by Dr. Terrell Boothe
On August 1st, Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions welcomed the public to its official ribbon cutting and open house to celebrate the April move to the East Bay Campus.

Provo Mayor John Curtis gave the keynote remarks at the ribbon cutting ceremony, noting that from his own observations what RMUoHP President Dr. Richard P. Nielsen says will happen, does indeed come true.

RMUoHP’s students, alumni, employees, and Trustees participated in the event, which included over 300 guests. Community members and business leaders attended the celebration hosted by the Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The Open house featured guided tours of the new facility, including each of the clinical laboratories, the cadaver lab, mock exam rooms, expanded classrooms, conference rooms and offices. Guests also enjoyed a delicious catered lunch from Landmark Catering and were introduced to the RMUoHP family.

RMUoHP’s first home was a few offices and borrowed classrooms at Provo College with about 100 students. Now, 16 years later, RMUoHP has more than 600 students, and more than 1300 graduates who have an entire campus to call their home.

The new facility is more than 56,000 square feet that includes seven classrooms, three skills labs, an anatomy/cadaver lab, five mock patient exam rooms, eight study rooms, two student lounges, several conference rooms and meeting rooms, 42 offices for faculty and staff, two large event rooms, storage areas and a much expanded learning resource center and library.

This new facility will allow RMUoHP to provide more opportunity for students to obtain graduate healthcare degrees, fulfilling a university goal of improving nationwide healthcare.

The new location is even more accessible to the freeway and is within walking distance from several established hotels, a shopping mall and several local and chain restaurants. There is also an onsite cafeteria, fitness center, open green space, soccer fields, volleyball courts and basketball courts.

A special thank you to the project manager on the University move, Dr. Hani Ghazi-Birry, as well as Dr. Jessica Egbert and Dr. Richard Nielsen for planning the event.
On July 31st, faculty, administration and staff gathered at the front entrance of the new facility as President Richard P. Nielsen took a few moments to christen the University by symbolically hoisting the American Flag representing freedom, the Utah State flag representing Utah’s pioneer heritage and the RMUoHP flag representing the university’s own pioneering in advanced healthcare education.

“We are, in many ways, and symbolically like the early pioneers who came to Utah, also pioneers in the efforts we are engaged in healthcare education, and advancing healthcare and our outcomes as our students literally alter the delivery of healthcare in this country and throughout the world,” Nielsen said.

Each flag was hoisted by a different member of the RMUoHP family.

“It is my hope and prayer that as faculty, administration, staff, trustees, or students pass by these three flags they will feel the true spirit of RMU and that it will inspire them towards greatness,” Nielsen said.

Copy Courtesy of Rena Lesue-Smithey, Daily Herald
The Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions Foundation has completed the Community Rehabilitation Therapy Clinic. More than 50 patients have already been seen since the soft opening earlier this month. The majority of patients have been referred from our partners Mountainlands Community Health Center, Community Health Connect and Utah Valley Regional Medical Center (IHC), but a few have been walk-ins who have heard about the services available to the indigent, non-insured or underinsured. For many patients, this is the first time these services have been available to them.

The Clinic is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2:00 to 6:00 PM for now, but as additional local physical therapists donate their time, the days and hours of operation of the Clinic will increase. The ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house for the Clinic will take place in late September.

Work at the clinic has been made possible thanks to another Utah County CDBG grant of $10,000 for Clinic operations during the 2014-2015 cycle. Additional gifts-in-kind of equipment and furnishings have been received from Dynatronix Corporation, Mountain Land Rehabilitation, S&N Properties and Dr. Mark Walker.

Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions is currently creating a service learning module that will be officially added to the University curriculum as an elective (audit) course, which will allow University students to volunteer at the Clinic and provide care to patients, supervised by RMUoHP faculty and local community volunteer professional practitioners.

For more information on the Community Rehabilitation Therapy Clinic or the RMU Foundation, or to volunteer, contact Vic Morris, Director of Development at 801.734.6774, or email vmorris@rmuohp.edu.

Dr. Mark Walker performs physical therapy on a patient at the Charity Care Clinic. Photos by Cara Caldwell
RMUoHP’s Neonatology Fellowship Program, one of only two neonatology fellowships in the United States, recently received ongoing accreditation approval from the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education. The Program is directed by Dr. Jane Sweeney.

Dr. Stacey Pfenning, an RMUoHP alum, was awarded the North Dakota Emergency Nurse Excellence Award in May.

Dr. Tim Flynn and the team of Colorado Physical Therapy Specialists received one of the American Physical Therapy Association Innovation 2.0 grants for the project entitled “Facilitating Access Improving Care- PTs as Integral Accountable Care Organization Members.”

Dr. Malissa Martin and Dr. Tim Speicher were awarded first place for Athletic Training Education Journal’s Outstanding Non-Research Manuscript for their article entitled “Evidence Based Concept Mapping for the Athletic Training Student” in June 2014 at the NATA National meeting.

Dr. Mary Massery, also a RMUoHP alum was selected to present a full day post-conference program at the 2015 World Congress of Physical Therapy in Singapore with her esteemed Australian colleague Dr. Paul Hodges. There were 128 international submissions and 22 accepted programs. Title: “Coordinating postural stability with breathing, talking, eating and continence.”
Health Promotion & Wellness PhD student Mary Jean Taylor, was awarded $50k by The Erie Community Foundation and the Hamot Health Foundation in August to expand her fitness programming for adolescent females and to build a sustainable plan for her after-school intervention. She has received $95k total to develop her program - $85k of which came after beginning her graduate work at RMUoHP.

Shaun O’Laughlin
PhD student and Army Captain Shaun O’Laughlin, a Munson Army Health Center Physical Therapist was recognized as the top physical therapist in the US Army on May 14th at a special ceremony. O’Laughlin is the officer in charge of the physical therapy, orthopedic and podiatry clinics, and is the chief of the Department of Surgery at the Munson Army Health Center. He was featured in the Ft. Leavenworth Lamp.

Mary Jean Taylor
Erie Community Foundation and the Hamot Health Foundation awarded $50k to PhD student Mary Jean Taylor to expand her fitness programming for adolescent females and to build a sustainable plan for her after-school intervention.

Darene Hall
Alumna Dr. Darene Hall (Winnetka, CA) received the 2014 Colleen J. Goode Research into Practice Poster Award at the 21st National Evidence-Based Practice Conference.

Brad Schoenfeld
PhD alumnus Brad Schoenfeld was selected to present June’s closing conference session on “Revisiting the Strength/Endurance Continuum: A New Paradigm for Hypertrophy Training” for the National Strength and Conditioning Association’s (NSCA) International Conference in Spain.

Allen R. Jones, Jr.
Alumnus Dr. Allen R. Jones, Jr. (Newport News, VA) was appointed to The Board of Physical Therapy for the State of Virginia by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

Tim Hughley
Alumnus Dr. Tim Hughley (Albany, GA), graduate of the Doctor of Philosophy program in Athletic Training, was selected by his peers and named the 2014 College/University Athletic Trainer of the Year by the Southeast Athletic Trainers’ Association.

Pam Story
Alumna Dr. Pamela L. Story, OTD, ORT/L, CPAM recently accepted a new position as the Interim Program Director and Visiting Assistant Professor for the Graduate Occupational Therapy Program at Dominican College in Orangeburg, New York. She graduated in 2010.

Jamie Valenzuela
Alumna Dr. Jamie Valenzuela received her Neuro-Developmental Treatment Certification through the Neuro-Developmental Treatment Association.
On August 2nd, Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions set records as 80 graduates crossed the stage and earned their doctoral hoods. This commencement was not only the highest attended commencement with 500+ guests and faculty, but it was also the largest number of graduates in a single commencement ceremony to date. RMUoHP faculty and staff from all departments within the university planned and executed the ceremony, which lasted roughly 2 hours.

Aegis Therapies sponsored a light reception for the graduates, their guests and RMUoHP Faculty members and staff after the commencement ceremony ended.

This ceremony was the fourth commencement ceremony that RMUoHP has held at the Covey Center for the Arts in Provo. The Covey Center is a 42,000 square foot premiere performance rental facility with a 670 seat performance hall and two backstage green rooms (which came in handy for all the graduates getting ready!) The Covey Center actually has two theaters and often hosts multiple productions a day. It was the perfect venue for this ceremony.

Dr. Clayton M. Christensen, Professor at Harvard Business School and the world’s number one management thinker and disruptive innovator was the keynote speaker, and, true to form, Christensen addressed the graduates via a video-recorded message. Professor Christensen holds a Bachelor of Arts from Brigham Young University and a Master of Philosophy in applied econometrics from Oxford University where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar. He received an MBA and a Doctor of Business Administration from the Harvard Business School, Professor Christensen and his wife Christine live in Belmont, MA and have five children and five grandchildren.

More than 500 graduates and guests filled Covey Center for RMUoHP’s Commencement Exercises

Group and individual photos were taken by photographer Brock Best and he will contact students directly to they can order copies.

SUMMER 2014

COMMENCEMENT

Photo from claytonchristensen.com
**COMMENCEMENT AWARDS**

**Sonia Paquette, OTD, OTR/L, CPE, ABVE-D**  
*Outstanding Alumnus/Alumna Award Recipient*

Dr. Paquette holds an assistant professor appointment with Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions and serves as an adjunct faculty at Salus University. She excels in teaching evidence-based practice, theoretical perspectives and measurement in occupational therapy to masters and doctoral level students. She also serves as a vocational and ergonomic expert in litigious cases. Frequently speaking at IARP, ABVE and AREA annual national conferences, Dr. Paquette has contributed to multiple books, including her latest publication in press regarding ergonomic accommodations for return to work.

**Janet Tankersley, PT, DPT, PCS**  
*Richard P. Nielsen Student Service Award Recipient*

Dr. Tankersley is an Assistant Professor and Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education in the Department of Physical Therapy at Georgia Regents University (GRU) in Augusta, GA. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Pediatric Science at RMUoHP. Dr. Tankersley is a board certified clinical specialist in pediatrics with 22 years of pediatric practice experience. Dr. Tankersley remains active in clinical practice at the Children's Hospital of Georgia and directs the GRU faculty/student pro-bono clinic. She is currently working on initiatives to advance the physical therapy profession in Haiti through development of an entry-level physical therapy school. She resides in Appling, GA with her husband Bill and sons, Will and Ethan.

**Rodney W. Hicks, PhD, MPA, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN**  
*Hartgraves' Award for Excellence in Teaching*

Dr. Hicks is a nurse educator and nurse researcher and faculty member for RMUoHP’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program. He has conducted and published numerous studies related to patient safety, specifically in the area of safe medication practices and safety in perioperative care. The Joint Commission, Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses (AORN), and the Association Society of Perianesthesia Nurses (ASPAN) and others have all incorporated the findings of his research into national standards. He currently is a member of AORN’s Recommended Practices panel where he contributes to perioperative standards. He is an active reviewer for a number of journals.

**New Graduate Already Making Good on Degree Advancement**

Dr. Cathleen St. Dennis, is already putting her Doctorate degree in Occupational Therapy to good use. St. Dennis graduated with Cohort 22 of the Doctor of Occupational Therapy program at RMUoHP earlier this month, and she has just accepted a position at Tennessee State University as the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. As a very recent alumna of RMUoHP, she is already making strides in her field, and will do great work at TSU. “I’m very happy that my degree is paying off this quick,” St. Dennis said.
Pediatric Continuing Education

2014 Summer Series

Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions (RMUoHP) hosted the fifth annual Pediatrics Continuing Education series August 14-23, co directed by Drs. Jane Sweeney and Jan McElroy. The nine day series was taught by a team of interdisciplinary faculty. The first course in the series was geared toward updating pediatric therapists working in NICUs and other professionals interested in future NICU practice. Additional courses included a NICU Specialty Day on the Gastrointestinal System (Medical, Feeding, and Positioning Interventions) followed by reliability/certification training in two infant movement assessments: Infant Motor Profile and General Movements Assessment.

RMUoHP was privileged to host the first training course in the US on The Infant Motor Profile, a new observational instrument developed in the Netherlands to evaluate motor abilities and movement variability, symmetry, and fluency for infants 3-18 months old. Mijna Hadders-Algra, MD, PhD, a Professor of Developmental Neurology at University Medical Centre Groningen and Beatrix Children’s Hospital, traveled from the Netherlands to RMUoHP for the third time to teach infant movement assessments to the community of pediatric therapy clinicians. Practitioners participated from 5 major regions of the US and from Chile.

Proceeds from the course have been set aside to support the Neonatology Fellowship Fund of the Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions Foundation.

NEW FNP Certificate Program

A Post-Graduate Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Certificate Program has been developed for RNs with a master’s (or higher) degree in nursing, or a health related specialty, who wish to expand their nursing practice to the role as a FNP. Like our existing BSN to DNP/FNP program, graduates will be eligible to take national certification exams and petition their state Board of Nursing for licensure as an advanced practice nurse. This program does not lead to a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. More information is available online.
The inaugural class of the Speech-Language Pathology clinical doctorate program at RMUoHP began in May with 22 students. Students convened in Provo for five days in June and met one another, attended orientation and classes, and enjoyed the new campus. Speech-language pathologists are communication specialists, which was apparent by their lively, energetic interactions during our time in Provo. The group is characterized by incredible diversity. While average length of time since graduating with their master's degree is 14 years, the most recent student graduated with her master’s in 2013 with the earliest one in 1971. The students represent 13 states (including four from Illinois and three from South Carolina), as well as one territory (Puerto Rico) and six distinct ethnicities. RMUoHP has been extremely welcoming to this new Speech-Language Pathology program and its educational model allows clinical speech-language pathologists to advance their education while continuing to work in their profession.

The PA Program at RMUoHP has launched a newsletter to keep everyone apprised of the program as we prepare for the initial class in 2015. This first issue provides a little Q & A with each of the faculty to help you get to know a little more about each member of the team. A new newsletter will be posted each month for the next several months, so check back to this link often.

Click on the cover to read this month's issue >
Amy Kashiwa:
OTD Advancing Knowledge Scholarship

Amy Kashiwa grew up in Los Alamos, New Mexico and graduated from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1994 with a BS in Occupational Therapy. 20 years later, she enrolled in the OTD program at RMUoHP because she wanted to advance her skills knowledge to utilize evidence-based practice, and to grow professionally to discover new opportunities in her field. Kashiwa is interested in grief support, the emotional healing process, the role of positive psychology, resiliency and the effects of life changes on occupation, roles and responsibilities.

Kashiwa has two teenage children who are highly supportive of her studies at RMUoHP and she is inspired to work hard so that she can set a good example for her children. The blended aspect of the limited residency program worked for her, as she currently resides in Bellingham, Washington and practices in a skilled nursing facility.

“It was a huge honor to receive the inaugural OTD Advancing Knowledge Scholarship,” Kashiwa said. “It meant so much to receive the award in person from my OTD program directors and the University President.”
Sanaz “Suny” Faradj-Bakht grew up in the Maryland/Washington D.C. area and went to school at the University of Maryland for her undergrad, where she got a BS in Psychology. She then went on to study Occupational therapy and didn’t feel like her OT education was complete and wanted to achieve more in the field of Occupational Therapy.

Suny began her studies at RMUoHP in an effort to find more open doors for growth. Upon graduation from the Doctor of Occupational Therapy program at RMUoHP, Suny plans to pursue more educational opportunities through continuing education. Ultimately, she wants to become a board certified geriatric Occupational Therapist.

Suny loves her two dogs, Judd, a Havanese/Maltese mix, and Molly, a Maltese/Yorkie mix. Molly actually gets to serve as a therapy dog, and gets to go to work with Suny sometimes.

Ramsey Nijem grew up in the Bay area of Northern California and earned his Bachelor’s degree at the University of California Santa Barbara in Communication and Exercise Sciences. He went on to earn his Masters from California State University Fullerton in Sports Performance.

Nijem is currently coaching (he recently accepted a position with the NBA as the strength and conditioning coach for the Sacramento Kings), reviewing for a few journals in the exercise science field, publishing, writing, and of course educating alongside his DSc colleagues at RMUoHP.

His hobbies include lifting heavy things, reading research, and destroying dogma in the fields of exercise science and nutrition and he trains for powerlifting and physique competitions.

“The best part of my being in the fitness and general health science field is helping others,” said Nijem.

Nijem has found that the RMUoHP program offers the perfect blend of independence to continue pursuing his desire to work with athletes while simultaneously earning a doctorate in a clinical scholarship program. “I am passionate about science and research and the application of it to bridge the gap between the lab and the weight room. This doctorate allows me to do that.” said Nijem. He hopes that this degree will help him to establish more connections and credibility in his field, plus as his mentor says, “people call you back when you’re a doctor.”
On August 1-2, 2014, Dr. Tim Flynn represented the big dreams of RMUoHP as a member of a unique 200-mile relay team made up of six members, including the International Space Station Commander Steve Swanson.

The race gained 16,000 feet of elevation as it wound from Fort Collins to Steamboat Springs, CO. The team communicated with Commander Swanson with their cell phones to the ISS (via Mission Control) so Swanson could complete his legs of the relay when his turn came.

Their team name, 20 Miles, 20 Orbits and 90 Shillings was inspired by a local beer, and the team’s conjecture as to how many times the space station would orbit the earth during the relay.

Other team members besides Flynn and Swanson included Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger a former NASA astronaut and shuttle crew member, Captain Suni Williams, NASA astronaut and previous ISS commander, Carrie Alexander, Swanson’s sister-in-law and Swanson’s childhood friend and team captain Bredt Eggleston.

Swanson launched into space in March for a six-month mission called Expedition 40. Since he had participated in the race before, and had missed the last one due to training for this mission, he wanted to do it again. As the race date conflicted with his mission, Swanson asked the race coordinator Paul Vanderheiden if he could participate from the International Space Station. Vanderheiden was on board with Swanson’s request, and team 200 Miles, 20 Orbits and 90 Shillings was born.

Because of the lack of gravity up in space, many astronauts face weakening muscles and loss of bone density and space-induced osteoporosis. Many astronauts, like Swanson, avoid this issue by exercising on a special treadmill that simulates gravity as the astronaut connects him or herself with a harness and weights. Swanson used a similar system to run his legs of the Wild West Relay, using 140 pounds of weight to harness him down.

Swanson’s feat wasn’t only a great personal victory, but a win for physical therapists as well. Flynn and his colleagues were able to showcase Swanson’s participation in the Wild West Relay to raise awareness about bone and muscle health. You can find coverage of the story in the Coloradoan and Runner’s World.

Generally, Wild West Relay teams consist of 12 members who complete three legs each. Swanson and Flynn’s team however, was an ultra team, meaning that each of its six members completed six legs of the race. That’s more than 30 miles per team member over a two-day period.
University Gift: Florence Nightingale Sculpture

Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions will soon be the owner of a bronze casting of “Lady with the Lamp,” which was originally sculpted by American artist, sculptor and anatomist Avard T. Fairbanks, courtesy of the Fairbanks family.

This statue was originally sculpted as a gift for the University of Utah College of Nursing in 1975. It portrays Miss Nightingale, the great founder of the modern day nursing profession, with a lantern in one hand, her writings in the other, on some nighttime errand of mercy.

The statue is twenty six inches high and cast in bronze. Our Medical Director of the Physician Assistant Program is Fairbanks’ grandson. The late Avard Fairbanks is internationally acclaimed in both the artistic and academic communities. He was the former Dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Utah and his works grace Abraham Lincoln’s New Salem Historic Site, The U.S. Capitol building, Ford Theater and Angels on the tops of many LDS temples including South Jordan, UT; Washington, DC; Seattle, WA; as well as many of the statues in Temple Square in Salt Lake City and the Pioneer Family in front of the courthouse in Provo, UT. He also sculpted the famous BYU Cougar in front of LaVell Edwards Stadium at BYU.

RMUoHP is proud to sponsor the Now I Can Foundation in a benefit concert. click the image to reserve your tickets

Benefit Concert

nowican.org

September 12, 2014 Tickets $7
In late August of 1999, two young students embarked on a journey to become Physical Therapists. Kunal Bhanot and Navpreet Kaur found themselves at a university in India in an orientation group of 30 students, and spent much of their freshman year studying and spending time together having fun as a group. After six months passed, Kunal finally asked Navpreet out, and they soon fell in love, supporting each other throughout the next four years of Physical Therapy school. They pushed each other the whole way, and finished first and second in their graduating class. “Even though I finished ahead of her, I give her the credit of my success.” Said Kunal, “She was the one who motivated me in first place.”

In 2004, Navpreet left Kunal in India and came to the United States to further her education in Physical Therapy. When she arrived in the US, she mistakenly began an entry-level PT program, so rather than continue on in a duplicate degree, Navpreet quit school after a year and took the NPTE exam. She received her PT license and began working in an outpatient facility in Michigan in January of 2006, all the while dating Kunal (very) long distance, as he was still back in India.

In August of 2005 Kunal finally came to the US to study Biomechanics at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. During his time at UNLV, Navpreet came to visit for a week. During that week, Kunal decided to do something crazy and ask Navpreet to marry him. After being apart for a year and a half, Navpreet said “YES!” and they were married right away, Las Vegas style, for $50! The newlyweds were then separated for another year and a half as Kunal finished his master's degree in Las Vegas, and Navpreet started her new job in Michigan, more than 1,700 miles away, visiting each other only for holidays. Finally, Kunal graduated from UNLV and joined his wife in Michigan in January of 2008. After three years of long distance, team Kunal and Navpreet were finally Physical Therapists, back together for good.

Kunal and Navpreet both felt that they wanted to give back to the profession by teaching students to become physical therapists. However, their education was lacking, and both wanted to further their clinical education and teaching skills. In their search for a terminal degree Physical Therapy program, they found the PhD in Orthopaedic and Sports Science program at RMUoHP. They were impressed by the online program and exceptional faculty who were the best in their area. They also loved the emphasis on clinical research and experience with the dissertation phase. “We knew that this program would not only provide us the clinical knowledge we were seeking but also teach us to become clinical researchers and independent scholars,” said Kunal.

Navpreet was admitted and finished transitional Doctor of Physical Therapy program in cohort 14 in 2008 before both Navpreet and Kunal began the
DSc program in February 2009 in the 4th cohort. The next 4 years were spent working full-time in Michigan in an orthopedic setting, and spending nights and weekends studying together on the couch, furthering their research and critiquing each other’s papers just like old times when they studied together in PT school in India.

Kunal and Navpreet attribute much of their success to the people they met while studying together at RMUoHP, especially Dr. Richard Nielsen, who they say is one of the most inspiring people they have met. At one point during one of their regular visits to RMUoHP, one of the class projectors wasn't functioning and for some reason, the IT representative was unavailable. Instead of wasting time waiting, Dr. Nielsen found a ladder, rolled up his sleeves and climbed up to fix the projector. “He taught us humility,” Kunal said. “This is what RMUoHP provides you: knowledge, lifelong relationships, and above all an outlook towards life. We both are proud to be part of the RMUoHP family.” They both feel blessed to have gotten instructors in the PhD program who guided them through the process. “We both are grateful to Dr. Lori Thein Brody who not only was our program director but also our PhD adviser. Without her guidance our dream would not have come true,” said Navpreet.

Team Kunal and Navpreet were the first two graduates of their PhD program cohort, which they attribute to their adviser and also their teamwork and pushing each other to work harder during tougher times. Since graduation last summer, both have accepted Assistant Professor positions at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) in Austin, Texas.

“It is a dream come true for us to be able to start our academic career at the same time, work together for the same organization, and share our successes and challenges both at a personal and professional level,” said Kunal.

On October 27, 2013, team Kunal and Navpreet welcomed Ayaan Singh Bhanot into the world. They love spending time with their precious son, eating and cooking different ethnic foods, exercising and listening to live Austin music. They feel very blessed and grateful for each of their teachers, friends and family who helped them to get where they are today.
Alumni


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Faculty


Summer 2014


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How can you help others discover Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions?

As an alumnus or student, you are a powerful resource for discovering qualified applicants because you have the necessary insight and firsthand experience to identify individuals who will be successful in our programs.

If you know someone who might be interested in our program, please refer them by completing our online referral form located at [rmuohp.edu/refer](http://rmuohp.edu/refer) (or click ‘Refer a Friend’ above to get to the form). A small goodwill gift will be provided as a thank you for ‘sharing the RMUoHP message.’

As always, we appreciate each and every referral and your continued support! Your participation in helping to promote RMUoHP Programs is critical to our success.
Dr. Marie-Eileen Onieal reminisces about how the support she received from her family kept her on track to finish her PhD dissertation.

by Dr. Marie-Eileen Onieal

As health technology and methodology advance, the need for continued learning and scholarly activities has driven many of us to pursue advanced degrees. Many are poised in various states of completion, with as many reasons for being stalled in one stage as there are degree programs. Recently, in a conversation with friends, we reminisced about our “all-but-dissertation” days. While the pain of the process has finally become a mere wince in recollection, the memory of how much support we each received is ever present in our minds.

The common African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child,” is poignantly applicable when a spouse, significant other, or parent ventures into the “terminal degree” vortex. Acknowledgements in the preface of the (finally) finished document are mere prattle compared to the words of encouragement, the editing assistance, daily sounding board, and relief from day-to-day responsibilities that allowed us to chase our dream. Through months of listening to ideas in which fewer than a dozen people in the world have any interest, the vague responses to questions posed, the ninety-dollar technical words, and the necessary absence from family time, a few phrases are hardly sufficient to recognize the sacrifices our families made so we could complete the #$%^&* dissertation.

We have all heard horror stories about the dissertation phase, the dissertation committees, and the frustrations of topic approval, conducting the research, writing the manuscript, and defending the work. What those of us who have survived the process often fail to tell are the stories of who made our success a reality, and how. After the year I spent languishing in the preproposal phase, my spouse and I had a lengthy heart-to-heart conversation about whether I was “in” or “out” of the dissertation; was I going to be “ABD” or “PhD”? That was my reality check. Had I spent too much time with my computer and not with my spouse? Had that much time gone by without my realizing it? I knew I just couldn’t walk away—I had to finish—but how could I do that and maintain our relationship?

There are several guides to assist the “dissenter” to finish the blasted doctoral degree: books, Web sites, and support groups. My dissertation buddies and I met monthly. Our motto was “focus to finish.” We listened as each of us gave an update on our progress, or lack thereof. We guided each other through committee selections, topic refinement, and survey development. We cheered each success and consoled each setback.

When the idea for this editorial popped into our conversation, my spouse and I recalled the approach we took to “getting it done.” We searched our computers for the documents that were my guide and provided

The Family Finishes The Dissertation

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my daily structure. Alas, they were long gone. Much to our pleasure and laughter, we found a guide almost identical to the approach we had put together for me. What this meant was that we had created something that also worked for someone else. The concepts are intuitive and simple, although they require a great deal of discipline from both the “dissenter” and, more significantly, the associated person in the disserter’s life.

True to my spouse’s profession, project management processes were established; we first decided on a target date for the proposal, then another for the defense. I sent a schedule for my deliverables and a list of my expectations to each member of my dissertation committee. Once I had received agreement and approval from them on the proposed timelines, I posted the schedule on my computer. I held not only myself to the identified milestones and dates, but also my committee members. When I missed the mark, I advised them; when they didn’t provide feedback within the approved timeline, I presumed they had none. That was the deal we agreed to, and more notably, my project manager was ensuring that I stuck to that deal! —Not so easy when the peace of the household was at stake and a dangling carrot of a trip to a private island in the Caribbean hung in the balance. If I finished on schedule, I was going!

I was privileged to be able to quit my job and have “only” the dissertation be my sole responsibility. I was reminded that the dissertation was not my life’s work, but my current job. I started every day just as though I was going to an office, and I stopped working at the end of that day. Evenings and weekends were time to spend together and to visit with friends and family. Life at home was getting better! Discussions about the dissertation were off limits at those times, and the break often helped restore the energy I needed to maintain my world of project management discipline. More importantly, keeping that time sacrosanct meant that our relationship was not only not lost, but actually improving along the journey.

Completing my dissertation was a momentous achievement, but I could not have done it without the support of my sweetheart—a project manager extraordinaire. We shared in the commitment to get it done. We celebrated each milestone and cursed the stalled days. But the motivation and management never wavered. Whenever I lost my momentum, to say that I was prodded to keep moving would be an understatement. And with the same zeal, I in turn prodded my Chair—who after I was finished, called me a “bully”! That comment never ceases to make us chuckle. I guess she had never before been “project managed” by a professional with 20+ years’ experience of moving projects to success. And yet, that is what it takes to finish: a relentless perseverance to stay on task with your timelines—and a family whose desire to finish is as great as your own.

To those of you who are taking the step into doctoral studies, I highly encourage you to bring on your family as a key component of your staff—because it is the family that finishes the dissertation. And just in case you become too preoccupied with your degree completion and success, do not forget to say thank you to your family.

Thank you, Sweetheart!

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Special Thanks...

To all those who contributed to this issue. Your efforts make this publication possible! Also thank you to those who provided photos.

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