



ELIZABETH A. CADA

Dear friends of CHHS,  
It's been some time since The College of Health and Human Services published our magazine, *Make Someone's Life Better*. Therefore, we would like to give a bit of an update on the many wonderful things our students and faculty have done since the last rendition of the magazine. It is our intent to publish the full magazine later in 2018, bringing the news of how our college continues to make a difference both locally and globally and Make Someone's Life Better.

-- Elizabeth A. Cada, Ed.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Dean, College of Health & Human Services

## HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

### Lincy John Rewarded for Being Outstanding Leader

**D**ouglas H. Everett once famously said, "There are some people who live in a dream world, and there are some who face reality; and then there are those who turn one into the other."

Lincy John is certainly the latter. Currently pursuing her Master of Health Administration degree at GSU, John has taken the lead on many initiatives to better herself, her fellow students, and the world around her.

"Lincy embraces all there is to know about the U.S. healthcare system and is committed to improving people's lives," said Dr. Rupert Evans, DHA, MPA, FACHE, professor and College of Health and Human Services division chair. "Aside from maintaining a 4.0 G.P.A., Lincy was selected by our faculty to be the research assistant for the P20 Cancer Disparity Grant and she's the incoming president of the Student Health Care Management Association.

"She continues to go above and beyond to support our program and the community – organizing blood drives at the university, conducting fundraisers for student organizations, and planning on-campus events with world-renowned speakers."

John is also an active member of the American College of Health Care Executives (ACHE). Nominated by Dr. Evans, John was selected as a co-recipient of the organization's 2017 Health Studies Student Leadership Award. The award recognizes the achievements of an outstanding graduate student, administrative fellow, or resident in a Chicago area healthcare management program.

"The competition was tough, with students from Rush, DePaul, Northwestern, University of Chicago, UIC, Loyola, and more, being considered," said John. "I was thrilled and excited when I found out I was chosen as one of two recipients this year."



DR. RUPERT EVANS

John was presented the award on February 28, 2017 at the annual meeting of the Chicago Health Executives Forum (CHEF), held at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

"The ACHE and the CHEF events are amazing platforms for networking, enhancing professional skills and ultimately advancing your career," John said. "So to be recognized in front of so many well-known medical professionals and thought leaders was a wonderful experience."

John expects the opportunities she continues to have at GSU to learn, grow, and lead to help her turn her professional dreams into a reality after she graduates.

"Governors State University provides opportunities to students from all over the world that they may not otherwise have," John said. "My teachers have encouraged me to get involved and stay involved in things that matter to me.

"They push me and my classmates to do more and to know more, and that's ultimately useful for all of us, no matter what our futures hold."

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

## Picturing a Better World for Children with Autism and Transgender Youth

In the eight years since the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DrOT) program began at Governors State University, 35 students have graduated, each one completing an evidence-based capstone research project related to their clinical practice. This method is unique to GSU and provides students with the rare opportunity to pursue their professional passion within the framework of their continuing education.

“Our program is designed to meet the needs of the practicing occupational therapist,” said Dr. Divya Sood, OTD, OTR/L, associate professor of the OT department. “It’s set up so that the working professional doesn’t have to drop everything and can actually merge their area of clinical practice with the education they’re getting at GSU.”

This hybrid approach enables DrOT faculty members to work closely with students on their capstone projects by providing ongoing guidance and support. Such was the case with two recent research projects that Dr. Sood felt could benefit from a data collection methodology in the OT field known as PhotoVoice.

“PhotoVoice has been utilized by researchers for a number of years but is just now being used in the occupational therapy research world,” said Dr. Sood. “The way it works in our field is to have study participants, or their caregivers, go out and photograph things around them that either facilitate or inhibit their participation in the community and then share their stories about these photographs with researchers.”

The qualitative nature of PhotoVoice is one of the reasons Dr. Sood felt it would be an ideal collection method for two particular students’ research projects, both dealing with understanding the complexity of social participation in community environments.



DR. DIVYA SOOD

“One of the key areas that occupational therapy practitioners focus on is social participation in community activities,” said Dr. Sood. “Students Frank Czuba and Monika Szymanski were exploring factors that influence the social participation of two unique groups.”

“Frank was working with transgender adolescents and Monika with caregivers of children with autism,” Dr. Sood said. “For these groups in particular, photography seemed like a way for them to become actively involved in the effective telling of their stories.”

With the help of Dr. Sood, Czuba and Szymanski were able to understand the fundamentals of PhotoVoice enough to guide participants in successfully capturing important aspects of their worlds.

# COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

## As the Master of Health Sciences in Communication Disorders Turns 30, Department Chair Looks Ahead

**A** CHHS program is celebrating a very important milestone this year. 2017 marks the 30th anniversary of national accreditation for the Master of Health Sciences in the Communication Disorders.

This achievement speaks volumes to the dedication and commitment of the Communication Disorders faculty and staff over the past three decades. Dr. Catherine Balthazar has led the department as chair since 2013, and has had a long and meaningful career at Governors State University for nearly 24 years.

“I was initially hired by the man who founded the program, Dr. John Lowe III, back in 1993, and I’ve known every department chair since,” said Dr. Balthazar. “The program has gone through a lot of changes since that time, and right now is no exception.”

One of the biggest shifts for the seasoned program and its faculty, according to Dr. Balthazar, is GSU’s evolving student body.

“With the addition of freshmen and sophomore classes, we’re getting younger, more full-time students,” Dr. Balthazar said. “That presents us with new sets of challenges and opportunities, and it’s also helped me look towards the future at a time when we’re also celebrating our past.”

For Dr. Balthazar, that means not only examining the state of the community GSU serves, but also the speech language pathology profession as a whole, and beginning to anticipate the needs of both.



DR. CATHERINE BALTHAZAR

“As a program and a profession, we face the ongoing obstacle of having adequate representation of all aspects of our diverse society,” said Dr. Balthazar. “One of my biggest dreams is to make our program more visible and accessible to students of color and to increase the number of males going into this currently female-dominated profession.”

“I’m also striving to find ways to encourage our students to reach higher and higher levels of education so that they have even more employment possibilities,” she continued. “Because of an aging population, there will be a lot of openings in our field in the coming years—in both the service side and in academia. Both paths can be rewarding, and I want to ensure students are aware of their options and are prepared to make the most of them.”

Dr. Balthazar knows that financing a degree can be a difficult barrier for many students, and one of her visions for the future is to find ways to break that barrier.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

## A Hands-on Approach to Community Health Helps One GSU Graduate Find Her Calling

When Janee Rubio decided to leave the nursing program she was enrolled in to pursue a bachelor degree from Governors State University, she wasn't even sure what she wanted to study.

"I knew I was going to continue in the field of health in some capacity, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to study occupational therapy, physical therapy, or community health," Rubio said. "I chose community health as a starting place but it wasn't until I took a few classes that I really committed to it."

It was in those initial classes, including Introduction to Community Health, that Rubio first realized the flexibility of the degree and all the possibilities it presented.

"What I learned pretty quickly is that there are a lot of opportunities for community health professionals," Rubio explained. "Even better, most roles involve preventing illness and encouraging healthier lifestyles and behaviors. You're working to improve people's health instead of caring for them when they're already sick."

Inspired by the proactive nature of community health, Rubio became involved in GSU's Wellness Club and eventually became the organization's vice president. In this role, she took part in several initiatives that included working with youth from the city of Chicago Heights, participating in a Relay for Life, and organizing a health fair on the university's campus.

"I had the benefit of seeing Janee grow and develop as a student and professional during her time at GSU," said Dr. Carolyn Rodgers, Ph.D., MPH, MHS, MCHES, a senior lecturer at Governors State University.



DR. CAROLYN RODGERS

"She not only organized a health fair, but she also took the lead on planning our first career fair, establishing new community health internships and opportunities and allowing students to 'speed interview' with these organizations on campus to see if they were a good fit."

Rubio credits the program's hands-on approach to education with helping her discover her professional calling.

"In the Teaching Strategies class we work in teams to develop a program proposal based on our own research," Rubio said. "It was that project that first connected me to women affected by domestic violence and helped me realize how much I could offer them as a community health professional."

Rubio now works as a client service coordinator for Family Violence Prevention Services in San Antonio, Texas. She says her education and experience at GSU is something she utilizes every day in her current position.

# NURSING

## Dr. Shirley Comer Uses Simulation to Set Graduate Students Up for Success

If there's one skill Shirley Comer, DNP, RN, JD, CNE, ACNS-BC, APN wants her advanced practice nursing students to develop in her classroom, it's critical thinking.

"Most of the students in Governors State University's graduate and doctoral nursing programs are already working professionals," said Dr. Comer, a senior lecturer and law school graduate who obtained a Doctorate of Nursing Practice from GSU in 2010. "They don't necessarily realize what the transition from beginner to expert in this new role is going to feel like, or just how big the responsibility of providing primary care to a patient really is.

"It's my job to ensure they stay cognizant of this responsibility and have the opportunity to experience hands-on learning in both the classroom and a clinical setting."

To make this happen, Dr. Comer has had to do a bit of critical thinking herself. Utilizing the University's patient simulator, known as SimMan 3G, Dr. Comer has developed several one-of-a-kind scenarios for her upper division physical assessment courses.

These scenarios place students in true-to-life healthcare situations with extremely realistic patient prototypes. Because SimMan is a high-tech mannequin built to replicate a variety of symptoms, Dr. Comer is able to customize its condition to challenge the students in ways they might not otherwise face before graduation.

"Typically, educators use these simulators to enable students to perform rudimentary procedures—like monitoring a patient's heart rate or inserting a Foley catheter," Dr. Comer explained. "Our students already come to us with those skills, so I've had to get creative in designing patient scenarios that go beyond the basics and empower students to think analytically on their feet."

Such scenarios include a middle-aged diabetic patient who claims she is following her diet and medical regimen, but whose symptoms tell a different story. To bring this profile to life, Dr. Comer is able to program the simulator and even speak as its voice, making interactions between the student and patient feel seamless and authentic.



DR. SHIRLEY COMER

Dr. Comer has a single student lead each scenario but involves the entire class in the process. This allows the student to act as the sole healthcare provider, while also enabling everyone's ideas to be shared and considered throughout the process. After the

primary assessor delivers a diagnosis and treatment plan, the class discusses the scenario together and analyzes their performance.

"In the beginning, the students are usually very hesitant because they're not sure what to expect," Dr. Comer said. "But as they begin to question the patient and investigate her symptoms, they clearly start to get excited. People jump in to help. They want to improve the patient's health and feel like they can think innovatively about how to do that because they're in a safe place to both succeed and fail."

Dr. Comer has begun sharing her visionary approach to simulation with other faculty members and departments. She's even worked with colleagues to set up a faux ICU environment where students had the opportunity to draw lines and treat patients in more critical conditions.

Her unique position as both an educator and GSU's SIM coordinator enables Dr. Comer to develop scenarios that will set up students for success as they begin the next phase of their careers.

"I'm very lucky because if I were teaching at a bigger school, they would likely hire someone just to be a SIM coordinator," Dr. Comer said. "The fact that I'm with the students on a daily basis is a huge advantage to everyone. I can see what students' weaknesses are, what kind of issues they're facing and where the simulations can help.

"The best part is, I then have the freedom to customize scenarios that I know will advance their skills, and that's truly rewarding."



# SOCIAL WORK/HEALTH ADMINISTRATION INTERNATIONAL

## CHHS Students Experience the World Outside the Walls of the Classroom

Just about everyone can agree that Governors State University is committed to its community. From the school's values that include providing access to first-class education for underserved residents to the volunteer work and activism promoted in GSU's classrooms and organizations, both the staff and students make area involvement a top priority.

Recently, several faculty members from the College of Health and Human Services decided to take that passion and expand it into other parts of the world through learning and service opportunities abroad.

One such opportunity was the Public Health Brigades trip to Nicaragua, led by Dr. Phyllis West, a senior lecturer in the department of Social Work. In partnership with the Global Brigade and the Office of International Service, this was second year GSU participated in the Nicaragua public health service initiative.



The 2017 excursion took place in January and included 17 students. The work the students did in Nicaragua involved building hygiene units to provide latrines, septic tanks, and showers to four families, as well as contributing to a water brigade which will eventually supply water for 500 Nicaraguan citizens.



DR. PHYLLIS WEST

Although the onsite work was service focused and labor-intensive, students prepared by learning about Nicaragua's culture, history, public health, and politics before they embarked on the journey.

"The trip itself is one portion of a three-part course I lead," explained Dr. West, Ph.D., MPH, MSW, and a former Peace Corps volunteer. "Before leaving Chicago, both the students and faculty learn as much as we can about Nicaragua. Then, once there, we immerse ourselves into the culture of the Nicaraguan people. We meet with translators and community leaders to receive an overview of our public health assignment. From there, we establish goals to get as much done as possible in the seven-day span of our trip."

"Upon returning home, students complete a research paper and host a symposium on their experiences in Nicaragua," Dr. West continued. "They invite the GSU community, family, and friends to learn about this transformative service learning journey in Nicaragua."

# SOCIAL WORK/HEALTH ADMINISTRATION INTERNATIONAL

## CHHS Students Experience the World Outside the Walls of the Classroom *Continued*

Another course that took students way outside the classroom and into the cities of Stockholm, Sweden and Tallinn, Estonia was “Exploring the Swedish and Estonian Healthcare Systems” led by Dr. Jennifer Groebner, a senior lecturer in the department of Health Administration.

The course was offered in the spring semester of 2016, with the trip itself taking place in May. Nine GSU students joined learners from Texas A&M and Central Michigan University to explore the healthcare systems in Sweden and Estonia firsthand.



DR. JENNIFER GROEBNER

“There were many organized tours in hospitals, nursing homes, and administrative health offices, and of course those were very educational for the students,” said Dr. Groebner. “But I found that where they really learned the most was from their interactions with the people who either worked in the system or were citizens dealing with the system.”

“For example, one group of students who rode in a taxi for an extended period of time had a very meaningful conversation with the driver,” Dr. Groebner continued. “He told them that his level of income, combined with the high taxes he paid prohibited him from benefitting from the ‘free’ healthcare system in place. He just didn’t have the funds for the deductibles or copays required for medical treatments.”

“It was astounding for students with little national healthcare experience to hear some of the harsher realities alongside the benefits that everyone talks about.”

Both teachers agree that providing students with experiences away from home and outside their

comfort zones have far-reaching educational and emotional benefits.

“When students go abroad, it gives them the chance to see life differently,” said Dr. West. “Not only are they experiencing a world and lifestyle previously unknown to them, they’re gaining more confidence, taking more risks, and unlocking possibilities they never knew existed.”

“I also find that they tend to feel a larger sense of gratitude for their own lifestyles, and it opens up questions about the unbalance in the world,” Dr. West continued. “As difficult as those questions can be, they can lead students to making a permanent change or larger impact on the world in ways they might not have otherwise considered.”

Dr. Groebner believes a better healthcare system starts with understanding what’s happening internationally.

“All students should have the opportunity to go abroad and learn for some length of time,” Dr. Groebner said. “It exposes them to new ways of thinking and doing things, and it’s that sort of knowledge that just might be the key to improving the U.S. healthcare system. We simply can’t know what we don’t experience so getting there is the first step.”

Both Dr. West and Dr. Groebner have plans for additional trips in the future, to places like Argentina and Haiti.

“My dream is to be digging ditches until I’m 80 years old, and I want to do so next to as many students as possible,” said Dr. West. “Pushing your boundaries and serving others in the process is one of the most rewarding experiences a person can have. It’s a part of my mission as an educator to give students the chance to enrich their lives and the lives of others.”

Dr. Groebner will take students to Argentina in March of 2018. A trip to China, led by Dr. Ning Lu, M.P.H, professor for the department of Health Administration, is also being planned for the summer of 2018. More information can be found on the CHHS webpage of [www.govst.edu](http://www.govst.edu).

# GRANTS

## Governors State and UIC Collaboration Helps GUIDE Students in Important Cancer Disparity Research



**Back row, Left to right:** Carol J. Ferrans, MA, Robert Winn, MD, Knitasha Washington, DHA, Rupert M Evans, DHA, Karriem Watson, DrPH, Catherine Balthazar, PhD, Richard B. Warnecke, MD, Alicia Matthews, PhD, Kent Hoskins, MD, Chris Gay, MPH

**Front row, Left to right:** Regina Greer-Smith, MPH, Renee Theiss, PhD, Kameron Matthews, MD, JD, Walter Henne, PhD, Ning Lu, PhD, Binta Chauncey, Teri Sosa, PhD, Ebony Jones, MBA

What happens when GSU partners with Chicago's only public research university in an effort to benefit students, faculty, and the city's southland community? The GUIDE (Governors State University–UI Cancer Center Disparity Education) Cancer Research Training Project is born.

Funded by a joint four-year, \$1.5 million grant from the National Cancer Institute, the program involves a community-based research approach to reducing cancer disparities in the south suburbs of Chicago.

The grant, created as a way to establish a mutual partnership between GSU and UICC, will help foster the development of cancer research focused program for GSU faculty investigators, while lending career-development support to students from underrepresented groups interested in health disparities research.

“Partnering with the UI Cancer Center will increase the capacity of GSU to serve as a center of health disparities research in a community that is disproportionately affected by cancer,” said Dr. Rupert Evans, Sr., DHA, MPA, FACHE, Chair and Program Director of GSU's Department of Health Administration, as well as co-principal investigator on the grant.

“It will also build our faculty's ability to pursue larger federal grants for projects that will address high cancer rates and mortality in the Southland community,” Dr. Evans said.

Dr. Evans and Dr. Catherine Balthazar, department chair of GSU's CHHS Communication Disorders, are working alongside Dr. Robert Winn, director of the Cancer Center of the University of Illinois, as principal investigators of the GUIDE Project.

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# GRANTS

## Governors State and UIC Collaboration Helps GUIDE Students in Important Cancer Disparity Research *Continued*

“When we initially sat down with the UIC team, we wanted to be sure that a collaboration between our two institutions would not only have a positive impact on the faculty and students, but also on the community and people who are a part of the research,” said Dr. Evans. “Luckily, Dr. Winn and his team felt exactly the same way.”

Despite the UICC team’s extensive work in the field of cancer research, Dr. Evans and Dr. Balthazar believe GSU’s strong ties to the Southland community position them as an equal partner in the project.

“The students and faculty of GSU are really embedded in the community in a way that is unique among the region’s universities,” Dr. Balthazar said. “That’s a huge benefit and will allow us to address the needs of those we’re researching, while building sustainable partnerships and increasing awareness of health disparities in our community.” Five undergraduate interns from GSU will be chosen to participate in the GUIDE Project’s summer research institute starting in May. Aside from contributing to the overall cancer disparities research, these students will have the opportunity to take part in special workshops, hands-on experiences and lab activities at UICC, and will work to develop a project of their own under the framework of the grant.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach to research, whenever possible, is something that’s important to both both Dr. Evans and Dr. Balthazar.

“One of my visions for the College of Health and Human Services is to show our students that the things we do to care for our community don’t happen in a silo,” Dr. Evans said. “They happen with the help of different people, different institutions, and through diversity and a wealth of knowledge.”

“My dream is for GSU to increase our capacity to do and fund research that supports our teaching and service mission,” said Dr. Balthazar. “Having this kind of partnership increases our ability to compete for funding and gives us more power to address some of the problems we find important.”

Dr. Balthazar stressed the importance of opportunities like the GUIDE Project that involve personalized, hands-on mentoring and learning for both students and faculty.

“This project, and hopefully others like it, will give us a chance to build a supportive network with our faculty and students so that we can sustain these efforts moving forward,” Dr. Balthazar said. “Almost everyone working on the GUIDE Project is from an underrepresented group, and we’re all equally committed to doing the hard work that comes with this responsibility. “That’s quite an accomplishment in itself.”

# ADDICTION STUDIES

## Teri Thompson Makes Her Dream Come True, One Class at a Time

**A**lthough Teri Thompson's higher education story has a happy ending, it certainly didn't start out that way.

"During my first semester as an undergraduate at Governors State University, I had a house fire that destroyed pretty much all of my belongings, including my school books," said Thompson, who received her Master's degree in Addictions Studies from GSU in 2014. "Honestly, I was ready to postpone my coursework until I met with supportive services.

"They helped me pay for new books and supplies, but most importantly, they showed me that the university cared about me and my education. That made me care more too."

After the rocky start, it was full-steam ahead for Thompson, a single mother who first graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Health Administration from GSU in 2008.

"I was an adult student by the time I came to GSU, working full-time as a nursing assistant and raising my daughter," Thompson said. "I didn't have a concrete plan. I just kept telling myself that if I completed one class, I'd take another and see how far I could go."

And go far, she did. With a steadfast determination and the encouragement of her teachers, advisor, and peers, Thompson made the decision to be one of the first students in GSU's Addictions Counseling Concentration, which began in 2012.

"With the introduction of the Affordable Care Act, my colleagues and I saw a need for more substance abuse counselors in the field, and we wanted to prepare our students for that need," said Dr. Serena Wadhwa Psy.D., LCPC, CADC, RYT, program coordinator and assistant professor in GSU's Addictions Studies and Behavioral Health department. "Several faculty members within the department put together a new curriculum for students that enabled them to be more proficient in clinical counseling, while offering them even more professional opportunities."

Although the curriculum added 30 hours to her mandatory credit list and already busy life, Thompson went forward in pursuit of the certification, largely due to the urging and support of Dr. Wadhwa.



DR. SERENA WADHWA

"Dr. Wadhwa was instrumental in helping me understand not only how rewarding this career path could be, but also how marketable the certificate and license would make me," said Thompson. "Her insight and real world experience helped me feel confident in making the decision to pursue the certification."

According to Dr. Wadhwa, Thompson's confidence came largely from within.

"The entire time Teri was a student here, I was impressed with her hunger to learn and her enthusiasm when applying her educational knowledge to the real work at hand," said Dr. Wadhwa. "She decided to be one of the first students in the Addictions Counseling Concentration and she really went for it. It's not always easy to be the first, but she excelled and paved the way for students today."

Thompson is currently a licensed professional counselor (LPC) at Metropolitan Family Services and credits GSU with helping her realize and achieve her dreams.

"I'm so fortunate to do such fulfilling work every day," Thompson said. "If it weren't for the support and guidance of my teachers and advisor at GSU, I'm not sure I would have ever dreamed this big,"

For Dr. Wadhwa, that sort of encouragement is all in a day's work.

"It's an essential part of my role to encourage students to dream and to dream big," Dr. Wadhwa said. "I tell them, 'Dream big, and if you hold onto that vision throughout your time at GSU, your dream will come true.' And it does."

# PHYSICAL THERAPY

## Othman O'Malley: On the Road to Success

Sometimes all it takes is a change of scenery to help you discover the right path for your journey.

For Othman O'Malley, that transformative moment happened in South Korea, where he was teaching English after receiving his undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

"I was a political science major dead set on going to law school, but being in Korea changed all of that," O'Malley said. "Teaching kids between the ages of six and 15, who didn't speak any English, forced me to come up with creative ways to not only engage them in the learning, but to also make it fun."

"That was a real challenge for me," O'Malley continued. "But it also made me realize that what I really wanted was to work directly with people, to help them, and educate them in a way that could actually improve their lives long-term."

On his travels, O'Malley met several people who were preparing to enter the occupational and physical therapy fields. Through speaking with them, he discovered that physical therapy was a great fit for his personality and professional aspirations.

"I started researching physical therapy and loved how hands on it is," O'Malley said. "You interact with people every day. Your goal, oftentimes, is to restore not only patients' health, but also their spirit, and to really educate them so they can maintain that health and spirit after their time with you. I love that it merges teaching with health."

Once O'Malley was back in the U.S., he began exploring doctoral programs for physical therapy and quickly decided on Governors State University.

"After looking into several options, it became clear pretty fast that GSU was the right choice for me," said O'Malley. "I could easily commute and afford it financially, but beyond all that I was attracted to the smaller class sizes and the clear dedication of all the faculty I met with."

The small class sizes – with an average of 30 students per cohort – are unique to GSU and tend to help students like O'Malley build a support system and create professional relationships that often last long after graduation.

"I think the smaller cohorts are a point of distinction for our program," said Dr. Rebecca Wojcik, PT, EdD, GCS, department chair for Physical Therapy and O'Malley's professor and academic advisor. "It helps the students develop close working relationships with each other and the faculty in the program, which fosters engagement in the curriculum and in the profession as a whole."

O'Malley is certainly engaged in all aspects of physical therapy. A leader with a natural curiosity and drive, he has become actively involved in both the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and the Illinois Physical Therapy Association (IPTA) and was the only student member to be asked to join the IPTA's Diversity Task Force in 2016.



DR. REBECCA WOJCIK

"I think the word passion has to come up frequently when talking about Othman," said Dr. Wojcik. "He's passionate about classes, about society, and about helping others. He has an above average commitment to being involved outside of academia. He walks

the walk by attending meetings that aren't required and contributes new ideas frequently.

"His clear passion is most certainly one of the reasons he was selected to be one of seven on the diversity task force, and the only student."

O'Malley has also been involved on campus at GSU, as a graduate assistant for the Writing Center. It's a position that, he says, has not only assisted him financially but has also allowed him to meet and work with students outside of his program.

"Through my work at the Writing Center, I've really been able to see the impact GSU can have on so many students, at all different stages of their lives," said O'Malley. "I like to think of the university as a transformation machine."

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# PHYSICAL THERAPY

## Othman O'Malley: On the Road to Success *Continued*

"No matter what challenges a student might face, they're able to get the support and education they need in an environment conducive to their learning," O'Malley continued. "Because of that, they're able to graduate and be seen as a success to themselves, and in the eyes of their family and community."

For O'Malley, who is still deciding on a career path but likes the idea of working in an inpatient setting,

GSU has helped him reach the right destination.

"GSU has given me the chance to pursue a career I think is one of the most rewarding there is," he said. "The program has prepared me for all aspects of the profession. From the clinical side to leadership and effective communication skills, I feel ready to enter the field and succeed. That's my dream come true."

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*"If you can dream it, you can do it." – Walt Disney*

Illinois institutions of public education continue to face a budgetary crisis. Yet, despite ongoing financial instability, Governors State University's faculty and students do not only persist, they innovate. They excel. They exceed. They prepare themselves, their peers, and our university for the future.

This has always been the GSU way. Both our students and our staff are resilient leaders ready to take on even the toughest of challenges. The leadership, optimism, and commitment of those in the College of Health and Human Services can be seen in the pages of this magazine. It can be felt in the hallways of our institution. And it's driven by our dreams and visions for tomorrow.

We dream of achieving what seems unattainable. We dream of changing the world around us—of truly making someone's life better. We envision a university that can continue to be accessible for anyone willing to work hard and dream big.

In order to make these dreams a reality, we need your support. If you've given in the past, we thank you. You are a large part of the reason we're able to explore new and exciting research opportunities, organize life changing trips abroad, and champion our faculty as they develop curriculum that helps our students stand out in the workforce. We need this type of support now more than ever as we try to do more with even less.

If you are able to support the work of the College of Health and Human Services this year, please help us continue to bring the visions and dreams of our



students to reality. Gifts may be made via the Foundation's website at [www.govst.edu/donate](http://www.govst.edu/donate). Your support, in any amount, is invaluable. You may also send a donation to:

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**Thank you for dreaming with us.**