

MGH INSTITUTE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL FOUNDED BY MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL



The Next Chapter

**President Deborah Jones
charts a new course for the future**

PA Class of 2026
Achieves Milestone

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Using AI to Fast Track
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Two Generations
Find Their Calling

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The Promise of Our Future

As I write this, I am just a couple of months into my role as president, and I continue to be energized by the remarkable community that defines this institution. Every conversation with students, faculty, staff, clinical partners, alumni, and donors has reinforced what makes this Institute so distinctive: a shared commitment to advancing health through education, research, and practice, and a deep sense of purpose in the work we do together.

The MGH Institute has long been recognized as a place where innovation meets real-world application. Our graduates are not only highly skilled clinicians and professionals; they are leaders, problem-solvers, and change agents in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. That legacy is both inspiring and instructive. It reminds us that our responsibility is not simply to prepare students for today's healthcare environment, but to anticipate and shape what comes next.

Since my arrival, I have been listening, intentionally and broadly. I have met with students who are passionate about their chosen professions and eager to make a difference. I have engaged faculty who are advancing groundbreaking research while reimagining how we educate the next generation of health professionals. I have spent time with staff whose dedication ensures that the Institute operates with excellence and care. And I have connected with our partners across Mass General Brigham, whose collaboration is essential to our continued success.

Several themes have emerged from these conversations. First, there is a strong sense of pride in the Institute's mission and accomplishments. Second, there is an eagerness to build on that foundation, to think boldly about what is possible, and to position the Institute for even greater impact. And third, there is a clear recognition that

our strength lies in our ability to work together across disciplines, roles, and environments.

This spirit of integration—bringing education, research, and clinical practice into closer alignment—is central to our future. In today's healthcare environment, no single discipline or perspective can solve the complex challenges we face. It is through collaboration and shared purpose that we will drive meaningful change. The Institute is uniquely positioned within Mass General Brigham to model what this integration can look like at its best.

As we look ahead, we are also approaching a pivotal moment in our history. In 2027, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Institute. This milestone provides an opportunity not only to reflect on how far we have come, but also to articulate a bold vision for the future. It is a chance to elevate our visibility, strengthen our partnerships, and expand our impact in ways that align with the needs of the communities we serve.

Our future will be shaped by several key priorities. We will continue to innovate in how we educate, leverage technology, rethink traditional models, and ensure that our programs remain relevant, accessible, and responsive to workforce needs. We will strengthen our research enterprise, supporting faculty and students in generating knowledge that improves care and advances health equity. We will deepen our partnerships within Mass General Brigham and beyond, creating new pathways for learning, discovery, and practice. And we will invest in our people, recognizing that our success depends on the talent, dedication, and well-being of our community.

At the same time, we must remain attentive to the broader environment in which we operate. Higher education



Deborah Jones,
President and John Hilton
Knowles Professor

and health care are both undergoing significant transformation. Questions about access, affordability, value, and workforce readiness are front and center. These challenges require thoughtful, strategic responses, and they also present opportunities for institutions like ours to lead.

I am confident that the MGH Institute of Health Professions is well-positioned to do just that. We have a strong foundation, a clear mission, and a community that is deeply committed to excellence. By building on these strengths and embracing a spirit of innovation and collaboration, we can continue to distinguish ourselves as a leader in health professions education.

I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received and for the opportunity to serve this extraordinary institution. I look forward to continuing to listen, learn, and work alongside all of you as we shape the next chapter of the MGH Institute together.

FIVE QUESTIONS

Valerie Fuller, PhD, DNP, AGACNP-BC, FNP-BC, FAAN, FNAP, FAANP

Valerie Fuller, DNP '08, CAS '10, is the president of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, a nurse practitioner at Maine Medical Center, and a recent inductee into the American Academy of Nursing.

In this edition of “Five Questions,” Sean Hennessey from the Office of Strategic Communications spoke with Dr. Fuller about her presidency, the challenges facing nursing, and being a two-time author and editor.

1 You're coming up on your first year of being president of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. How did this ascendancy occur?

Valerie Fuller: I have long been an advocate for nursing, and as a nurse practitioner I have focused much of my efforts on advancing the role of NPs. I became involved with AANP first as a member and later as the AANP state representative. From there, I progressed through elected leadership roles within the organization as a regional director, president-elect, and now president.

2 Talk about your role and what the American Association of Nurse Practitioners is all about.

VF: Serving as AANP president has truly been one of the greatest honors of my career. I represent more than 461,000 nurse practitioners nationwide and am dedicated to supporting nurse practitioners nationwide in providing high-quality, patient-centered health care. Our mission is guided by our core pillars of practice, education, advocacy, research, and leadership, to ensure that NPs have the resources and professional support they need to thrive and to meet the needs of the patients and communities they serve.

3 What challenges are the nursing profession facing these days?

VF: Misinformation and disinformation about nurse practitioners remain a significant challenge, along with

persistent regulatory barriers at both state and federal levels. Currently, 27 states, Washington, D.C., and two U.S. territories grant full practice authority, allowing NPs to practice to the full extent of their education and training. However, barriers remain elsewhere despite more than 50 years of evidence that NPs provide high-quality, cost-effective health care.

We know that more than 100 million Americans lack access to basic primary care services—nurse practitioners are the solution to that problem.

4 You were recently inducted into the American Academy of Nursing, considered by many to be the pinnacle of the nursing profession. Tell us about that and how the MGH Institute contributed to your career.

VF: It is deeply meaningful to be recognized by organizations that represent excellence in the nursing profession, which include the American Academy of Nursing, the National Academies of Practice, and the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. This honor is both humbling and affirming. I view it not only as recognition of past contributions, but also as a responsibility to continue to contribute to practice, policy, education, and research that improve patient care and advance the nursing profession.

As a member of the inaugural DNP cohort, my experience at the MGH Institute was truly transformative. It strengthened my skills in leadership, policy, and advocacy, and connected me with an exceptional group of peers.

My career has been shaped by clinical practice, intellectual curiosity, and a strong academic foundation, including my education at Boston College (BSN, MSN), the MGH Institute (DNP, CAS), and the University of Arizona (PhD). These experiences have guided my path in advancing the NP role across clinical practice, academia, and in national



leadership. It has been incredibly rewarding to contribute to the continued growth and impact of the nursing and nurse practitioner professions.

5 You have written and edited two nursing textbooks. Tell us about that.

VF: During my time in the inaugural DNP cohort at the MGH IHP, we relied on dozens of textbooks, yet none fully addressed the DNP essentials. Together with two of my colleagues, Drs. Sheila Davis and Stephanie Ahmed, as well as our program director, Dr. Linda Andrist, we wrote *The DNP Essentials: Education, Practice and Policy* to fill that gap.

Later, while practicing as an acute-care nurse practitioner, I recognized a similar need in acute-care NP education. In collaboration with my colleague, Dr. Paula McCauley, we developed a comprehensive textbook focused on the care and management of acute, complex, and critically ill patients. The book is now used in nearly 70 acute-care NP programs, and we are currently working on the second edition!

Expanding to the Undergraduate Arena

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

For nearly 50 years, the MGH Institute of Health Professions has been known as a graduate school that has sent thousands of healthcare leaders into the workforce to make a difference. Now, undergraduate education is a part of its portfolio, with the launch of the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences (BSHS) degree.

The new degree is designed for learners transferring from a two-year college or comprehensive university, those who began undergraduate work but never finished, and those working at Mass General Brigham who want to advance their career.

“This Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences completion program is a direct response to the critical need for accessible degree pathways for individuals who have some college but no degree—a barrier that limits career advancement across healthcare and many industries,” said Provost Reamer L. Bushardt, PharmD, PA-C, DFAAPA.

The Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences is part of the new Department of Health Sciences under program director Kim Mace, DAT, ATC, and is housed within the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. First classes will be held in fall 2026.

“Some students coming into the BSHS program are preparing for graduate study, while others are looking to advance in their current roles or explore new directions within health care,” said Mace. “The program has different concentrations intentionally designed to meet students where they are and help them take the next step with confidence.”

One of the people who advanced her career by earning her bachelor’s degree while working is Judith Vernon-Crawford, a 15-year MGB employee, because she knew there would be a career ceiling without it.



People like Judith Vernon Crawford, who credits her career advancement to earning a bachelor’s degree while working, can enroll in the MGH Institute’s Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences completion program, which begins in the fall.

“Having that higher level of education is important,” said Vernon-Crawford, a support operation supervisor with direct reports working on Spaulding Network endeavors. “If I didn’t have my bachelor’s degree, I don’t think I would have been given the opportunities that I’ve received.”

The Mass General Brigham Connection

Mass General Brigham Human Resources and Workforce Development categorized a considerable percentage of its workforce as having some undergraduate credit but not a bachelor’s degree—a barrier to career advancement and social mobility. The IHP program’s curriculum offers flexibility for working professionals and competencies that MGB has defined as essential for the current and future workforce.

“This initiative is a true investment in our people and in the future strength of our health system,” said Mary Ellen Schopp, chief human resources officer

for Mass General Brigham. “By partnering with the MGH Institute, we’re creating flexible and affordable pathways for career mobility—helping employees advance into high-demand fields like nursing, rehabilitation, and health administration.”

Free tuition for community college in Massachusetts and the Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan that offers a 40% discount to Mass General Brigham employees help make the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences a financially attractive and practical option.

“By shaping transfer pathways, employees can also transfer in credit earned at other two- and four-year colleges, or take advantage of free community college coursework, to further lower the cost of a bachelor’s degree,” said Bushardt.

The complex and fast-paced Mass General Brigham health system is more than ready for a bachelor completer program like this, one that encourages career mobility and workforce retention.

Leadership, Legacy, and Impact

BY LISA MCEVOY

The early leaders of the MGH Institute envisioned an educational experience that would enable healthcare professionals to transform care. For eight years, President Paula Milone-Nuzzo guided the Institute toward that goal while navigating unprecedented challenges. To celebrate her retirement, the community came together last December to explore the elements vital to advancing healthcare professions and to recognize all she has done to lead the Institute beyond what the early leaders could have ever imagined.

A panel with Chief Operations Officer Denis Stratford, Dean of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences Laura Plummer, Matina Soureis Horner Professor in Rehabilitation Sciences Jordan Green, and Leah Rothchild, DEN '24, discussed their experiences with Milone-Nuzzo and the work she did to prioritize students, faculty, and research. CBS Boston Sports Director Steve Burton moderated the celebration, sharing the Institute's current state of financial stability, enrollment gains, and new programs that have been developed under Dr. Milone-Nuzzo's leadership. He also shared a personal story to highlight the impact she has had.

“Her legacy will continue in a way that mirrors her life's work by supporting the future of our health professionals.”

— BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIR
JEANNETTE IVES ERICSON

“Before my dad died, he got our family together and asked a very simple question,” explained Burton. “What ripple effect will you have when you leave this Earth? Paula has left a tremendous ripple effect.”



President Paula Milone-Nuzzo (c) with her husband Joe Nuzzo (l) and panel moderator CBS Boston Sports Director Steve Burton chat at the podium following the celebration of Milone-Nuzzo's achievements during her eight-year presidency.

Milone-Nuzzo's full title was president and John Hilton Knowles Professor in honor of one of the early leaders, who, along with Dr. Charles Sanders, dreamed of what the Institute could become. Knowles' son, John “Joe” H. Knowles, Jr., serves on the Institute Board and closed the celebration.

“That's my family's name. That's my name. She's carried that name for eight years. So when I say Paula has done us proud, I'm saying quite a bit,” he said.

When Milone-Nuzzo began her time as president, one of the commitments she made was to build on the work of those who had come before.

“I committed to respecting and honoring the legacy of Dr. Knowles and Dr. Sanders, the legacy they provided for us, and to build upon that legacy with stellar and innovative academic programs and a cutting edge into professional curriculum,” Milone-Nuzzo told the crowd.

“The vision, creativity, and resilience of so many who have done the work of leading in this institution has put us in

the successful position we are in today. Leaders like Anne Caldwell, who was significant in rescuing us from closure,” Milone-Nuzzo said, referencing the Institute's fourth president, who was in attendance.

Milone-Nuzzo's contributions to that legacy will be recognized with the establishment of the President Paula Milone-Nuzzo Endowed Scholarship, which will support students who embody the values that have defined her career and her presidency—commitment to service, interprofessional collaboration, and compassionate leadership.

“Her legacy will continue in a way that mirrors her life's work by supporting the future of our health professionals,” said Board of Trustees Chair Jeannette Ives Ericson. “This endowment is more than a tribute to Paula. For all of us here, it is a promise. A promise of the future, a promise that the next generation of IHP students will be nurtured, encouraged, and empowered in the same spirit that Paula has shown every day of her leadership.”

Diversity of Experience Hallmark of Inaugural Doctor of Health Sciences Program

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

A former chief medical officer, a microbiologist from an industry leader, a director of radiology, a quality control analyst, a biomedical engineer, a director of community health, the head of Mass General Brigham's ambulance services, the granddaughter of the man who invented Ruffles potato chips, a former Marine, a former Navy submarine repairman, and multiple front-line clinicians: just some of the new students who are beginning their third semester of the MGH Institute's new Doctor of Health Sciences program.

The two-year, fully online program has attracted 22 students from three countries and three states, along with a dozen other students who are taking advantage of the Institute's Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan, which offers a 40% discount for Mass General Brigham employees.

The diversity of the program's cohort is one of its key strengths.

“Having people come from a variety of educational, clinical, and operational backgrounds really provides diverse perspectives and opportunities to learn from others who can provide a different lens for further professional growth.”

— SARAH MCKINNON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE DOCTOR OF HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAM

“I truly believe that in order for us to become better leaders in health care and really be innovative in solutions, we



The first cohort of the new Doctor of Health Sciences Program includes students from a diverse range of occupations, many of whom are Mass General Brigham employees.

need to put ourselves in places to best understand the perspectives of those experiencing different professional practice problems,” said Sarah McKinnon, program director for the Doctor of Health Sciences Program. “Having people come from a variety of educational, clinical, and operational backgrounds really provides diverse perspectives and really provides our students the opportunity to learn from and learn with others who can provide a different lens for further professional growth.”

Like its students, the pathways after graduation are diverse.

“We’ve learned that some people want to go back to school for promotion, some want to develop a different skillset and be leaders in their workplace, while others are looking for a career change,” noted McKinnon. “We envision graduates of our program are not only excelling and being leaders in their workplace but are also able to discover, define, and build solutions to professional practice problems affecting the healthcare system, and know how to address them regardless of where they’re working.”

Students agree with this vision.

“My long-term professional goal is to advance into a leadership role in quality and regulatory affairs,” said Sokuntheary Chhan, a quality control analyst with Takeda Pharmaceutical, “where I can help shape systems that promote patient safety and product excellence.”

“My long-term goals include advancing healthcare technology to improve patient outcomes, advocating for equitable access to healthcare solutions, and mentoring future healthcare leaders,” said Brian Blackman, who oversees IT systems and infrastructure across the Massachusetts General Hospital and its multiple health and surgical centers.

“My long-term goal is to improve patient care pathways through a systematic, evidence-based approach,” noted Nathaniel Idrissa Moussa, a medical science liaison at AstraZeneca, “ensuring providers can access and apply new science within weeks for better outcomes.”

The inaugural cohort of the Doctor of Health Sciences program will graduate in spring 2027. The program has two points of entry (summer and fall) and welcomes students with master's degrees across the health professions.

Physician Assistant Studies Program Scores 100% on PANCE on First Try

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The Physician Assistant program has new bragging rights: Every member of the Class of 2025 passed the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) on their first try. The national first-time pass rate is 91%. The program previously achieved the 100% milestone in 2018, making this year's result a remarkable repeat of that success.

The perfect score by all 43 students caps a two-year effort by the PA faculty that included implementing a holistic admissions process, establishing a competency-based advising program, providing individualized student support, and redesigning the program's course review process to conduct more systematic evaluations of course effectiveness across the curriculum.

Program faculty and advisors then worked closely with students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Students who needed additional support received individualized advising and were offered optional remediation activities to support their progress.



All 43 members of the 2025 Physician Assistant Studies classes passed the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) on their first try, marking the first time since 2018 a PA class has done so.

"It helped students understand that they're not yet where they want to be in terms of success on the PANCE," noted Deanna Denault, PhD, who took over as interim chair in January 2025. "You could pass a course but still be weak in certain areas. So we were deliberate in

our advising and mapping out the competencies that they're gaining in the medical knowledge domain.

"Our goal is simple: to graduate the very best PAs, and I am incredibly proud of the dedication and commitment our faculty bring to that mission every day."

Hallahan Named Fulbright Specialist

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The MGH Institute sent a Fulbright Specialist to the country of Georgia to help reshape how rehabilitation services are delivered there.

Tom Hallahan, ScD, MEd, an adjunct assistant professor in the Health Sciences Online Prerequisites Program, completed a project at McLain Association for Children, which serves children with disabilities. Georgia is considered a Eurasian country, given its location at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

"The rehabilitation model within Georgia is disability-based, and focused on children," said Hallahan. "There is no focus on adults, particularly around rehabilitation—post-stroke, trauma, neurodegenerative—and that's what this project is about."

During his 41-day assignment, the maximum allowed for a Fulbright Specialist, Hallahan conducted a needs assessment by talking with everyday people along with

authorities from higher education institutions, clinics, and the government.

As Georgia utilizes socialized medicine, Hallahan said his main focus was convincing the government to look at its policy.

"My focus from doing this work for 15 years is how do we change this on the national level, with their government looking at healthcare policy to include rehabilitative services for adults? In a very short time, I was able to establish a good understanding of the status of rehabilitative services in-country, including the lack of services for adults and the overall quality of such services," he noted.

Hallahan is one of over 400 U.S. citizens who share expertise with host institutions abroad through the Fulbright Specialist Program each year. Recipients of Fulbright Specialist awards are selected on the basis of academic and professional achievement, demonstrated leadership in their field, and potential to foster long-term cooperation between institutions in the U.S. and abroad.



MGH Institute Adjunct Assistant Professor Thomas Hallahan, speaking to deaf-education teachers, pediatricians, audiologists, interpreters, and parents in Tbilisi.

Faculty Leadership Roles Announced



Keshrie Naidoo is adding to her responsibilities as the SHRS associate dean for academic affairs.



Sarah McKinnon and Bridget Perry have been named department chairs.



Margie Sipe has been named associate dean of academic affairs in the School of Nursing.

BY LISA MCEVOY AND SEAN HENNESSEY

Three faculty members had “interim” removed from their titles recently, and another has expanded her role. Sarah McKinnon, OTD, FAOTA, FNAP, is chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, and Bridget Perry, PhD, CCC-SLP, is the chair of the Department of Communications Sciences and Disorders. Margie Sipe, DNP, RN, FNAP, FAONL, FAAN, is associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Nursing, while Keshrie Naidoo, DPT, EdD, added to her duties and now serves as associate dean for academic affairs for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

Dr. McKinnon is an associate professor of occupational therapy who remains involved in clinical practice and scholarship with the Mass General Brigham organization. An American Occupational Therapy Association Fellow since 2022, she currently serves as chair of the Occupational Therapy Academy of the National Academies of Practice and recently served as the government representative for the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy and on the board of directors for the American Occupational Therapy Association Political Action Committee.

She joined the Institute in 2019 as the founding program director for the Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. She and Perry co-designed the Doctor of Health Sciences

program, an interprofessional clinical doctoral program that launched last summer.

Dr. Perry is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, and program director of the post-professional Clinical Doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology program. A medical SLP expert and dysphagia researcher, Perry is the director of the Swallowing and Communication Collaborative Research Lab, with research centered around optimizing the management of swallowing and speech impairments to improve the quality of life for adults living with serious illnesses. She is the principal investigator for a National Institutes of Health K23 award and continues to practice as a speech-language pathologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

As associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Nursing (SON), Dr. Sipe oversees all academic affairs within the School and serves as the Board of Nursing program administrator and liaison.

Since joining the MGH Institute in 2012, Sipe has served in numerous roles, including as term lecturer, faculty member, interim director and director of the DNP program, assistant dean of leadership programs, interim dean, and most recently, interim associate dean. Sipe has led many significant initiatives across the SON and the IHP and has been the recipient of multiple awards: the Mary Ann Garrigan

Award for outstanding professional achievements in nursing, Excellence in Research Mentoring Award, DAISY Faculty Award, Alexandra Paul Simon Mentoring Award, Partners in Excellence Award for Quality Care, Loyal Service Award, ONL Elaine K. Sherwood Award, and the Spirit of Sigma Award, Boston College.

Inducted as a Fellow into the American Academy of Nursing two years ago, Sipe has been named a National Academies of Practice Fellow and an American Organization for Nursing Leadership Inaugural Fellow.

Already the chair of the Physical Therapy Department, Dr. Naidoo also now serves as associate dean for academic affairs for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. The part-time leadership role in the Dean’s Office focuses on strategic planning, program development, continuous quality improvement, and faculty support.

A distinguished teaching associate professor of physical therapy, Naidoo has 25 years of clinical experience. She has been at the MGH Institute since 2002, has been a certified clinical instructor since 2004, and is a board-certified specialist in orthopaedics emerita. Dr. Naidoo is also the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Physical Therapy Education* and was appointed to the Department of Developmental Services Self-Determination Advisory Board for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Fast-Tracking Alzheimer's Diagnosis Through AI and Speech

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Can speech and AI revolutionize the way Alzheimer's disease is diagnosed? MGH Institute of Health Professions researcher Marziye Eshghi, PhD, thinks so, and she's well on her way to proving it.

"A patient could be within normal limits in the way they speak, but AI can detect subclinical deviations from normative patterns," said Dr. Eshghi, assistant professor and director of the Speech, Physiology, and Neurobiology of Aging and Dementia Lab.

Eshghi says her team's research is distinct in both methodology and scope, integrating speech analysis with genetics, blood-based biomarkers, cardiovascular health, metabolic risk factors such as diabetes, and multimodal measures of brain structure and function, an approach still rare in Alzheimer's research.

"It's like puzzle pieces that we put together to create a truly holistic picture of what is going on," said Eshghi. "Work at this level, across so many modalities, is still uncommon in the field.

"Speech has been overlooked as a biological signal," she noted. "It's a remarkably rich behavior, and AI allows us to uncover patterns in natural speech that go beyond human perception and traditional analytic approaches. Our findings demonstrate that speech carries far more information about brain health than we typically recognize."

Supported by the National Institutes of Health, the ASHFoundation, and the Massachusetts AI & Technology Center, Eshghi and her team, working closely with neurologists at Massachusetts General Hospital's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, have spent the past five years exploring how the acoustic and kinematic properties of speech can reveal early signs of Alzheimer's disease, often years before traditional clinical methods can detect signs. This innovative approach is now being extended to other age-related neurodegenerative



Researcher Marziye Eshghi and her lab data scientist Mehrdad Dadgostar discuss findings related to patterns observed in brain cortical structure in association with speech features and plasma biomarkers of Alzheimer's disease.

disorders, including Lewy body dementia, Parkinson's disease, and ALS-FTD, with the goal of uncovering neurobiologically grounded speech features that enhance disease phenotyping and support more personalized clinical care.

"AI allows us to uncover patterns in natural speech that go beyond human perception and traditional analytic approaches."

— MARZIYE ESHGHI, RESEARCHER

Underlying this work is advanced microstructural analysis of speech, powered by artificial intelligence. Eshghi's team is examining subtle movement and acoustic features that reflect how early molecular pathologies affect brain regions responsible for speech motor planning and execution. By quantifying these microscopic deviations, even when speech remains clinically within normal limits, the system can identify individuals who may already be on a path toward Alzheimer's disease.

"We've shown that small departures from typical motor-speech patterns can signal the earliest stages of neurodegeneration," said Eshghi. "Our AI models integrate speech-derived biomarkers with comprehensive clinical and biological risk profiles, moving us closer to identifying high-risk individuals with precision, before cognitive symptoms emerge."

While early detection doesn't erase risk, it empowers people to maximize their cognitive health and quality of life for as long as possible, offering not a cure, but a meaningful extension of vitality and independence.

"This research can make a difference in the lives of so many people," concluded Eshghi. "A headstart to know, followed by lifestyle changes that can help delay symptoms—that combination is a game-changer. That's why we're here."

While the team's initial findings are promising, Eshghi and her collaborators are now focused on scaling their research to validate results across larger and more diverse populations. Their goal is to test these models against extensive longitudinal datasets to ensure robustness and generalizability.

Implementing Group Exercise Following Breast Cancer Surgery

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

It is one thing to know that a rehabilitation program can aid recovery after breast cancer surgery. It is another to implement the program. Kathy Lyons, director of the Cancer Rehabilitation (CaRe) Lab at the MGH Institute, undertook an implementation study to look at the challenges of translating an established rehabilitation program into real-world healthcare settings.

That program was a result of a series of studies led by Kathryn Schmitz at the University of Pittsburgh's Hillman Cancer Center that demonstrated that supervised strength training plays a critical role in recovery following breast cancer surgery. Dr. Schmitz developed Strength After Breast Cancer (SABC), an evidence-based program designed to help survivors rebuild arm strength, restore or maintain range of motion, and reduce the risk of lymphedema, a common and often debilitating side effect of treatment.

One promising approach to delivering SABC is through group exercise. Research and clinical experience suggest that breast cancer survivors are more likely to engage in and adhere to exercise when participating in a group setting. The social support, shared experience, and sense of camaraderie can significantly enhance motivation and outcomes.

However, implementing group-based rehabilitation is more complex than it may initially appear. Clinics must navigate logistical barriers such as limited physical space, appropriate scheduling, and insurance billing structures for group sessions. Additionally, successful groups require participants with similar functional abilities, while also avoiding excessive waitlists that could discourage participation.

Dr. Lyons worked with researcher and term lecturer Stephen Wechsler and a team at Massachusetts General Hospital's Waltham clinic, including physical therapists Allison Snyder and



Physical therapy aide Emily London (l) and physical therapist Allison Snyder, CLT (r) lead two group participants through their resistance band exercises.

Cheryl Brunelle and oncologist Amy Comander, to study how to introduce SABC in a group format.

“Steve and I looked at building an implementation study around it to see what works well and what might need to adapt,” said Lyons. “Any evidence-based program needs a little tailoring in any particular environment.”

Modifications included adding a session in response to patient and clinician feedback and creating an orientation package after one of the entry-level doctoral students noticed that the breast cancer survivors were getting a lot of verbal information, but no handout to take home to help them remember.

Lyons and her team consulted with Schmitz to ensure the modifications didn't change the program significantly.

“Practicing clinicians have good ideas and can make programs stronger,” explained Lyons. “One of the things in implementation science we talk about is whether the modification fidelity is consistent. Meaning, is it still in the

spirit of the program, or is fidelity inconsistent, meaning it changes it somehow?”

Dr. Schmitz approved their modifications, so Lyons and her team published a paper on them and will implement the modified program with physical therapists in Atlanta, Georgia, and at MGH Chelsea.

“We want to take what we learned in Waltham and help the two clinics find ways to make SABC work in their practices,” said Lyons. “We talked to the front desk people, the nurse navigators, clients, and the therapists who are going to lead the program. We asked them, how will it fit? What should we adapt going forward?”

The goal is to collect more data, apply for a grant, and implement the program on a larger scale.

“We want to be able to say, ‘We have a toolkit now, we know how to implement, we know how to talk to the clinics and help them know what they have to prepare for to be ready to do this,’” said Lyons.

Green, Hogan Forecast Future of Communication Sciences and Disorders



MGH Institute Chief Scientific Advisor Jordan Green (l) and Speech and Language Literacy Lab Director Tiffany Hogan were two of 20 experts nationwide who were asked to look into the future and write about what the next 100 years would bring.

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

In 2025, the field of communication sciences and disorders celebrated the 100th anniversary of the former American Academy of Speech Correction, now known as the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). To commemorate the centennial, the MGH Institute's Tiffany Hogan and Jordan Green were among a select group of 20 national leaders who were asked to look into the future and predict what the next 100 years would bring in their respective fields.

Dr. Green, chief scientific advisor for the MGH Institute, wrote about a speech clinic in the year 2125 and the influence of artificial intelligence—how AI instantly would analyze a child's voice and provide clinicians with a detailed diagnosis that addressed both the concerns and their underlying reasons. With AI becoming ubiquitous, from ambient sensors to ever-present digital companions, he asked whether communication will be reduced to slick, hurried

transactions, eroding the friction through which empathy and social skills grow. He called for an ethical compass to guide AI adoption—one anchored in privacy, dignity, inclusivity, and emotional safety.

“Being asked by ASHA to imagine the next 100 years of communication sciences and disorders was both exciting and sobering,” reflected Green, the Matina Souretis Horner Professor in Rehabilitation Sciences and director of the Speech and Feeding Disorders Lab. “It was an exhilarating mental exercise to envision bold new possibilities—neural implants, AI companions, thought-to-speech training—while acknowledging that my ideas will probably underestimate the speed of scientific progress. At the same time, it was sobering to face the ethical and human questions these advances inevitably raise. The exercise reminded me that our future will be defined as much by how we safeguard human connection as by how far technology takes us.”

Dr. Hogan, director of the Speech and Language (SAiL) Literacy Lab, looked into future classrooms and saw teachers weaving language-rich activities while AI monitored each child's linguistic growth in real time, making personalized language screening and intervention systems, which once seemed so futuristic, feel as natural as using spell-check. Hogan also hoped the future finally will give developmental language disorder (DLD) the recognition it deserves (only 20% to 30% of the nation's 5 million children with DLD receive the support they need) and that, one day, there will be a comprehensive support network including physicians, librarians, and community program leaders to follow people with DLD throughout their lives.

“It was an honor to be asked to write a piece for this special issue celebrating ASHA's 100th anniversary,” noted Hogan. “I had already been outlining points for an invited ASHA talk, so this was the perfect forum to flush those ideas out. It was uplifting to think about positive possibilities.”



Leading the Way

BY ALYSSA HAYWOODE

Deborah Jones talks with occupational therapy students Casey Powers '28 (l) and Morgan Lashinsky '28 while visiting classes in her first few weeks as president.

O n a bitterly cold day in February, Deborah Jones was a bundle of warmth and energy as she

introduced herself to a classroom of occupational therapy students in Shouse.

“Thanks for letting me take a few minutes out of your class to talk with y’all,” said Dr. Jones with a twinge of her Texas accent as she circled the room, making sure she made eye contact with every student. “It’s been two and a half weeks since I’ve been president.”

And two and a half weeks since she began acclimating to Boston’s unforgiving winter, which recently dumped two feet of snow on the area. Before arriving here, Jones told the students, she lived in Houston and worked in Galveston.

“And if you check the weather in Texas, which I’m sure you haven’t because why would you?” she said to laughs. “It’s about 75 degrees right now so I have to get used to the snow, the cold, and all of that.”

Jones noted she was impressed by Boston’s ability to keep the city open after so much snow, “but I’ve been more impressed with this Institute itself.”

And with that, Jones talked about why she came to the Institute, what she hopes to learn from her listening and learning tour, and what the potential is.

The John Hilton Knowles Professor and seventh president of the MGH Institute has been busy during her first months on campus.

“I want as much as possible to meet with everybody,” says Jones, who officially began on January 18.

So she’s going to classes, meetings, and lunches, and introducing herself to everyone in her path along the way, whether waiting for the elevator or walking through campus.

“It’s an exciting time because everyone—whether it’s students, faculty, or staff—has a different reason for being at the MGH Institute,” she noted. “They have a different perspective. They have different opinions about what they expect from their next president. And I’m not going to know what they think unless I’m out talking to them.”

A native of Virginia, Jones comes to the MGH Institute from The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) where she served most recently as chief integration officer, senior vice

president and School of Nursing dean. She also served for a year as interim provost. And at the national level, Jones has been a member of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Jones always knew she wanted to be a nurse. She also wanted to teach. So, she’s grateful that her career has combined nursing, education, and leadership.

“Deborah is a go-to person for leadership and she truly understands the MGH Institute’s mission,” says Jeanette Ives Erickson, chair of the MGH Institute’s Board. “She has the ability to balance that mission with the strategic demands of managing shrinking federal funding and inspiring donors. Her values are centered on people, and she knows that innovation is important.”

Jones began practicing as a critical care nurse. She earned a master’s degree in nursing administration, then worked as a project supervisor on a large research project at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), which kept her connected to clinical work and developed her administrative skills.

“People always talk about administration as ‘the dark side,’” Jones says, laughing. “But I see it as a way to do what I did as a practicing nurse, which is to make a difference, but on a larger scale. Administration allows me to help set policies and move systems forward in ways that impact many more people.”

“Deborah sees challenges as opportunities, so she’s going to look at issues like affordability, instructional design, workforce needs, and what new degrees and microcredentials the Institute might offer.”

— LAURA PLUMMER, DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Jones went on to earn her PhD in nursing at VCU. She was just starting her career as an assistant professor when she unexpectedly became a patient, diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma.

“Months of chemotherapy and radiation put things in perspective,” Jones recalls. “After that I started administrative roles in health and healthcare.”

These experiences, along with Jones’ personal warmth, stood out as the MGH Institute began its search for a new president.

Dean of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences Laura Plummer, who sat on the presidential search committee, points to Jones' ability to meet the needs of the changing Mass General Brigham landscape, especially now that the MGB system is focusing on tighter integration across its departments and hospitals.

"As MGB is reorganizing, it's a critical time for the Institute to make sure we are a prominent part of that process. It's really important to have a leader like Deborah who can help with continued integration of the academic and clinical partnership that we have with MGB," says Dr. Plummer. "Deborah has the skill to be strategic about how we develop workforce opportunities in a changing healthcare system and how we continue to grow and innovate."

"Deborah sees challenges as opportunities, so she's going to look at issues like affordability, instructional design, workforce needs, and what new degrees and microcredentials the Institute might offer."

Jones, Plummer says, leads with curiosity, an approach that should serve the Institute well.

Board member Joe Knowles, who also served on the presidential search committee, says of Jones, "We found a spectacular leader. The board is excited about working with her."

Knowles is the son of Dr. John Hilton Knowles, the general director of the Massachusetts General Hospital from 1962 to 1971 and the namesake of President Jones' professorship.

"Leadership is about articulation, candor, engagement, and always about care," Knowles noted. "It's also about being authentic and transparent. And that's the kind of leader Deborah is. She has been in education. She has been in healthcare. She has a sense for community health. She's steadfast, and she also listens."

Achievements in Texas

Colleagues who worked with Jones at UTMB consistently point to her work ethic, innovations, and the delight she takes in promoting other people's success.

"What makes Dean Jones unique is that she doesn't just see opportunities, she creates them," says Rachelle Mainard, UTMB's associate vice president, strategic integration. "She creates opportunities for people to be successful, and she creates opportunities for connections, programs, and partnerships. Even where nothing exists, she goes out and creates opportunities and moves them forward."

Mainard and Jones worked together to set up UTMB's first microcredentialing program, including a microcredential in rural telehealth.

"UTMB was an early pioneer of telehealth," Mainard says, "because we do telehealth for the entire Texas state prison

system. So, we've been doing telehealth since the 1970s. So, Deborah and I started looking at how we can take that expertise and infuse it into nursing training. We created a telehealth certificate program, and now we're breaking down into smaller segments that can be microcredentialed and badged."

Microcredentials are also being developed for artificial intelligence and for biosafety containment.

Jones' other accomplishments at UTMB include setting up partnerships with the governments of Belize and Kenya. UTMB faculty and students travel there and elsewhere to provide care and education in rural regions and settings with limited resources.

"Deborah has a great intellect and understanding," adds Dr. Charles Mouton. He is the vice president and executive dean at UTMB's John Sealy School of Medicine. "She's able to relate to colleagues, and she makes outstanding personal connections. And she was a calming voice during difficult conversations."



Visiting classes like this one in the Simulation Lab gave President Jones the opportunity to hear from students on what they like about the program and what led them to the MGH Institute.

Mouton points to Jones' successful efforts to develop and build the research effort at UTMB's School of Nursing. In addition to boosting research funding, Jones ensured that emerging research was a collaborative effort shared by UTMB's School of Medicine and its School of Health Professions.

"We both worked on building a health education center, a 160,000-square-foot, \$94 million building created to focus on education, simulation, and training," Mouton says. "And Deborah and her team were one of the key teams that designed and implemented an education program in the building."



(l-r) Christine Gallagher OTD '28, Clare Naughton OTD '28, and Assistant Professor Kevin Berner listen to President Jones during Occupational Therapy in Physical Dysfunction class.

Philanthropy, Mouton says, is also one of Jones' strengths.

"Deborah was one of the powers behind The School of Nursing fashion show, a major philanthropic effort that happened every year. It was an event that people looked forward to, and it raised money for the school."

Jerry Mansfield, UTMB's vice president and system chief nursing executive, applauds Jones' work as a collaborator. Mansfield oversees clinical nursing care throughout the UTMB healthcare system, which includes four campuses and six hospitals.

"I've worked in academic medical centers for most of my career, and this is the first time I've ever had such a collaborative relationship with a dean," marveled Mansfield. "These relationships can be one-sided: all about the school and not about the health system. Deborah, however, was a great partner who was willing to explore. She always asks, 'What can we do?' instead of focusing on what won't work."

What Jones did was to weave student nurses more firmly into the health system. Mansfield praises her for creating the Student Nurse Acclimation Program, or SNAP, which provides nursing students in their senior year with credits for working in the hospital during their final semesters.

"Students got to know the work environment better, and the hope was that they would want to stay in the units where they had worked and gotten to know the teams, and that turned out to be the case," he said.

Mansfield also points to SNIP, the Surgical Nursing Internship Program, explaining that it's not typical for four-year, baccalaureate nursing students to have the experience of working in operating rooms.

"I've worked in academic medical centers for most of my career, and this is the first time I've ever had such a collaborative relationship with a dean."

- JERRY MANSFIELD, VICE PRESIDENT AND SYSTEM CHIEF NURSING EXECUTIVE, UTMB

"They might get to watch a case or two or spend time in the recovery room, but generally the experience is watch, don't touch," said Mansfield. "But SNIP actually trains students in how to scrub in for surgical cases. Students begin to learn about the instruments for different cases. They get to meet the surgical team. And they get to think about surgical specialties and whether it's something they would want to do."

Embedded in these programs is a key principle of Jones' work: healthcare systems can hire newly graduated nurses as long as thoughtful structures are in place to promote these nurses' clinical success.



President Jones stopped into a nursing class in the Simulation Lab to have some real conversations with students.

Mansfield and Jones worked together to create partnerships through the RISE Center (Research Innovation and Scientific Excellence), which supports nurse researchers and their scientific work by helping students and faculty with grant applications, statistical support, and dissemination of their research.

And when UTMB's health system wanted to address the problem of high patient readmissions, Jones offered the School of Nursing's research services. Jones and her team observed the discharge process across units with high readmission rates, spending time in the clinical setting, and then gathering their observations in a report.

"Deborah did a lot of work with the leadership team to explain what we were doing and why," recalled Mansfield. "Her point was that no one is doing anything bad. We want to observe and learn."

One option that arose from this work, which is still ongoing, is the possibility of improving ongoing patient education during hospital stays, instead of rushing on the day of discharge to tell patients what they need to know.

Planting seeds that can lead to lasting change is, Mansfield says, invaluable.

"I've been a nurse for 48 years, and it is such a gift to run into people who have such a positive impact."

Moving ahead in Massachusetts

As the Institute's president, Jones is committed to building on the strong foundation built by her predecessor, Dr. Paula Milone-Nuzzo.

"What I've inherited is a jewel," Jones says, pointing to the Institute's work on health equity, interprofessional education, and serving the community. "At the MGH Institute, the mission and vision are connected to action. I see that in the faculty and staff and in the students, and that commitment drew me here."

Her next steps included even more conversations with the Institute community.

"I do a lot of leading by questioning, so I'm asking a lot of questions," Jones explained. "How are we connecting our education to our clinical setting? How are we approaching online education? How are we approaching artificial intelligence? I'm trying to create an environment where it's okay to always ask, How can we do better?"

Sharing answers, she says, will take courage and may cause temporary discomfort, but the goal is to position the Institute for the future.

"I would like the MGH Institute to be the leader in health professions education both nationally and in the MGB system," Jones says.

Jones is also proud of the Institute's \$50 million research funding, and she'd like to see it grow. That could mean recruiting more faculty members and doing more research that leads to improved outcomes for the communities that students and faculty care for.

To accomplish all this, Jones sees a need for action and innovation on many fronts.

“We have to unmarry what we’ve done traditionally,” Jones says. “That’s what we learned during COVID-19: institutions of higher education did things they had never done before, shifting online and still producing quality graduates.

“We have to embrace new technology and artificial intelligence, recognizing that they can help with operational efficiencies, including how we do research, how we guide students through our programs, and how we teach.”

Because the Institute is a small institution that relies on tuition revenues, Jones is thinking about sustainable ways to diversify revenue.

“Philanthropy is also a priority,” said Jones, “and that’s everyone’s job. Everyone at the MGH Institute has to tell me the stories about what’s happening here, so I can tell them at fundraising dinners. I need to know what our students and faculty are doing, what their research projects are, and how we’re developing and using innovative curriculum.”



President Jones spent her time at the Wine and Cheese Welcome meeting employees like Annie Holland (l) and Julia Yi (r).

Jones is also keenly focused on ensuring that the Institute is a key player in the continuing integration of the Mass General Brigham system, a sweeping effort to remove barriers and improve collaboration on patient care, healthcare education, and scientific discovery.

“We should be a workforce engine for MGB,” she says.

MGB leaders are also eager to see the Institute grow and thrive through the process of system integration.

“MGH Institute is core to what we do here at Mass General Brigham; it sits at the very intersection of our clinical and educational missions,” Dr. David Brown, president of MGB’s Academic Medical Centers, explained.

“By training the next generation of healthcare providers with a focus on equity, the MGH Institute ensures that our clinical care remains as innovative as it is compassionate,” says Brown. “Under Dr. Jones’ leadership, we will continue to build on that legacy by collaborating on new programs to unlock important talent pipelines and address critical staffing needs.”

“It doesn’t even take a minute to recognize or encourage someone else, and helping people reach their full potential is one of my principles—because that’s what people did for me.”

— DEBORAH JONES, PRESIDENT, MGH INSTITUTE

And as her colleagues in Texas and Massachusetts agree, Jones will be a higher education leader who helps imagine the future of healthcare education, from new degrees to exciting new ways to care for people and communities.

In the short term, however, the Institute community can rely on their new president to engage in many conversations and provide a great deal of encouragement.

“I’m genuinely interested in what people are doing and what they’re interested in. That stays with me,” Jones said. Equipped with that knowledge, she can then go into match-maker mode, connecting people and their interests to professional opportunities.

“It doesn’t even take a minute to recognize or encourage someone else, and helping people reach their full potential is one of my principles—because that’s what people did for me.”

For Jones, the early months of her presidency have been full of excitement. But back in Texas, her colleagues’ warm wishes for her success are bittersweet.

“We’re losing a talented leader and the MGH Institute is gaining a gem,” UTMB’s Dr. Mouton says. “Deborah is someone who will lead the school to a new place.” ■

Working with Actors to Train Students and Hospital Healthcare Providers

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

“Get away from me! Why am I here?” a male patient screamed at the medical professionals in the hospital room.

While realistic, this was a training exercise, something the medical team at Brigham and Women’s Hospital holds on a regular basis. And the patient? A simulated participant (SP)—or trained actor—from the MGH Institute of Health Professions.

Nearly every academic program at the MGH Institute—nursing, physical therapy, physician assistant, occupational therapy, communication sciences and disorders, and genetic counseling—partners with simulated participants to help train the next generation of healthcare leaders by acting out any scenario they’re likely to encounter in the clinical setting.

“Think about being able to communicate certain concepts and ideas such as, ‘How do you break bad news to a patient who has terminal illness or is going to have a child that may have a birth defect?’” asks Tony Williams, simulated participant program manager. “How do you deal with conflict resolution, or de-escalating an agitated patient? All of these are complex skills that go into health care, and ones that a lot of our students will encounter.”

More than 100 SPs have worked with MGH Institute students since the initiative began in 2018. Portrayed by local actors, these “participants” simulate whatever clinical situation a student needs to learn from, ranging from telling a patient about a life-threatening disease to treating someone with a sore shoulder.

Not only are SPs training students, but today they’re also helping healthcare professionals with anti-racism and bias training, along with de-escalation scenarios—a different level than what they portray for IHP students.



MGH Institute simulated participant Edgar Daniel, playing a psychiatric patient, confronts two nursing students who are trying to obtain his vital signs at Brigham and Women’s Hospital during a training focused on the use of restraints.

“When we do the simulation at the MGH Institute, we’re working with students, so you have to be gentle. There’s no real amping it up or cursing of any kind,” said Edgar Daniel, one of the SPs. “But when we do the de-escalation in a hospital, we’re working with nurses that have been doing this for 15–20 years. So they’ve seen it all, and that gives you freedom to just go as much as possible.”

“How do you deal with conflict resolution, or de-escalating an agitated patient? All of these are complex skills that go into health care, and ones that a lot of our students will encounter.”

– TONY WILLIAMS, SIMULATED PARTICIPANT PROGRAM MANAGER

The goal is to put trainees in uncomfortable yet likely scenarios and see how they handle it.

In January, the MGH Institute SPs, along with Brigham and Women’s Hospital’s Department of Emergency Medicine and STRATUS Center for Medical Simulation, won the Society for Simulation in Healthcare 2026 DAISY Team Award for their work with the Anti-Racism and Trauma-informed (ART) De-escalation Training Program. Daniel and fellow SPs Jamaal Eversley and Ezra Stevens were specifically cited.

“This group of highly skilled professionals brings clinical encounters to life by providing realistic, emotionally responsive interactions that enable learners to strengthen their communication, clinical reasoning, professionalism, and physical exam skills in safe simulated environments,” said Rachel Pittmann, assistant dean of interprofessional practice and director of the Sanders IMPACT Practice Center, Center for Interprofessional Education & Practice.

It’s the kind of training students have been benefitting from for most of the past decade and will continue into the next as it improves care at the bedside and clinician resiliency.

Preparing Students for Global Leadership

BY LISA MCEVOY

Last spring, the MGH Institute and the Deggendorf Institute of Technology (DIT) in Bavaria, Germany, partnered to establish a formal student and faculty exchange program to prepare students for leadership in global health care. By the end of the year, the first of those exchanges took place when DIT physician assistant studies students Michelle Fink and Lara Edlbauer spent 11 days observing at Mass General Hospital sites.

They teamed up with students from the MGH Institute Physician Assistant Studies program to discuss patient cases, participate in morning rounds, and experience different clinical situations.

“We were able to follow patients throughout their hospital stay and gain insight into all steps of care, from admissions to discharge,” said Fink.

“The combination of neurosurgery and hospital medicine gave us the opportunity to gain insight into both surgical and non-surgical care, which was incredibly valuable for our learning,” added Edlbauer.

Both were excited for what they termed a “once-in-a-lifetime experience” to learn, grow, and be inspired, while gaining insight into the U.S. healthcare system.

“We were interested in observing how care is organized, how clinical workflows function, and how different healthcare professions interact on a daily basis,” said Edlbauer. “It offered a valuable perspective beyond what we were familiar with in our own system.”

The physician assistant profession in Germany is relatively new compared to the field in the U.S., allowing Fink and Edlbauer the chance to see what the profession could evolve into in the future.

“The MGH Institute PA program represents a unique opportunity to



German students Michelle Fink (l) and Lara Edlbauer spent 11 days at the MGH Institute learning about the role of physician assistants in the U.S. healthcare system.

broaden our understanding of international healthcare models, reflect critically on our own system, and take inspiration from practices that could shape the future of our profession,” explained Fink.

The exchange with DIT was one of three exchanges that have taken place since the partnership came to fruition; the two others were a fellowship with a nurse practitioner from Beijing and a research exchange with a medical student from Iceland.

“Welcoming students from Deggendorf Institute of Technology strengthens our global partnerships and enriches the educational experience for everyone involved,” said Department of Physician Assistant Studies Interim Chair Deanna Denault. “These exchanges foster collaboration, cultural humility, and professional growth, which are essential qualities for the next generation of healthcare leaders.”

Fink and Edlbauer encourage others who have the chance to come to the

MGH Institute to take part in one of the programs.

“The welcoming and supportive atmosphere at MGH further enhanced this experience and allowed us to learn in an open and positive environment, making the program both professionally and personally memorable,” said Fink. “The MGH Institute represents excellence, innovation, and leadership in healthcare education, and being connected to such a respected institution was deeply meaningful to us. The overall combination of academic, clinical, and personal experiences made our time at MGH so valuable.”

“The broad clinical exposure, the opportunity to learn from experienced supervisors, and the close exchange with the PA students contributed significantly to our learning,” said Edlbauer. “At the same time, having the opportunity to explore the campus and the city of Boston, and to experience the cultural side of our stay, created a well-balanced and enriching overall experience.”

Admissions Partnership Program Grows

BY CAROLINE JOHNSON

The MGH Institute continues to add academic partners to its network of colleges and universities who want to provide their graduates with a streamlined pathway into graduate school that could lead to a career in a high-demand healthcare field.

Qualified graduates from The Citadel—The Military College of South Carolina—and the University of New Hampshire now have guaranteed admittance into MGH Institute programs such as physical therapy, speech-language pathology, audiology, healthcare data analytics, and health administration.

“UNH’s depth as a flagship public research university complements the Institute’s distinctive role as an urban graduate health sciences university,” said Kevin Finn, associate provost of student affairs and dean of students at the MGH Institute.

“The Citadel’s long-standing commitment to developing principled leaders—



The Citadel and the University of New Hampshire are the newest academic partners to join the MGH Institute’s network of colleges and universities.

grounded in honor, discipline, and service—has been evident to me throughout my career,” said Reamer Bushardt, provost of the MGH Institute. “Having grown up in South Carolina and worked closely with their faculty and trained many Citadel graduates, I have seen firsthand the strength of its educational model and the character of its students.”

As the cost of higher education continues to rise, students increasingly want assurance that their education will lead to meaningful career opportunities. At the same time, healthcare systems across the

country are facing significant workforce shortages.

That’s why the MGH Institute of Health Professions has been working to address both challenges through a growing network of admissions partnerships designed to create clearer pathways into graduate healthcare programs. Launched last fall, the partnership network also includes Suffolk University, Providence College, Bridgewater State University, Bryant University, and St. Michael’s College.

Strengthening the Behavioral Health Workforce

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The MGH Institute of Health Professions, in partnership with McLean Hospital and Mass General Brigham Behavioral and Mental Health (BMH), has received a \$1.4 million, four-year federal award from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to train and grow the behavioral health paraprofessional workforce in Massachusetts.

The initiative, Pathways to Paraprofessional Excellence, is designed to prepare peer support specialists, recovery coaches, and entry-level mental health workers to serve in communities across the Commonwealth.

By creating structured pathways for paraprofessionals, the new program is geared toward increasing the number of trained individuals available to support clinical teams, families, and communities. Graduates will be positioned to join care teams across Mass General Brigham and beyond, filling critical roles in hospitals, community health centers, and school-based programs.

Working together as part of the Mass General Brigham system, McLean and the



Fairlee C. Fabrett, PhD, director of training and staff development at McLean Hospital (bottom row, far right) with the McLean/MGB Post-Baccalaureate Clinical Fellowship cohorts of 2024–2026 and 2025–2027.

MGH Institute will offer a hybrid model that blends classroom learning, simulation, and immersive fieldwork in hospitals, schools, and community health centers. Trainees will receive mentorship and academic coaching, along with financial support to help reduce barriers to participation.

Reamer Bushardt, PharmD, PA-C, DFAAPA, provost and vice president of the MGH Institute and principal

investigator, said the grant underscores the value of partnership.

“This award reflects the strength of Mass General Brigham working as one system. By bringing together the MGH Institute’s innovative training models with world-class clinical expertise, we are preparing a new workforce of paraprofessionals who will expand access to behavioral health support for individuals and families across the region,” said Bushardt.

A Nurse's Story Comes Full Circle

BY RHONIQUE BROWN

For Joan Parise, MS, RN, ANP, nursing had always been a calling. Growing up with asthma, the director of clinical affiliations for the MGH Institute's School of Nursing spent a lot of time around medical professionals, developing an early fascination with the field. That interest carried her into a career as a nurse, where she spent years working in general medicine and cardiac intensive care, and eventually as a nurse practitioner in advanced heart failure and transplant.

What drew Parise to working with heart failure patients was the holistic approach it required. She didn't just want to treat illness; she wanted to educate and support the difficult emotions it brought for patients and their families as well.

This commitment had a profound impact on the life of Ellen Sohmer. When Sohmer was 11, her father, John, became ill with congestive heart failure. Parise was the inpatient nurse practitioner responsible for his care, and throughout the 300 days he waited for a new heart, she became a steady source of compassion and support for Sohmer's family.

Parise didn't realize it at the time, but Ellen Sohmer was witnessing the kind of nursing that would eventually inspire her own interest in medicine.

When John Sohmer's health began to decline again, over a decade later, the family made the difficult decision to shift to hospice care. Not long after his passing, Parise reconnected with Ellen's mother through Facebook. Parise had never forgotten the family, and had even kept a photo of herself with John taken during a fundraiser years before.

After reconnecting, Ellen Sohmer met with Parise virtually and shared her own interest in switching careers from digital design to nursing, a career that felt truly meaningful.



Ellen Sohmer, ABSN '25 (r) hugs MGH Institute School of Nursing Director of Clinical Affiliations Joan Parise at the ABSN Pinning Ceremony.

"I felt like I can offer a lot more to people," she said. "Something deeper, emotional, and hands-on."

"We both burst into tears. What are the chances out of the hundreds of people teaching and studying at IHP that she happened to be the one handing out diplomas?"

— ELLEN SOHMER, ABSN '25

Encouraged by Parise, Sohmer decided to start again. She became a nurse assistant at Massachusetts General Hospital, then applied to the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, where Parise was teaching.

The year was challenging, but Sohmer had Parise to turn to for encouragement. Parise reminded her of how proud her father would be and shared stories from those hospital days.

And then, life brought the story full circle.

At commencement, Sohmer walked across the stage and shook hands with faculty until she heard a voice call her name. She looked up to find Parise standing at the end of the stage, diploma in hand.

"We both burst into tears," Sohmer laughed. "What are the chances out of the hundreds of people teaching and studying at IHP that she happened to be the one handing out diplomas?"

She asked Parise to be the one to pin her at the pinning ceremony that took place a few weeks later.

"It was just really touching, because her whole family was thinking, this is what he [John Somer] would have wanted," Parise said. "It's the biggest honor that you could ever be asked."

For Sohmer, it felt like a culmination of all her life experiences.

"I hope to bring what Joan has brought," she said. "When one of my dad's cardiologists wanted to send him home, Joan trusted her gut and advocated. That is what I aspire to be."

Students Spend Break on International Service Trips

Providing Life-Changing Hearing Care to Ukrainian Refugees in Poland

BY ALYSSA KENNEY

A team of audiologists and students traveled to Krakow, Poland, in January with a shared goal: to provide essential hearing services to Ukrainian refugees whose lives have been disrupted by war.

Led by King Chung, PhD, CCC-A, an audiologist and faculty member at the MGH Institute, the team that included two SLP students from the MGH Institute, Libby Fox and Liv Menyo, delivered free hearing evaluations and hearing aids to refugees ranging in age from just three months to older adults. In total, the team served 82 patients and distributed about 70 hearing aids, services that many participants described as life-changing.

“This school and program have so many amazing opportunities, and I have seen some of the other programs’ international trips,” said Fox. “I felt it would be a missed opportunity to not take advantage of the amazing learning experience I had been offered.”



The students who traveled to Ghana during winter break included occupational therapy students from the MGH Institute and pharmacy students from Western New England University.



(l-r) Dr. Chung, Libby Fox, Dr. Waid, Olivia Menyo, Vivian Sun, Matthew Mascobetto, Drs. Mecklenburger and Uitenbroek in the main market square of Krakow.

“The overall goal is to provide hearing and hearing aid services to Ukrainian refugees in Krakow,” Dr. Chung said. “For many of them, access to this kind of care simply isn’t possible because of the high costs of hearing aids.”

When asked about the impact of the trip, Menyo said, “The bravery, strength, resilience, and hope that radiate from the Ukrainian people inspired me immensely, and I feel honored to have heard, and now get to share, their stories.”

Despite logistical challenges, safety concerns about Russian drones in Poland, and limited space and equipment, Chung says the importance of the work was never in question.

“For me, the main goal is to right injustice in the world,” she said. “Someone wanted to make other people’s lives difficult and impossible. We want to make it better.”

By using their professional skills to serve those affected by war, Chung and her team are doing just that: one patient, one hearing aid, and one meaningful connection at a time.

“We can’t help everyone,” Chung said. “But whatever we can do, we will.”



OT Students Gain Real-Life Experiences in Ghana

BY LISA MCEVOY

“Meeting a patient where they’re at” means a healthcare professional provides care that considers that patient’s particular needs and circumstances. During a two-week trip to Ghana during the break between semesters, six occupational therapy students challenged themselves by practicing that concept with patients whose beliefs, resources, and situations were different than what the IHP students encounter at home.

“I have learned a lot about approaching each interaction with openness and flexibility,” said Lyndon Pelmore, a second-year OT student. “It is important to leave biases and assumptions at home when interacting with clients and patients, as there are many socioeconomic, infrastructural, and interpersonal factors that contribute to a person’s worldview, personality, and needs.”

Pelmore joined Assistant Professor Colleen Muse and fellow second-year students in the Entry-Level Occupational

Therapy program Brendamaría Cuadra-Arguello, Caitriona Rocco, Ana Sofía Siqueiros, Emily Zerofski, and Savanna Pendergraft, along with pharmacy students and a professor from Western New England University, a medical doctor, a nurse practitioner, a program manager, and a physician assistant for the journey.

The group held community events in three different villages in Akuapem South Health District. More than 500 people, from children to elders, received services such as blood pressure checks, body mass index assessments, breast and cervical cancer screenings, laboratory testing, and medical consultations. At a grand opening of an OT clinic, the students saw how OT is put into action in Ghana and helped screen clients for needs such as rehab services and reading glasses as well as general health and wellness. At a local school, they provided oral hygiene education and toothbrushes.

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— LYNDON PELMORE, OT STUDENT

They also broke into smaller teams for home visits with community nurses, which highlighted the strength of Ghana’s community-based healthcare system.

“Walking through the jungle to reach families and seeing how care is delivered directly to patients to improve access was one of my favorite parts of the trip,” said Cuadra-Arguello. “The Ghanaian community nurses and healthcare



Outside their hotel in Villa Nueva are: (clockwise) Heather Moland (yellow/blue Boston t-shirt), Shannon Ferrando, Kate Rowland, Kenna Reichner, Natalia Dávila, Abby Schmitt, Jane Baldwin.

workers have a deep knowledge of their communities, and their focus on prevention and commitment to accessible care demonstrated the importance of community-centered and interprofessional healthcare models.”

Student Trip to Guatemala Builds Confidence

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Traveling to a new country can involve more than immersing oneself in culture, language, food, people, and sights. Combining all that with helping and teaching was the focal point for second-year physical therapy students who traveled to Guatemala in January on the MGH Institute’s Physical Therapy Program’s annual student service trip to Central America.

Led by Assistant Professor Jane Baldwin, overseeing her seventh trip to Guatemala, the eight students, guided by clinical instructors, traveled to the city of Villa Nueva and the Canillá municipality. They collaborated with Move Together, an organization that develops clinics in globally underserved areas to address movement, health, and physical therapy in a sustainable way.

“In Canillá and Villa Nueva, these clinics are really the only game in town,” said Dr. Baldwin. “There aren’t any other physical therapy services, so everyone comes to those two clinics in each area, and you need to be prepared for anything.”

Students saw the full spectrum of challenges: children with developmental disabilities; survivors of stroke, motor vehicle, and motorcycle accidents; patients with Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis, and Bell’s palsy; and those coping with low back pain, fractures, spinal cord injury, and limb loss.

The students saw approximately 165 patients during their four days of clinic duty—diagnoses and challenges they had never seen or treated before—making for a busy yet educational experience.

“It helped me grow as a clinician,” said student Kate Rowland. “It’s easy to lose your confidence and define yourself by test grades and the school structure, but seeing how things we’ve learned in the class come out and being able to implement them and actually help people, while building rapport with these patients and having a positive impact on their day, helped build my confidence a lot.” ■

Two Generations Find Their Calling at the IHP

BY RHONIQUE BROWN

For Christa Guerrier, walking into her Direct-Entry Nursing (DEN) pinning ceremony meant more than completing the generalist portion of the program—it meant walking in her mother’s literal footsteps. When Christa was just three months old, her mother, Marie, graduated from the IHP as a nurse practitioner. Christa was there for the ceremony, sharing in a moment that would become part of her story long before she could understand it.

This time, the roles were reversed, as Marie stood beside Christa and pinned her at the ceremony, then watched from the audience as her daughter became a nurse in her own right.

“She is my inspiration. Since I was a little girl, I always wanted to be like my mom. This moment is a dream fulfilled,” beamed Christa Guerrier. “I never imagined attending the same school my mom went to and graduated from.”

“She is my inspiration. Since I was a little girl, I always wanted to be like my mom. This moment is a dream fulfilled.”

—CHRISTA GUERRIER

Before enrolling at the MGH Institute, the younger Guerrier earned degrees from Union College and Boston University School of Medicine for her master’s in medical science and was considering paths as a physician assistant or nurse practitioner. Following her mother’s advice, she applied to the MGH Institute.

“I always wanted to go into the medical profession, but I realized when applying to medical school it did not fully align with my personality,” Christa said. “The impact of my mom and seeing how she



Direct-Entry Nursing graduate Christa Guerrier (r), a newly minted nurse practitioner, is following in the footsteps of her mother, Marie (l), who graduated from the MGH Institute as a nurse practitioner when Christa was a baby.

carries herself resonated more with who I am and led me to pursue the next two years of becoming a nurse practitioner.”

Marie Guerrier attended the MGH Institute while pregnant, completing a dual track in adult and geriatric care. She felt called to nursing after witnessing the lack of compassion her grandmother received in the hospital. Marie knew she wanted to make a difference and ensure that patients were truly seen, heard, and cared for.

“When they see you and that smile, the compassionate feeling about you, they know that they can trust you. You are saving lives,” she noted. “You have to see the whole picture, not only the patients, but the families as well. It’s a holistic approach.”

The mother could not be prouder that her daughter has come to embody these values and is now going on to help people in the ways that she has always taught.

“I am so happy,” gushed Marie as she held Christa. “I see you in me. You just

remind me of who I was going through that process, and I am so proud.”

The veteran nurse also taught the new nurse some of the challenges that can come with the profession.

“There are some good days, some bad days. Whatever problems you are facing before you get to work, leave those problems behind you,” Marie Guerrier reiterated. “As long as you love what you do, everything is limitless.”

Marie continues to bring that dedication to her work with patients and families affected by dementia, Parkinson’s disease, and Alzheimer’s. Christa Guerrier, on the adult gerontology acute care track, hopes to bring the same commitment to her future work in the ICU.

“MGH is now part of the family,” Christa shared. “My mom went here and now here I am, following in her footsteps.”

“Hopefully your children, too,” her mother added. “The legacy will just keep going.”

Combining Two Passions

BY SEAN HENNESSY

Mark Chicote's career goal is simple: combine research with being a nurse practitioner. And he's well on his way.

While pursuing his nursing studies at the MGH Institute, he is also working per diem as a clinical research coordinator in the Neuroendocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). He's the lead coordinator on several clinical studies on the impact of growth hormone on steatotic liver disease, working with Dr. Laura Dichtel.

"In the back of my head, I had always wanted a career that would allow me to bridge my research experience with real-world patient care. I came from a heavy undergrad research background," recalled Chicote, who graduated from UMass-Amherst.

While he was pursuing a post-baccalaureate certificate at Harvard Extension School, he received an email indicating the Neuroendocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital was looking for student interns interested in pursuing clinical research.

"What drew me to the NP role was how it integrates nursing's holistic, patient-care centered philosophy with advanced clinical expertise."

— MARK CHICOTE

"It felt like this is the perfect opportunity for me, because I wanted to do patient care and research," he noted. "So I started as an intern back in September 2019."

And that led to a choice—medical school or nursing school.

"I realized nursing would allow me to pursue both research and patient care in a more direct, timely way," said Chicote.



Nursing student Mark Chicote is studying to become a nurse practitioner while also balancing responsibilities as a clinical research coordinator in the Neuroendocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Chicote shadowed nurse practitioners, physical therapists, and hospital pharmacists to explore different roles to find his niche. He ultimately enrolled in the Institute's Direct-Entry Master of Science in Nursing to become a nurse practitioner.

"What drew me to the NP role was how it integrates nursing's holistic, patient-care centered philosophy with advanced clinical expertise," he said. "That ability to connect closely with patients while also applying evidence-based care is exactly the kind of practice I want to build."

Last summer, he landed an opportunity at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center's outpatient dermatology clinic as a medical scribe, a role he still holds alongside his per diem clinical research coordinator role.

"Balancing these experiences complements my path toward becoming a nurse practitioner by teaching me how providers integrate research into practice, engage in patient education, and manage complex care across both outpatient and academic settings," said Chicote.

He completed the BSN portion of his program in January 2026 and will begin NP training in September, with a long-term goal to unite research with advanced practice—a combination he rarely sees in the field.

"A lot of the nurses and nurse practitioners that I work with are focused on bedside care, which is essential to the profession," he said. "I'm hoping to build a career that also integrates research, combining both aspects in a way that's less common."

Until then, he has much to balance.

"I like to call myself a working student; balancing work and graduate school is eye-opening and rewarding, as it has taught me new ways to manage work-life balance and responsibilities," Chicote said. "As an endurance runner, I've learned to approach life like a marathon, not a sprint—pacing myself, pushing through challenges, and keeping my long-term goals in focus. The MGH Institute is preparing me for that opportunity to grow and become stronger in how I tackle real-world challenges."

On the Road to Independence

BY LISA MCEVOY

When Derrick and Jodie Williams visited Las Vegas in January 2023, they didn't expect their trip to last as long as it did. Or to be as life-changing.

Just 72 hours into their stay, Derrick Williams collapsed. At the hospital, he was diagnosed with a stroke resulting from a brain aneurysm. The medical staff was not optimistic about his prognosis.

"We were given the worst possible scenarios," said Jodie Williams. "[If he survived] they didn't think he would walk or talk again. They also brought up the possibility of organ donation."

Fortunately, that route was not needed. Williams' recovery began with an extended stay in a Las Vegas hospital, followed by a medical flight back to Boston to inpatient care at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. He then had to be admitted to Massachusetts General Hospital before returning to Spaulding.

By the time Williams was receiving outpatient care at Spaulding, the family had exhausted its insurance, but he still had a long road to recovery.

"I was anxious, given the fact that he still needed a lot of rehab," recalled Jodie Williams.

One of the care providers at Spaulding told them that another Mass General Brigham entity could help. The MGH Institute of Health Professions offers physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and nursing for clients who are no longer eligible to have their rehabilitative care covered by insurance. Under the supervision of licensed faculty clinicians, MGH Institute graduate students provide clinical care through the Dr. Charles A. and Ann Sanders IMPACT Practice Center and the Tedy's Team Center of Excellence in Stroke Recovery—at no charge.

"Unfortunately, our healthcare system often does not allow clients to be seen in traditional outpatient settings for as long as we have worked with Derrick,"

said Pauline Fiorello, a clinical instructor at the MGH Institute Occupational Therapy Center for Learning, Rehabilitation, and Participation (CLiPR). "Given our wonderful pro bono centers, a client like Derrick has the opportunity to work with our energetic and motivated OT students."

"Given our wonderful pro bono centers, a client like Derrick has the opportunity to work with our energetic and motivated OT students."

— PAULINE FIORELLO, CLINICAL INSTRUCTOR

After beginning with individual sessions with OT students in 2023, Williams took part in a wellness group run by OT students, and began physical therapy and speech therapy. Through the Tedy's Team Center of Excellence in Stroke Recovery, Williams received more than clinical care—he became part of a

community dedicated to long-term recovery and wellness. In addition to his therapy services, Williams has participated in Tedy's Team Center activities designed to promote confidence, physical activity, and social connection, including the 2025 Waterfront Wellness Walk.

Williams continues to receive PT and speech therapy sessions at the MGH Institute and has defied the predictions of the doctors in Las Vegas by being able to speak, walk, and eat independently. During his individual and group sessions, Williams worked hard to reach his goals. Both he and his wife recognized how much the team of students and faculty contributed to his success.

"We spent an extensive amount of time here," said Jodie Williams. "I kept highlighting to the instructors that the institution does an amazing job at selecting the students, because they were all so empathetic and committed. They were very inspiring to my husband. There was never a day that anyone displayed anything other than wanting to see him succeed."



Derrick Williams (l), with wife, Jodie, has received occupational, physical, and speech therapy at the MGH Institute's IMPACT Practice Center since he had a stroke caused by a brain aneurysm in 2023.

Unsilenced by Aphasia

BY LISA MCEVOY

Roy Grafton sat in a room in 2CW on the MGH Institute of Health Professions campus and made a phone call. Talking on the phone is something he used to do frequently for his job, but after having a stroke in January 2024, his phone calls were few and far between. That has changed.

The phone call he was making was to a fellow participant in the comprehensive aphasia program, S-IHP's CAP, a collaboration between Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and the MGH Institute of Health Professions. Aphasia is a disorder that can affect one's ability to speak, write, and understand both written and spoken words. Each of the nine participants in this year's S-IHP's CAP took part in the intensive, six-week program to work on individual goals with occupational therapy and speech language pathology students from the MGH Institute in one-on-one and group sessions, as well music therapy, swimming, wellness, and adaptive sports with professionals from Spaulding.

“We all have our own struggles and frustration with aphasia. However, keep improving. Practice, practice, and piece by piece we will get there. Never give up.”

– ROY GRAFTON

Each client has different challenges. Since the stroke, Grafton has been dealing with the effects of a type of aphasia called conduction aphasia.

“Basically, I don't understand what you are saying,” explained Grafton, who will at times ask people to rephrase so that he can understand what they are trying to say.



S-IHP's CAP participant Roy Grafton (c) worked with second-year speech-language pathology student Hannah Indiviglio (l) and second-year occupational therapy student Samantha Fitzgerald during the six-week program

That can make talking on the phone difficult, so he didn't make many calls after his stroke. During the occupational therapy assessment at the beginning of the program, that was one of the goals he chose to focus on during his sessions with second-year OT student Samantha Fitzgerald.

“When Roy first started the program, we talked through every possible daily activity, and he narrowed down five areas that he really wanted to work on during this program—things that felt meaningful to him or had been impacted by his stroke,” said Fitzgerald.

S-IHP's CAP also connected Grafton with the other eight participants, who bonded over their shared experiences, appreciated the differences in their challenges, and helped each other throughout the program. He considers them his brothers-in-arms.

“We're all different, but we are the same,” Grafton reflected during a presentation at the program's

graduation ceremony in October. “We all have our own struggles and frustration with aphasia. However, keep improving. Practice, practice, and piece by piece we will get there. Never give up.”

“Throughout this program, Roy showed such patience, determination, and care for the people around him,” said Fitzgerald. “Watching him encourage others and reflect on his own growth has been one of the most rewarding parts of this experience. It was such an honor to work with him.”

Grafton also shared some thoughts he had written in his journal during the program for others with aphasia.

“You cannot keep your ideas, questions, and dreams in your head,” he advised. “You have to express them. One of my words of the day was *idiom* and one of those in business is ‘being seated at the table.’ Aphasia survivors must have a seat at the table. Furthermore, you must have a voice at the table.”

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Inaugural Giving Day Surpasses Goal of \$300,000



More than 300 supporters of the MGH Institute chose to “Be the Impact” during the MGH Institute’s first ever Giving Day on October 15, 2025, which surpassed both fundraising and participation goals.

Giving Day 2025 raised more than \$302,000 from 309 donors. The funds will provide vital scholarship support to students across programs, easing financial burdens, and empowering the next generation of healthcare leaders.

Meagan Sheffield, executive director of development, emphasized the remarkable breadth of support Giving Day inspired.

“What made this year so special was the incredible mix of donors who showed up for our students—current students, alumni, current and former faculty and staff members, longtime supporters, and many new friends of the MGH Institute,” noted Sheffield. “Seeing familiar names alongside first-time donors truly reflects the strength and reach of our community. Every single gift tells a story of someone who believes in the future of health care.”

Student video testimonials, a video ask from Tedy and Heidi Bruschi—founders of Tedy’s Team, whose \$1 million donation led to the Tedy’s Team Center of Excellence in Stroke Recovery—emails, social media, and reaching out to prospective donors all came together in the campaign.

October 15 is the anniversary of the first endowed scholarship gift, in 1978, which set the foundation for a tradition of supporting student success. Today, that legacy continues through the generosity of hundreds who believe in the Institute’s mission of preparing exceptional health professionals. Giving Day’s success reflects a shared commitment to creating opportunities for students who will go on to make an impact in communities near and far.

While the campaign has ended, donations to help support student scholarships are still being accepted. Use this QR code or visit www.mghihp.edu/giving/ways-to-give/scholarships



- | | |
|--|--|
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| Mary Beth Kadlec | Dr. Noreen M. Poirier |
| Jean Jay, DPT '15 and Paul Kay | Dr. Mertie Potter |
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Opening the Door to a Career in Professional Sports

BY LISA MCEVOY

Professional athletes develop their talents by building their skills over years and putting them into practice at all levels of competition. The same can be said for the support teams who make sure those athletes can perform when called upon.

Kristina Osorio is on one of those teams.

On the baseball fields and training rooms of the FCL Phillies, a rookie-level, minor league affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies, the 2025 graduate is combining her background as an athlete and athletic trainer with what she learned in the Physical Therapy program at the MGH Institute.

A collegiate softball player herself, Osorio's interest in sports medicine began after taking a first aid and safety class in high school. Knowing she wanted to stay in sports after her playing career, she earned her athletic training degree and worked as a high school athletic trainer for four years before exploring where else her interests and skills could take her.

“I saw this as an opportunity to continue learning, and it has allowed me to perform and experience things I wouldn't have been able to if I hadn't accepted this role.”

– KRISTINA OSORIO, DPT '25

“I wanted to advance my career and expand my knowledge on the best forms of practice in sports medicine and sports injury rehabilitation,” explained Osorio.



After graduating from the MGH Institute, Kristina Osorio, DPT '25, has been working with the rookie league affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies at the Carpenter Complex in Clearwater, Florida.

When she decided to pursue her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree, the MGH Institute's location, facilities, faculty, and research focus influenced her choice of graduate school. Following her graduation in January of 2025, Osorio applied to several positions in Major League Baseball and the National Football League. After interviewing with several teams, Osorio began her current position a year ago in Clearwater, Florida.

“I work one-on-one with these athletes daily on short-term rehabilitations, treatments, first aid, and emergency care,” said Osorio. “I am in constant communication with our on-site physical therapists, strength and conditioning, dietitians, and our coaching staff.”

As a former athlete who understands both the athletic training and the physical therapy aspects of working with athletes, she brings a unique perspective.

“This role has shown me how athletic training and physical therapy look at

this level and gave me the opportunity to combine both of my skillsets as an athletic trainer and physical therapist into my role as a clinician,” said Osorio.

“I am finding my way within professional athletics and seeing what that looks like for me,” she reflected. “While I knew this role was based for an entry-level athletic trainer, I saw it as an opportunity to continue learning, and it has allowed me to perform and experience things I wouldn't have been able to if I hadn't accepted this role.”

For those who will be graduating from the PT program soon, she suggests taking a similar approach.

“Keep pursuing opportunities after graduation, and always take on whatever challenges you may face head-on, as it'll just shape you into a better clinician,” she advised. “You never know what doors will open, and even if it is not your ideal door, walk through it and see what's on the other side. You never know what could come of it.”

Developing Strong Foundations for Mothers with Babies in the NICU

BY LISA MCEVOY

When Rachel Carpenter, PP-OTD '23, began working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Newton-Wellesley Hospital 10 years ago, she knew the infants weren't the only ones who needed attention. She understood the emotional toll that having a baby in the NICU takes, since she had experienced it herself after her daughter was born.

When she returned to the NICU as an occupational therapist supporting babies' neurodevelopment, Carpenter remembered how traumatizing that experience was. "The first time I came into the unit, I kept looking at the moms and couldn't stop thinking, how are they surviving this?" she said.

Recognizing the significance of the work done in the NICU, she wanted to hone her skills further. She completed a comprehensive process to become a certified neonatal therapist and earned her Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree at the MGH Institute. For her capstone project, she developed the Strong Foundations program, an occupational therapist-led, activity-based support group to address the increased risk of postpartum depression for mothers with babies in the NICU.

"I wanted organic moments for these moms to meet each other, not in a typical support group but with occupational therapy behind it," explained Carpenter. "In the class, I am teaching them ways to calm the baby or change the diaper or do a bath so they are getting an education, but they're also in a room with other moms and can share some of their experiences."

The classes also gave them the tools they need in their roles as parents, so they gained confidence instead of feeling like the nurses performed those tasks better. There were activities to help the mothers deal with stress by focusing on their breath and movement, and others to let them gain support from



For her capstone project in the Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy program, Rachel Carpenter developed the Strong Foundations program to address the increased risk of postpartum depression for mothers with babies in the NICU.

the other participants while they decorated journals and baby footprints and made bracelets with their babies' names on them.

"I wanted organic moments for these moms to meet each other, not in a typical support group but with occupational therapy behind it."

— RACHEL CARPENTER

"I wanted them to be able to relax and have their minds off the stress," said Carpenter. "One mom said it was literally the first time she had thought about herself since having her baby."

Carpenter published an evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of the program in *Maternal and Child Health*, which won the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy Outstanding Practitioner Award for Clinical Excellence and an MGB Pillars

of Excellence Award for "Commitment to an Exceptional Patient Experience." She was also awarded the Class of 2023 Innovation Award for her capstone project.

Carpenter credits her two mentors, assistant professor Jessica Asiello and Colleen Craven, OTD '22, with helping her figure out how to operationalize the program, think about its details, and add the theory behind it. She has created a booklet that other hospitals can use to replicate the program and is looking forward to working with other Mass General Brigham OTs on doing a bigger trial.

This project and her decision to obtain her doctorate have produced additional benefits. Carpenter had been splitting her work between the NICU and other medical units, but her experience helped her gain a full-time position in the NICU.

"This project allowed me to focus on the NICU. I am so glad I did, because I really found my niche," says Carpenter. "I am so much more passionate about this than I've ever been about anything, and I don't think I would have had the capacity to do it if I didn't have the program."

It's Never Too Late to Go Back to School



ABSN '25 graduate Lisa Faucon switched careers at age 45. Now a registered nurse, Faucon hopes to land a job in the Cardiac Surgical Intensive Care Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she is currently working as a critical care technician.

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Scrolling Instagram changed the trajectory of Lisa Faucon's life.

A 45-year-old dietitian in San Francisco, Faucon was tired of her career and looking for something new. That's when she went on Instagram and saw a message from an old college roommate who had become a nurse.

"We hadn't talked in about 25 years, and when I saw Vanessa's message, I instantly FaceTimed to catch up," recalled Faucon. "I told her how I wasn't very happy and how I should have been a nurse like her."

That friend, Vanessa Henry, didn't hesitate with advice and encouragement.

"I instantly said, 'You can definitely do it, Lisa. If anyone can, it's you,'" Henry said. "I meant what I said, and I was absolutely right."

That call and the ensuing encouragement to work in a hospital setting was just what the doctor ordered.

"Vanessa said, 'Lisa, you're in the perfect place to start over. If you want to go back to school and become a nurse, you absolutely can,'" Faucon said. "I remember laughing and saying, 'Can I really do this?' We didn't even have the internet in college! No Google, just library books and microfiche. I wasn't sure I could keep up with how fast everything moves now, or with students half my age."

She took the plunge, first fulfilling her prerequisites at community college (which became free in California after the pandemic), and then looking at two-year programs, which had a two-year waiting list.

Enter Instagram. Again.

"I think the MGH Institute popped up in my Instagram feed, and I hadn't even given the school a thought," noted Faucon, originally from New Hampshire. "I thought, 'There's no way I'm going to get into the MGH Institute program.'"

Her fears came true; on her first application, she wasn't accepted into

the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program, largely because the prerequisites she took after college had since expired. She plowed ahead and completed the prerequisites again, and re-applied. Not only was Faucon accepted into the MGH Institute's ABSN program the second time around, but she also earned a scholarship.

It proved to be a great fit for her.

"The teaching and clinical rotations were just phenomenal," said Faucon. "The professors were so passionate and deeply invested in our success, they challenged us, but they also supported us every step of the way. The rotations offered incredible exposure and hands-on learning opportunities across so many specialties. I loved every minute of it."

Some aspects of the program came easily to her, but a lot changed since she was in college. She had to relearn how to learn and get some help from her younger classmates.

“After 18 years as a dietitian, I was already comfortable walking into patient rooms and connecting with people, but nursing allowed me to take that connection to an entirely new level,” said Faucon. “But the year wasn’t without its challenges, which included a steep technical learning curve.

“When I was in college, we took notes with a pencil and paper. Today, the pace is so fast that you just can’t do that anymore—everything is digital. I had to learn how to use a Mac, sync it with an iPad, download PowerPoints, and take notes with a stylus. I remember not even knowing how to create a folder to save my documents during my first Health Assessment class. It was humbling but also empowering. My younger classmates were incredibly kind and patient, guiding me through it all without hesitation! And while I had a lot to learn, I knew how to work hard, stay organized, focus, eliminate distractions,

and make sacrifices; habits I’d built throughout my career.”

She learned quickly because fast-forward one year, and Faucon graduated in 2025 with a 3.95 GPA.

“The professors were so passionate and deeply invested in our success, they challenged us, but they also supported us every step of the way. ... I loved every minute of it.”

– LISA FAUCON, ABSN '25

When it came time for Faucon to officially be pinned and welcomed into the field of nursing, it was Henry, her

college roommate and an ICU nurse for 23 years, who stood proudly by her side to perform the pinning.

“I knew I had to be in Boston for that moment, to see Lisa walk across that stage and finally become the nurse she was always meant to be,” Henry said. “To know I played even a small part in inspiring her to change her life for the better is something I will cherish forever.”

Now that she’s a registered nurse, Faucon hopes to land a job in the Cardiac Surgical Intensive Care Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she is currently working as a critical care technician.

“The work is not only exciting and challenging, but I’ve never experienced such a positive, collaborative environment,” said Faucon. “I genuinely look forward to every shift I get to work there.” ■

Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled through a variety of sources, including information sent in by alumni, hospital publications within Mass General Brigham and beyond, and public information released by various organizations.

Komal Bajaj, MS-HPED '16, and **Tesiah Coleman, MS-NU '19**, are serving on the Society for Women’s Health Research’s Clinical Advisory Board.

Bobby Belarmino, DPT '06, was accepted as a Distinguished Fellow of the Physical Therapy Academy by the National Academies of Practice.

Allegra Bereszniwicz, MS-SLP '18, shared her expertise on the “Clinical Evaluation and Treatment of Tongue Tie in Pediatric OSA” episode as a guest on the BackTable ENT podcast in December 2025.

Amirra Condelee, OTD '19, was a guest on the podcast Dr. Dev Talks Money to discuss her transition from occupational therapist to fintech founder as well as the hidden wealth gap affecting many high-achieving professionals.

Ami Faria, DPT '05, was named secretary of the 2026 American Physical Therapy Association Board of Directors.

Sarah Fleischman, MS-SLP '22, served as an advisor to SpeechLP as they developed an articulation app for children ages 3–9, ensuring that every game and exercise aligned with best practices in therapy.

Amy Jarry, MS-NU '06, received the Norman Knight APRN of the Year Award to recognize her leadership and dedication to exceptional patient care.

Olivia Lynn, BSN '20, received a DAISY Award for the compassionate clinical care she provided to a patient with multiple myeloma and his family.

Drew Mancini, MS-SLP '18, presented “Acoustic Predictors of Intelligibility on Pediatric Acquired Brain Injury” at the 2026 Conference on Motor Speech.

Emily Maxwell, MS-GC '22, and a colleague presented on “What Changed in 2025? New Neurology Gene-Disease Discoveries Every Child Neurologist Should Know” during an Ambry Genetics CNS webinar in December 2025.

Laura Nagy, MS-SLP '22, is a co-author on the article “When Dementia Looks Different: Transitions for Older Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities,” published in the Winter 2026 edition of *Melmark’s Autism Spectrum News*.

Alice Rose, CAS-NU '97, was the recipient of a 2026 Outstanding Alumni Award from the University of Cincinnati during their awards ceremony in April 2026.

Virginia Sullivan, OTD '20, is a co-author on the article “Unveiling the Impact of Occupational Therapy on Acute Care Outcomes: A Machine Learning Approach,” published in the *Archives in Physical Medicine* in April 2026.

Karen Winn, DNP '14, MS-NU '13, published a short story, “An (Updated) History of the Modern World,” in the Spring 2026 issue of *Ploughshares* literary magazine. You can read the full story here: <https://pshares.org/issue-article/352576/>

Cecelia Wu, DPT '12, along with her colleague, presented “The Hidden Epidemic: Implementing Vestibular Rehab in Home-care” at the APTA MA Annual Conference.

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Guardrails for AI: Why Human Oversight Matters

Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant concept. It is already embedded in how we teach, learn, and work. This transformation has created a critical need for guardrails—the boundaries, policies, and oversight systems that ensure AI is used responsibly, effectively, and safely.

Guardrails are not just about restriction; they are about enablement. When implemented correctly, they allow people to use AI confidently and creatively. AI tools can streamline administrative tasks, while AI-driven simulations can enhance experiential learning. However, these benefits are only realized when systems are transparent, monitored, and aligned with educational objectives.

AI is not new. Early forms date back to the 1950s, but the November 2022 launch of ChatGPT made it much more accessible. This accessibility and subsequent rapid adoption created opportunities to enhance efficiency in a wide variety of ways, but also introduced an element of unpredictability because AI systems evolve continuously. That makes using AI risky without guardrails.

Any use of AI in healthcare or healthcare education introduces risk, but not to the same degree. Using AI to draft an email is far less consequential than using it to support clinical decision-making. One of the necessary guardrails is categorizing risks and applying appropriate levels of scrutiny so that innovation is not stifled, while protecting users and stakeholders.

That is one of the reasons my colleagues and I at the MGH Institute's Research on Experiential-Based Education and Learning (REBEL) Lab are focused on AI and healthcare simulation "trust engineering," which aims to ensure the reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of AI and simulation technologies.

One important aspect of using AI is the need for continuous evaluation. Because AI is generative and adaptive,



its outputs can shift over time. What works today may not work tomorrow. This means institutions must adopt a cyclical approach to regularly review AI performance, update prompts, and reassess whether outcomes align with the intended educational goals. It is critical for us, the humans, to be in that loop.

Because AI is generative and adaptive, its outputs can shift over time. What works today may not work tomorrow. It is critical for us, the humans, to be in that loop.

On a broader scale, questions about governance arise. Some organizations have begun developing AI frameworks based on the WHO guidelines, the EU AI Act, or other reputable sources, yet no single unified standard exists. As a result, institutions must take responsibility for their own AI integration. Over the last few years, assurance

labs have begun to emerge in hospitals and patient care settings to examine AI being deployed in their organizations. But health professions education has been left out of that conversation entirely.

At the REBEL Lab, we are closing that gap—bringing the same standard of accountability to faculty and their students, tomorrow's care providers. My colleagues and I are developing the assurance lab specifically for health professions education, testing the claims AI products make, and building trust profile cards that document how systems actually behave. And these cards are not permanent—just as AI models drift over time, their outputs can shift, making continuous reassessment essential.

AI is here to stay. At the REBEL Lab, we are not waiting for a global standard to emerge. We are building the infrastructure that responsible AI use in health professions education requires, because faculty and students, tomorrow's care providers, deserve nothing less.

Please email alumni@mghihp.edu if you are interested in sharing your first-person story with the IHP community.

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