

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY



John G. Rangos, Sr.
School of Health Sciences
and
Nasuti College of
Osteopathic Medicine

Friday, May 8, 2026
UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse



Dear Graduate,

Today is a special day for you and for your families as you receive your hard-earned diploma from Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit. On behalf of our entire University community, I extend my heartfelt congratulations. You have worked with determination to reach this moment, and I am incredibly proud of all that you have accomplished. From this University – with its 148-year tradition of excellence – you are prepared to go anywhere and achieve the highest levels of success. I look forward to watching you embark on bold new paths and transform the world in the years ahead. And today, I am honored to welcome you into a new place within our University family, as you officially join the ranks of more than 100,000 Duquesne alumni around the globe.

This year's commencement holds special meaning for me personally, as I transition into my new role as Duquesne's Chancellor after ten years as President. As I look back on the past years I have shared with you – witnessing your growth, your resilience, and your many achievements – I do so with deep pride and gratitude. And as I begin the Chancellor position and work alongside President-elect David Dausey – who will do a fabulous job – I look forward to continuing to support you, champion you, and celebrate all that you will accomplish as Duquesne graduates.

Congratulations – the entire Duquesne University family salutes your success!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Gormley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ken Gormley
President, Duquesne University

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

MAY
COMMENCEMENT
CEREMONY



Friday, May 8, 2026

May 2026 Commencement

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDING

Kenneth G. Gormley, J.D.
University President

PRELUDE

Fanfare to "La Péri" Paul Dukas
arr. Wayne Barrington

OPENING OF CEREMONY **David J. Dausey, Ph.D., Ed.D.**
Executive Vice President and Provost

PROCESSIONAL

Pomp and Circumstance Edward Elgar
arr. Michael Green

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER **John Stafford Smith**
arr. Garrett Hoffman
lyrics: Francis Scott Key

led by Joseph R. Atkinson

INVOCATION **Rev. John Osei Yaw, C.S.Sp.**
Associate Director, Spiritan Campus Ministry

WELCOME **Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D.**
Dean
John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences

SPECIAL PRESENTATION **Kenneth G. Gormley, J.D.**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS **Kenneth G. Gormley, J.D.**

PRESENTATION OF JOHN G. RANGOS, SR.
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES GRADUATES **Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D.**

Bachelor of Science in Health Administration **Jason S. Scibek, Ph.D.**
Department Chair, Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Joan M. Kiel, Ph.D.
Professor

Bachelor of Arts in Public Health **Jason S. Scibek, Ph.D.**
Department Chair, Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Urmi Ashar, MD

Assistant Professor, Program Director

Bachelor of Science in Health Studies..... Jason S. Scibek, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Adrian Wright-FitzGerald, DAT
Assistant Professor, Program Director

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences..... Jason S. Scibek, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Adrian Wright-FitzGerald, DAT
Assistant Professor, Program Director

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences.....Kelley Henderson, Ed.D.
Department Chair, Athletic Training

Erica Beidler, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences..... Elena Donoso Brown, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Occupational Therapy

Elizabeth D. Deluliis, OTD
Clinical Associate Professor

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences..... Benjamin R. Kivlan, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Physical Therapy

Helena Pingree, DPT
Assistant Professor

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences..... Kristin D’Acunto, Ed.D.
Department Chair, Physician Assistant Studies

Allison A. Morgan, MPA
Assistant Professor

Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences..... Heather L. Rusiewicz, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Speech-Language Pathology
Associate Dean, Research

Abigail Delehanty, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Master of Science in Athletic Training.....Kelley Henderson, Ed.D.
Department Chair, Athletic Training

Erica Beidler, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Master of Health Administration..... Jason S. Scibek, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Joan M. Kiel, Ph.D.
Professor

**PRESENTATION OF NASUTI COLLEGE OF
OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE GRADUATES John M. Kauffman, Jr.**
DO, FACOI, FACP
Founding Dean, Nasuti College of Osteopathic Medicine

Master's in Biomedical Sciences Delbert Abi-Abdallah, Ph.D.
*Chair and Associate Professor, Microbiology Associate Director,
Master's in Biomedical Sciences Program*

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES..... Kenneth G. Gormley, J.D.

RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM..... Alia M. Pustorino, Ed.D.
Director, Compass Program

Davis Foster Clay Mowry

PRESENTATION OF JOHN G. RANGOS, SR. AWARDS..... Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D.
Award Recipients on Page 7

CLOSING REMARKS Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D.

ALMA MATER..... Robert Traugh
Words and Music on Page 5
arr. Benjamin Cornelius-Bates
lyrics: Kenneth G. Gormley, J.D.
led by Joseph R. Atkinson

BENEDICTION Rev. John Osei Yaw, C.S.Sp.

RECESSIONAL
Ode to Joy Ludwig van Beethoven
arr. David R. Thomas

(The audience is requested to remain at their seats during the recessional)

MARY PAPPERT SCHOOL OF MUSIC MUSICIANS

Zachary Hommel, trumpet
Matthew Montelione, trumpet
Ben Cacioppo, horn
Will Bridges, trombone
Dustin Freeman, tuba
^Joseph R. Atkinson, soloist

^Mary Pappert School of Music Graduate, May 2026

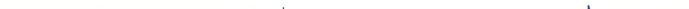
Music by Robert Traugh | Words by Ken Gormley
Inspired by Rev. John F. Malloy, C.S.Sp.

Al - ma Ma - ter, proud Du - quesne, guide, and friend of our youth - ful days.

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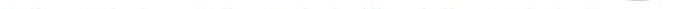
As we face new tests in times a-head, mar-ching al-ways by your light.

17 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 84$



for - ward e - ver — Al - ma Ma - ter; famed Du - quesne with your

23 *rit.*



Hail to thee! Hail to thee! All hail to thee! Du - quesne.

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Special Presentation Biographies



Barbara Shear is President of the Shear Family Foundation (SFF). SFF makes annual grants in the interest areas of Israel and Jewish causes, Food Insecurity, Medical Research, and Mental Health & Well Being. The SFF Israel grants include Foundation for Defense of Democracies, AIPAC, Leket, Jewish Nation Fund, City of David, FIDF, MDA, and Cyberwell. Barbara has a BS degree from Penn State and a Masters of Education from University of Pittsburgh.

Herb Shear is the Chairman of the Shear Family Office and the Shear Family Foundation. Herb was formerly the Executive Chairman and CEO of GENCO, a supply chain services and reverse logistics company, that was sold to FedEx. Herb successfully led the company's growth to employ over 12,000 teammates. Herb holds a bachelor's degree in finance and completed post-graduate studies in Business Administration from Southern Illinois University. He has also completed Executive Entrepreneurial and Leadership Programs at Stanford University, Carnegie Mellon University and Northwestern University. He served on the Board of Directors for the University of Pittsburgh and chaired the budget committee and currently serves on the board of Duquesne University, Foundation for Defense of Democracy and several for profit companies.

John G. Rangos, Sr. School of Health Sciences Awards

STUDENT AWARDS

Marci Sobczak Spirit Award.....Felice Salvatore Panebianco

OUTSTANDING STUDENTS BY DEPARTMENT

Health, Exercise & Applied Science

Health AdministrationMackenzie L. Wesley

Public HealthKylie Terese Klavon

Health Sciences Allison Marie Gass

Athletic Training Christina Michele Amrick

Occupational Therapy (Doctorate).....Peyton Audrey Nolan

Physical TherapyEmma A. Armstrong

Physician Assistant Studies..... Jasmine Alexandra Urzua-Alba

Speech-Language Pathology.....Gianna D. Baker

DEAN'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE.....Allison Marie Gass

FACULTY AND STAFF AWARDS

Dean's Awards for Faculty Excellence

TeachingFaina Linkov, Ph.D.

Early Career Scholarship..... Kasey Stepansky, CScD

Service to the Mission.....Joan M. Kiel, Ph.D.

Community and Professional Service (Team Award) Kristyn Lowery, MPA

Michelle McCann, OTD

Helena Pingree, DPT

Adrian Wright-FitzGerald, DAT

Innovative Teaching and Pedagogy (Team Award) Elena Donoso Brown, Ph.D.

Retta Martin, Ed.D.

Dean's Award for Staff Excellence.....Chelsie N. Crate, M.Ed.

JOHN G. RANGOS, SR. SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Fevzi Akinci, Ph.D., MHA, Dean

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PUBLIC HEALTH, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE and BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HEALTH SCIENCES GRADUATING WITH ACADEMIC HONORS

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

Christopher Richard Albar	Emma Morgan Motter
Asma Feras Almghrabi	Peyton Audrey Nolan
Jenna Elizabeth Bondyra	*Richard E. Plesic IV
Abigail Louise Bull	Hanna Potosnak
*Peter William Clements	Jordan Faith Pozarycki
Emily Coppeta	*Allison Miranda Rice
*Julia Marie Finkbeiner	Jamie Melissa Riggs
*Allison Marie Gass	Sarah Marie Scanlon
Emily Lynn Gierczynski	*Ellie Nicole Schlafer
Chiara Elisabeth Golomb	*Erin Elizabeth Schrantz
*Alaina Jordan Hicks	Sydney Grace Severini
Joseph Robert Klanchar	*Charlotte McKay Sparks
Kylie Terese Klavon	*Jenna Anne Stewart
Lindsay Katherine Krafchick	*Justin Carl Suchar
Julia Elaine Kubera	*Emily Elizabeth Talierco
*Seth Jeron Miller	Laryssa Therese Wasylko
Dakoda Ella Mock	Haley Cierra Yacoviello-Andrus

MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Christina Marie Bober	Kiana Sage Nuccitelli
Madison Whitney Bourque	*Megan Carol Penrod
*Ava Elizabeth Cappella	Morgan Eileen Reilly
Erin Stephanie Cline	*Emma Marie Riley
*Brianna Noel Dubeck	Anna Grace Seach
*Erin Elizabeth Egan	Taryn K. Shutika
Zachary Michael Katz	Abbey Elizabeth Surdy
*Kelsey Elizabeth Kovalsky	Grace Katharine Verano
*Gwyneth Teresa Macdonald	Hanna Lynne Wilson
Fiora Rose Marchionda	Julia Michel Winebrenner
*Julia Ann McLaughlin	Jessica Faith Winters
*Megan Mitchell	*Edward Albert Young IV
Mackenzie L. Muir	

CUM LAUDE

Brooke Marie Alexander	Vivian Bao-Ngoc Mai
Rachel Grace Alexander	Marissa Elizabeth Mamatas
Jillian Paige Austin	*Christine Hoa Lien Nguyen
Emma Katherine Bathgate	Felice Salvatore Panebianco
Morgan Leigh Beck	Marco Patitucci
Lynley Osborn Birchard	Katelyn Jane Pepper
Maggie Louise Brown	*Kristina Nicole Polo
Emily Rose Brzyski	Tori Minh Quach
Jacqueline Kim Bui	Madelyn Elizabeth Rinehart
Abigail Grace Colangelo	Emmerson T. Robinson
Margaret Joy Colenbrander	Zachary Jon Schlegel
Danielle Joyce Coyle	Mattea L. Scott
Elizabeth MacKenzie Crow	Emma Grace Siekierski
Alexis V. Crowley	Madelyn Annette Simeone
Emma K. Daniels	Gwendolyn Guanacaste Sobkowiak
Capri Alexis DeCaro	Abigail Reese Stinelli
Aubrey Claire DePaul	Nicole McKenzie Szabo
Megan Tate Elliott	Lauren Elizabeth Wagner
Gabriella Taylor Garcia	*Sarena Faith Walker
Madison Leanne Grimm	*Caroline Elizabeth Ward
*Larae Jackson	Mackenzie L. Wesley
Layla Marie Killmeyer	Natalee Anne Whartenby
Olivia Grace Lorayna Kurdziel	*Elaina Brite Wohlford
Alondra Rubí Laureano	Kaylin Ann Young
Kaitlin Marie Leitholf	
Kathryn Nicole Ligeros	

JOHN G. RANGOS, SR. SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HEALTH ADMINISTRATION DEGREE

Abdulaziz F. Alarifi
Brooke Marie Alexander
Emily Anne Conti

Advika Gupta
Camryn Grace Kneib
Mackenzie L. Wesley

CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE

Taylor Lynn Corcoran
Laila Marley Cronin
Olivia Mae Gifford

Kylie Terese Klavon
Aiden Richard Murphy

CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE

Eric Dwayne Allen II
Sophia M. Conrad
Madeline Esme Cummings
Kayla Belle Denke
Cherise Lynn Dicke
Chiara Elisabeth Golomb
Ashley Gabrielle Johnston

Nora Shiaoyn Lange
Alec Micheal Likens
Sophia Sarah Lombardi
Casey Katherine McBride
Hannah Elizabeth Miller
Leah Marie Smith
*Caroline Elizabeth Ward

CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HEALTH SCIENCES DEGREE

Christopher Richard Albar	Gabriella Taylor Garcia
Rachel Grace Alexander	*Allison Marie Gass
Asma Feras Almghrabi	*Marissa Susan German
Aleks Assenov	Emily Lynn Gierczynski
Jillian Paige Austin	Madison Leanne Grimm
Emma Katherine Bathgate	Isabella Mary Guerrieri
Morgan Leigh Beck	Abigail Marie Hayward
Lynley Osborn Birchard	Jacob Andrew Hecklin
Christina Marie Bober	*Alaina Jordan Hicks
Jenna Elizabeth Bondyra	Taylor Kaitlyn Holloway
Madison Whitney Bourque	Ava Jabara
Maggie Louise Brown	*Larae Jackson
Emily Rose Brzyski	Zachary Michael Katz
Blake Richard Bucenec	Madison Jean Keck
Jacqueline Kim Bui	Layla Marie Killmeyer
Abigail Louise Bull	Joseph Robert Klanchar
Kalista Butler	Tessa Rain Klock
Colleen Elizabeth Byrne	Brandt Joseph Kopec
*Ava Elizabeth Cappella	Kelsey Elizabeth Kovalsky
*Peter William Clements	Lindsay Katherine Krafchick
Erin Stephanie Cline	Julia Elaine Kubera
Abigail Grace Colangelo	Olivia Grace Lorayna Kurdziel
Margaret Joy Colenbrander	Alondra Rubí Laureano
Emily Coppeta	Kristen Elizabeth Lavallee
Danielle Joyce Coyle	Kaitlin Marie Leitholf
Elizabeth MacKenzie Crow	Connor Robert Lenz
Alexis V. Crowley	Kathryn Nicole Ligeros
Bryson Cid Cruz	Katie Allison Llewellyn
Alicia Marie D'Acunto	Tristan William Lloyd
Emma K. Daniels	*Gwyneth Teresa Macdonald
Capri Alexis DeCaro	Vivian Bao-Ngoc Mai
Aubrey Claire DePaul	Kalliopi Nicole-Maria Makricostas
Isabella Daniele Dorfmeister	Marissa Elizabeth Mamatas
Johnathan Nick Dragisich	Anthony J. Mancino
*Brianna Noel Dubeck	Fiora Rose Marchionda
Isabella Skye Dunford	*Emma Mei Mazzio
Kyleigh Mae Dunn	*Julia Ann McLaughlin
Adam Joseph Dybowski	*Kaitlyn Susan McLaughlin
*Erin Elizabeth Egan	*Seth Jeron Miller
Megan Tate Elliott	*Megan Mitchell
*Julia Marie Finkbeiner	Dakoda Ella Mock
Patrick Michael Fischer	Kiarra Marie Montanez
Alexandra Elena Fishell	Colin Christopher Moore
Alexandra Rae Frink	Emma Morgan Motter
Carly Jean Gabriel	Mackenzie L. Muir

*Christine Hoa Lien Nguyen
 Peyton Audrey Nolan
 Kiana Sage Nuccitelli
 Felice Salvatore Panebianco
 Marco Patitucci
 *Megan Carol Penrod
 Katelyn Jane Pepper
 *Richard E. Plesic IV
 *Kristina Nicole Polo
 Hanna Potosnak
 Jordan Faith Pozarycki
 Tori Minh Quach
 Dominic John Redman
 Morgan Eileen Reilly
 *Allison Miranda Rice
 Jamie Melissa Riggs
 *Emma Marie Riley
 Madelyn Elizabeth Rinehart
 Emmerson T. Robinson
 Ryan Gunnar Rose
 Sarah Marie Scanlon
 *Ellie Nicole Schlafer
 Zachary Jon Schlegel
 *Erin Elizabeth Schrantz
 Cecelia Marie Scott
 Mattea L. Scott
 Anna Grace Seach
 Sydney Grace Severini
 Lauren Camille Seymour
 Reagan Lee Sharp
 Taryn K. Shutika

Emma Grace Siekierski
 Madelyn Annette Simeone
 Rachel Rose Sittler
 Gwendolyn Guanacaste Sobkowiak
 *Charlotte McKay Sparks
 *Jenna Anne Stewart
 Abigail Reese Stinelli
 *Justin Carl Suchar
 Abbey Elizabeth Surdy
 Angelina K. Swisshelm
 Nicole McKenzie Szabo
 Zachery David Szpala
 *Emily Elizabeth Talierco
 Taylor Mae Thacker
 *Grace Anna Trimpey-Warhaftig
 Joshua Joseph Undereiner
 Grace Katharine Verano
 Lauren Elizabeth Wagner
 *Sarennia Faith Walker
 Laryssa Therese Wasylko
 Natalee Anne Whartenby
 Hanna Lynne Wilson
 Julia Michel Winebrenner
 Jessica Faith Winters
 *Elaina Brite Wohlford
 Haley Cierra Yacoviello-Andrus
 Aubree Lynn Yocum
 *Edward Albert Young IV
 Kaylin Ann Young
 Dalton John Zelwalk
 Giovana Rose Zonna

CANDIDATES FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ATHLETIC TRAINING DEGREE

Christina Michele Amrick
 Grace Alynn Dietrich

Julia Lee Doolittle
 Casey C. Padgett

CANDIDATES FOR THE MASTER OF HEALTH ADMINISTRATION DEGREE

Gwyneth Nicole Baker
 Breanna Elizabeth Nackrelli
 Andrew Donald Coleman
 David Allen Eppley Jr.

Conor Lee Saunders
 Sonia Somwar
 Emily Joy Steele

NASUTI COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

John M. Kauffman Jr., D.O., FACOI, FACP, Dean

CANDIDATES FOR THE MASTER'S IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Fazil Ali Abbas
Mariam Abouelhana
Christina J. Adam
Sarah Atileh
Nandani Vinodbhai Badhiwala
Maria Alexandra Beatty
Ryan Allen Beck
Soraya A. Behzadi
Muizz Irfan Butt
Nathalia Naomi Cordero Rodriguez
Kendall M. Cramer
Niya Selena Cyrus
Joel T. DeFelice
Kent Jay Deng
Michael Fabian DePaola
Anthony Earl Gibson
Sandra H. Girgis
John Sterling Golec
Stephanie Samantha Heyligar
Yuvraj Hirwani
Maia Gabrielle Hughey
Nathaniel A. Hupp
Jamisha Jacobs

Daniel Francis Joy
Hasher Kaleem
Jahanzeb S. Khan
Nour Krayem
Emily Rose Kreger
Chelsea Rose Lanigan
Marjona Mardonova
Zachary V. Marini
Courtney Ethan Morgan
Shakhnoza Norkulova
Chigozie Onyeagoro
Margaret Achiaa Osei
Emma E. Patton
Courtney Peden
Serena Jordan Seltzer
Gabriella M. Skatell
Aliya Smith
Anjali Visvalingam
Izahné L'kyah Williams
Luke David Wirfel
Nadia Rose Zamorski
Kareem A. Zein

RSHS DEPARTMENTAL OUTSTANDING STUDENT AND DEAN'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS

MACKENZIE WESLEY – Outstanding Student in Health Administration. Mackenzie Wesley, a Health Administration major, has maintained a strong overall GPA and a noteworthy science GPA, reflecting the academic excellence and professionalism of the program. Mackenzie's achievements, leadership, and dedication make her a deserving recipient of this distinction. In addition to her academic success, Mackenzie has pursued professional growth through a healthcare administration internship and active campus involvement. Mackenzie served as President of Zeta Tau Alpha and as Co-President of BE uninTImidated, which raises awareness and funds for appendix cancer to support families with housing and travel needs related to cancer care.

KYLIE KLAVON – Outstanding Student in Public Health. Kylie Klavon, a Public Health major, has maintained an outstanding overall GPA and science GPA, exemplifying the academic excellence and professionalism of the Public Health Program. Her achievements, leadership, and dedication to service make her a deserving recipient of this distinction. Beyond her academic success, Kylie has demonstrated a strong commitment to professional growth through internships and employment experiences serving individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities. She has further distinguished herself through professional presentations at the McGinley-Rice and Grefenstette Symposia and through her work with the Allegheny County Immunization Coalition. A dedicated advocate for her peers, Kylie has actively led and promoted community outreach and engagement initiatives.

ALLISON MARIE GASS – Outstanding Student in Health Sciences and the Dean's Award for Excellence. Allison Marie Gass, a Health Sciences major with minors in Biochemistry and Global Health, is also enrolled in the Pre-Medicine and Health Professions Program and has maintained an exceptional 4.0 GPA. Her pursuit of rigorous science coursework, including Cell Biology, Organic Chemistry I & II, and Biochemistry I & II, reflects her strong commitment to academic excellence and her goal of attending medical school. Beyond her academic achievements, Allison has demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication to service. She has participated in faculty-mentored research through Duquesne's Sport Injury & Psychology Research Laboratory and has been an active, decorated member of the Three Rivers Battalion Army ROTC. Her service includes volunteering as a medical team member at the Boston Marathon and organizing and participating in service-learning medical outreach through MedLife. Allison will attend osteopathic medical school next year.

PEYTON NOLAN - Outstanding Student in the Department of Occupational Therapy, Doctorate Program. Peyton Nolan is a dedicated and service-oriented leader who has demonstrated a strong commitment to becoming a practice scholar and leader in the field of occupational therapy. Peyton has achieved academic excellence in the classroom while concurrently developing her scholarly skills through participation in the department's research apprenticeship program. In addition, Peyton has served in leadership roles within student organizations at the department, school, and university levels. Her dedication to service and demonstrated leadership reflect the mission of the Occupational Therapy Department which strives to develop practice scholars who serve, question, and lead.

CHRISTINA AMRICK – Outstanding Student in the Department of Athletic Training. Christina Amrick is a second-year graduate student in the Master of Science in Athletic Training program. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences and is a certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. Christina has gained valuable clinical experience in Division I collegiate athletics, high school sports, and major events, including University of Arkansas Football, University of Pittsburgh Women's Gymnastics, the Boston Marathon, and the Special Olympics Winter Games. She is committed to service and providing high-quality care in diverse and resource-limited settings. Christina has served as President of Duquesne University Students in Athletic Training and as a District II Student Ambassador for the National Athletic Trainers' Association, promoting mentorship, communication, and professional development within the athletic training community.

EMMA ARMSTRONG – Outstanding Student in the Department of Physical Therapy. Emma Armstrong joined the Physical Therapy Department as a graduate student after earning her Bachelor of Science degree from Towson University in 2023. During her undergraduate years, she was a member of the softball team and served as team captain her senior year, demonstrating early leadership and commitment. While pursuing her studies at Duquesne University, Emma has remained actively engaged in athletics through CrossFit and Olympic weightlifting. She is also involved in her church's Young Adult Group and is currently preparing for the Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) examination. Emma's professional focus is orthopedic physical therapy, with a goal of working with athletes and sports teams. She was awarded the \$5,000 Dale and Michelle Cordial Scholarship for the 2025–2026 academic year in recognition of her dedication and potential. Emma's career plans reflect remarkable drive and intention. Within the first two years after graduation, she plans to complete a sports physical therapy residency, earn APTA Sports Physical Therapy certification, obtain her CSCS and USAW Level 1 certifications, secure direct access licensure, and complete advanced continuing education in overhead athlete biomechanics and injury management. Her long-term goal is to open a cash-based orthopedic practice. Faculty and clinical instructors describe Emma as a strong communicator and collaborative team member who leads with humility and encouragement. She is recognized for her technical proficiency, genuine empathy, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to excellence in patient care.

JASMINE URZUA-ALBA – Outstanding Student in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies. Jasmine Urzua-Alba is an exceptional physician assistant student whose dedication to service, medicine, and global health reflect the highest values of her profession. She consistently translates her passion for care into meaningful action. During academic breaks, Jasmine worked as a licensed practical nurse in a Florida clinic serving low-income patients, and providing compassionate, high-quality care to individuals with limited access to healthcare. At Duquesne University, she has embraced leadership and service opportunities, through active involvement in campus ministry, co-leading a medical mission trip to the Dominican Republic, participating in World Youth Day in Portugal, and studying abroad in Rome—experiences that have shaped her into a globally minded clinician with a strong ethical foundation.

As she continues her clinical training, Jasmine has developed particular interests in pediatrics, surgery, and neurology, approaching each specialty with curiosity, humility, and dedication. She aspires to incorporate medical mission work into her professional career. Grounded by her love of reading, travel, and time with family and friends, Jasmine brings compassion, perspective, and purpose to all she does.

GIANNA BAKER – Outstanding Student in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology. Gianna Baker earned a 4.0 undergraduate GPA and is on track to complete her graduate program with the same level of academic excellence. Gianna has been deeply engaged in research, completing her thesis, “Bridging the Gap: Documenting the Effectiveness of Counseling Education in a Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Program,” under the mentorship of Dr. Seth Tichenor. In Spring 2024, she received the Undergraduate Research Award from the Rangos School of Health Sciences for her poster, “Impact of an Intensive Short-Term Intervention Program on an Adolescent with Residual Speech Errors.” She has demonstrated exceptional leadership as President of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) and as Historian for the Duquesne University American Sign Language Club. A member of the Duquesne University Honors College, Gianna has also served as a graduate Teaching Assistant in dysphagia and as a student assistant for Dr. Snyder and Dr. Ford. Service has been central to Gianna’s academic journey. Her volunteer work includes supporting a FEES training course, Apraxia Kids, and JFCS Bridge Builders. In Summer 2023, she participated in Therapy Abroad in Belize, where she spent two weeks providing services to children and their families.

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

FAINA LINKOV, Ph.D. – Dr. Linkov has been a full-time faculty member of the Health and Administration since 2020 and has also served as the department chair. Since that time, she has demonstrated a consistent pattern of excellence in teaching. Dr. Faina Linkov has dedicated significant time to developing new courses since joining Duquesne, including Introduction to Healthcare Administration, Managerial Epidemiology, and the Health Administration Capstone course. Her SES/SPOT scores consistently exceed University averages and align with school means, with student feedback highlighting her use of diverse teaching approaches to meet varied learning needs, as well as her passion, responsiveness, engagement, and effective integration of real-world examples. Beyond the classroom, she has mentored student scholars from Kazakhstan through the Bolashaq Program, supporting their coursework and research during their time at Duquesne. Students frequently cite her innovative teaching strategies as a meaningful part of their education, particularly her use of structured scientific debates in Research Fundamentals, which model rigorous reasoning and encourage critical evaluation of evidence from multiple perspectives. Dr. Matt Kostek mentions “Dr. Linkov’s teaching is marked by innovation, intellectual rigor, and a clear commitment to student-centered learning. Her leadership in instructional design, dedication to accessibility, and ability to engage students through dynamic and evidence-based teaching methods make her a great candidate for the Excellence in Teaching Award”

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE FOR EARLY CAREER SCHOLARSHIP

KASEY STEPANSKY, CScD – Dr. Stepansky joined the Department of Occupational Therapy as a Clinical Assistant Faculty member in the summer of 2023. In addition to a full course load at both graduate and undergraduate levels, she continued to pursue her passion of conducting research with a goal of impacting the lives of those around her by focusing on the impact of environments on quality-of-life spanning nature spaces and intergenerational living communities. Since joining the faculty, Dr. Stepansky has been accepted to present research internationally in four countries: Denmark, Poland, United Kingdom, and Thailand representing Duquesne University's Occupational Therapy department on a global stage. Dr. Stepansky has published in 3 peer-reviewed journals and has another manuscript that is currently under review in less than three years as assistant faculty at Duquesne University. Since 2023, she has had 24 peer-reviewed presentations and posters with forty percent of this work including Duquesne Occupational Therapy Students. Dr. Stepansky skillfully combines her passion for leadership and scholarship with her desire for educating students. She has taken on primary mentorship of two research project students and co-mentored five additional students. Dr. Stepansky has worked with other faculty members to contribute novel ideas with her involvement in the Home Opportunity for Practice and Exercise lab's work related with caregivers' involvement in home programs along with collaborating with Music Therapy to secure a Community-

Engaged Research Seed grant to benefit patient's with acquired brain injury and their caregivers. Regarding Dr. Stepansky's contributions, Dr. Mattila noted "Her work has earned strong endorsements from colleagues and students alike, reflecting a pattern of excellence that aligns fully with the intent of the Early Career Scholarship Award."

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE MISSION

JOAN KIEL, Ph.D. – Dr. Kiel has been a full-time faculty member of the Department of Health Administration for over two decades. During that time, she has demonstrated a consistent pattern of excellence in service to the mission. In 2013, Dr. Kiel was awarded the inaugural Office of Residence Life Faculty Friend of the Year Award. President Gormley invited Dr. Kiel to be a member of the Carl G. Grefenstette Center for Ethics in Science, Technology & Law Advisory Board in November 2019 where she continues to be an active member. Due to her expertise with HIPAA, Dr. Kiel was asked to be a member of the new Data Governance Committee. She is a member of the Pre-Medical Program Student Standing Committee and the Pre-Medical & Health Professions Program Professional Behavior/Student Standing Committee, as well as the Student Health Advisory Group. Dr. Kiel is also on the University Clinical Coordinators committee whereby she takes a leadership role in supporting students and peer clinical coordinators. At the School level, Dr. Kiel the Chairman of the Non-Tenure Faculty Review Committee since 2018 where recently led the revision of the criteria for non-tenure track review. She has been an active member of the RSHS Promotion and Tenure Review Committee since 2003, as well as the RSHS Promotion and Tenure Mentoring Committee.

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - TEAM AWARD

MICHELLE McCANN, OTD, HELENA PINGREE, DPT, KRISTYN LOWERY, MPA, ADRIAN WRIGHT-FITZGERALD, DAT – This team has collaborated extensively as members of the Rangos School of Health Sciences Community Engaged Learning and Service (RSHS CELS) Committee, advancing Duquesne University's mission and values by supporting students, faculty, and community partners through community-engaged pedagogy and service-learning initiatives. Notably, their individual and collective contributions have exceeded the standard expectations of committee service. Each has demonstrated exceptional initiative and voluntary commitment to addressing the needs of community partners in meaningful and impactful ways including: community partnerships that expand experiential learning and strengthen students' knowledge, clinical reasoning, and career readiness. Through sustained, reciprocal collaborations with regional organizations, they have promoted health literacy, supported brain injury education, delivered wellness initiatives, and addressed health disparities across diverse communities. Their interdisciplinary

leadership has united clinicians, educators, policymakers, and students to develop innovative programming, adaptive fitness initiatives, and signature events such as the Rangos Symposium. In doing so, they have fostered a vibrant, service-oriented campus culture while demonstrating entrepreneurial vision and creative stewardship to enhance both educational experiences and community health outcomes.

Collectively, the work of Dr. McCann, Dr. Pingree, Ms. Lowery, and Dr. Wright-FitzGerald has had a profound and lasting impact on faculty professional development, enriched classroom teaching and learning experiences, expanded opportunities for collaborative research, and strengthened the cultivation of leadership and mentorship across the institution.

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY - TEAM AWARD

ELENA DONOSO BROWN, Ph.D., RETTA MARTIN, EdD – Drs. Donoso Brown and Martin are both full-time faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy and carry full-time teaching loads as well as other administrative duties.

Drs. Donoso Brown and Martin demonstrated a highly creative and intentional approach to teaching by integrating best pedagogical practices, including instructional scaffolding, constructive alignment, and developmentally appropriate progression, to support meaningful, outcomes-driven learning. They designed a cohesive research thread that integrates three courses, enabling students to synthesize knowledge across the curriculum while embedding scholarship within real-world community contexts. Through both qualitative and quantitative assessment, and by incorporating student feedback, they continuously refined the initiative to strengthen collaboration and learning integration. Their innovative, vertically and horizontally aligned model has been praised by academic leadership and colleagues alike, while students highlight its strong connections between classroom learning, real-world practice, and professional preparation.

RSHS DEAN'S AWARD FOR STAFF EXCELLENCE

CHELSIE N. CRATE, M.Ed. – Ms. Crate consistently demonstrates excellence, initiative, and a deep commitment to the University's educational mission—frequently going above and beyond the expectations of her role while maintaining the highest standards in her primary responsibilities. A notable example of this is her work supporting educational activity and student success. Through initiatives such as the Early-Arrival Pilot Program and co-curricular programming, such as Etiquette Night in partnership with the Center for Career Development, Chelsie has strengthened students' academic readiness, professional development, and persistence—efforts that extend beyond her formal position and have a tangible impact on student outcomes.

In addition, Chelsie has contributed meaningfully to school-wide strategic planning and community-building efforts aligned with the RSHS Strategic Plan. As Co-Chair of the Community Building & Engagement Committee, she has helped foster a positive, inclusive, and engaged work environment through trainings, presentations, and signature initiatives such as the Month of Unity. Chelsie's work is consistently of exceptional quality, and she is widely regarded by colleagues as a trusted, reliable, and collaborative partner as evidence by her receipt of the President's Staff Professional Development Fund Award. Her leadership, commitment to student success, and alignment with the University's mission make her highly deserving of this recognition.

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The Academic Procession

The Provost/Academic Vice President serves as the Commencement Marshal, holds the University mace and presides over the Academic Procession while standing directly in front of the platform. The raising of the mace signals that the Commencement ceremony is ready to begin. As the processional music begins, the procession of first the candidates for degrees, then the faculty and finally the platform party will file in. The audience should rise and remain standing until after the invocation.

Candidates for undergraduate degrees may be identified by the color of the tassel on the cap—which signifies the discipline. If they are receiving an advanced degree, the color on the neck band of the hood signifies the field of study.

Colors Distinctive of the Disciplines

White: Arts

Light Blue: Education

Yellow: Sciences

Apricot: Nursing

Drab: Business

Purple: Law

Sage: Pharmacy

Royal Blue: Philosophy

Pink: Music

Orange: Engineering

Academic Vestments

The gown, the cap, and the hood, representing the *major* components of the academic dress, are a ceremonial inheritance from the medieval universities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where clothing was an outward sign of social privilege and responsibility. Our usage of academic regalia derives from the early English universities. Academic clothing was first introduced at St. Peter's College, Cambridge University, in about 1284 A.D. Each school or college in Cambridge and in Oxford developed different methods to signal the various levels of degrees and the awarding institution. In America, in 1894 an Inter-Collegiate Commission met to adopt a uniform style for all degrees for all colleges and universities. The resulting code stated that every undergraduate robe would be the same style; likewise, every master's robe and every doctor's robe. Thus the academic dress worn by those participating in today's academic procession symbolizes both the level of their academic attainment and the institution they attended.

Gown

Although the gown is more frequently black, certain universities have authorized the use of colored gowns. The bachelor's and master's gowns were originally fashioned from black serge wool; today they are often of synthetic fabrics. The yoke of the bachelor's gown is designed to be worn closed and features long, flowing and pointed sleeves. The master's gown is designed to be worn open or closed. The sleeves are very long with squared ends, and the front part has an arc cut away. The wearer's arms protrude through slits at the elbows. The gown for the doctor's degree is made of wool, serge, or silk with an open front faced with wide velvet panels running from top to bottom. The sleeves are loose and bell-shaped with three encircling bars of velvet in black or in the color of the discipline in which the doctorate was obtained.

Hood

The most outstanding feature of the academic dress is the hood. It is usually worn only for the master's and doctor's degrees. The doctor's hood is longer than the master's hood (four feet vs. three and one half feet) and has distinguished panels inside. The college or university granting the degree is indicated by the color of the hood lining. Here, the panels are blue and red. The velvet trim on the hood indicates the field in which the degree was granted.

Cap

The standard cap is the mortarboard—or the Oxford-type cap—which appeared at Oxford after 1769 and replaced the round soft beret-like cap still worn at Cambridge. Its shape is variously explained as like the scholars and their books, or as derived from the Master Workman's actual mortarboard, or from the quadrangle shape of the campus. It is usually the color of the gown—black. The tassel is the color of the school for the undergraduate and worn on the right side of the cap until the moment the degree is conferred by the president. Then it is swung to the left side. The tassel for the master's degree is black and worn over the left front quarter of the cap. The tassel for the doctor's degree is also worn over the left front quarter of the cap and is of gold thread.

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The members of the Duquesne University Corporation are members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, or Spiritans, which founded and continue to sponsor Duquesne University. The members work in conjunction with the Board of Directors to govern Duquesne University.

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Latin Honors (e.g., Cum Laude) listed in the program are based on cumulative grade point averages at the conclusion of the fall 2025 semester and are therefore tentative. Latin Honors are confirmed after the conclusion of the spring semester and will be reflected on final official transcripts and University diplomas.

**Honors College*

