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Winter 2011

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College of Health and Human Services

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Welcome Back ... To Another Year of Success for CHHS!

In terms of achievement, last year truly has to go down as "one for the books" for the **College of Health and Human Services (CHHS)**.

CHHS once again maintained its position as fastest-growing college in the University; student enrollment continues to climb.

It was a year of history-making, too, as the CHHS conferred GSU's very first doctoral degrees to 20 students — two graduates from the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program, and 18 graduates of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree program. (See story, below.)

2010 also saw the opening of a brand new, state-of-the-art Nursing Laboratory for our Nursing students. (See story, below.)

Last year the CHHS also was awarded a \$4.9 million U.S. Department of Labor grant for the establishment of a *Healthcare Jobs for Chicago Southland Project*. By joining forces with eight community partners, we're creating roadmaps to careers in healthcare for the unemployed and underemployed across our communities. Since its debut this spring, the project has placed 27 persons in healthcare employment.

This past fall, the CHHS research program "Building Capacity in Health Disparities (HDR)" hosted a conference, *Eliminating Health Inequity: From Research to Practice* at GSU. More than 150 individuals—students, health administrators, clinicians, community organizers and more—attended this free, daylong event. Additional information, including conference abstracts and PowerPoint presentations by conference speakers, can be viewed at the [conference's website](#).

So as we say hello to 2011, we also welcome what will surely be another good year for the CHHS and, most importantly, for our students. Happy New Year to all!

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All Hail GSU's First Doctoral Grads!

A long journey came to an extremely successful conclusion last June as GSU's College of Health and Human Services celebrated the graduation of 20 students from the university's very first doctoral programs.

Two students earned their [Doctor of Nursing Practice \(DNP\)](#) degree, while 18 students were awarded their [Doctor of Physical Therapy \(DPT\)](#) degree.

The DPT and DNP programs elevate graduates to new levels of expertise and qualifications in their respective fields. The professional doctorate focuses primarily on the knowledge graduates need for advanced practice.

E-mail: [Editor](#)

"The degree candidates for DPT and DNP reflect GSU's commitment to educational access and our belief that we as an institution must provide our constituents the opportunities to achieve in the professional practice world," said [Linda Samson](#), Ph.D., RN, BC; NEA, BC, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services.

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PT Department Chair Named Outstanding Physical Therapist

[Rebecca K. Wojcik, PT, Ed.D., GCS](#), Associate Professor and Chairperson of the CHHS Department of Physical Therapy, recently received the [Illinois Physical Therapy Association's \(IPTA\)](#) Outstanding Physical Therapist Award.



Presented by the IPTA since 1972, the Outstanding Physical Therapist Award recognizes members who exhibit exemplary service and representation at the national level.

For more than 30 years, Dr. Wojcik has served the IPTA in various roles. Dr. Wojcik has been teaching and mentoring physical therapy students for the past 26 years; she joined GSU's Physical Therapy Department faculty in 2000.

Most recently, Dr. Wojcik assumed the position of Physical Therapy Department Chair following the retirement of Russell Carter, Ed.D., PT, who chaired the department for 13 years.

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Seminar on Human Trafficking Scheduled for March 4

The Illinois Social Work Field Directors' Network will host a free, multimedia presentation on "**Human Trafficking: Implications for Social Work Practice**," on Friday, March 4, 2011.



The presentation will be held in **two locations**:

- Sherman Recital Hall at Governors State University, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Depaul University, DePaul Center, 1 East Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The presentation will examine the global concern of human trafficking from three different angles:

- Defining the issue;
- Examining legal aspects and service options available for human trafficking victims;
- Examining opportunities to respond and work together to end human trafficking.

CEU's will be available for licensed social workers: three hours at the DePaul location, and five hours at GSU.

Deadline for registration is Friday, February 25. Go [here](#) to register online for this event.

For more information, contact jsmith@govst.edu

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Social Work Student Named Lincoln Laureate

Every year an outstanding senior from each of the four-year, degree-granting institutions of higher learning in Illinois is named Student Laureate of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois. This year's Lincoln Laureate from GSU is **Tamara S. Lewis** of Chicago.

Lewis received her award at the Thirty-Sixth Annual Student Lincoln Laureate Award ceremony, held November 6 in the Old State Capitol building in Springfield.

As a Social Work major at GSU, Lewis has earned a 3.8 GPA. She is a member of the [Phi Alpha Honor Society](#) for students studying social work, and [Alpha Sigma Lambda](#), the National Adult Learners Honor Society.

Lewis was nominated for this honor by [Dr. Phyllis West](#), Ph.D., MPH, MSW, Assistant Professor of Social Work.

According to Dr. West, "Tamara is that person who is willing to step out of her comfort zone in order to serve others. Tamara does not mind being uncomfortable if it means getting the job done and helping others."

Lincoln Laureates are chosen for their commitment to the principles of democracy and humanity as embodied by Abraham Lincoln.

A Helping Hand for Haiti

Lewis showed her compassion to others while helping to develop, promote, and produce a fashion show, "All Nations for Haiti," designed to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

Lewis credits GSU's Black Student Union, along with other Social Work students and Social Work department faculty members, for conceiving the plan for the fundraiser.

"The most fulfilling aspect of being a part of the fundraiser was working with other students and faculty that I would not normally have had an opportunity to work with, and seeing people from all walks of life come together not only to raise money for Haiti, but also to celebrate the people of Haiti's strength and resilience," Lewis said.

After receiving her Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree in June, 2011, Lewis feels "fully prepared" to move out into the work force. "The Social Work Department faculty and staff are dedicated, supportive, and encouraging," Lewis noted.

Her next goal is to receive her Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) and then find work in community organizing.

"I would love to work for the Urban League in its policy and research department," Lewis said.

She's also concerned with community health issues.

"The beauty of social work is that it can take me in a lot of different directions and allow me to explore many different areas," Lewis said.



"My ultimate goal is to open a youth center in Roseland."

Joining Tamara S. Lewis (right), graduate Social Work student, in Springfield, Illinois, where she was honored as Lincoln Laureate recipient is (left) Assistant Professor of Social Work Dr. Phyllis West, Ph.D., MPH, MSW. Dr. West nominated Lewis for this honor.

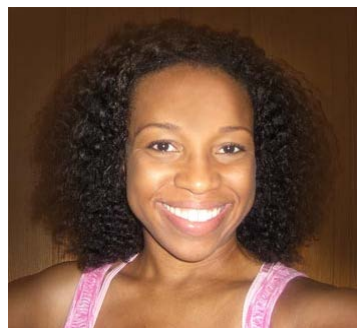
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OT Student Wins Prestigious E.K. Wise Scholarship

GSU Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) student **Kimberly Land** is one of only three female students from across the entire nation to be recently awarded the highly prestigious **E. K. Wise Scholarship**.

Established in the 1960s through the bequest of Elizabeth K. Wise, the E. K. Wise Scholarship is sponsored by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to support female students pursuing a post baccalaureate entry-level degree program in occupational therapy.

The selection process is extremely competitive, with 145 applicants vying for the three spots this year. The scholarship aims to support students from diverse backgrounds who can help develop a workforce capable of meeting the occupational needs of underserved areas or communities.



Living Life to the Fullest

Land has done a lot in her 31 years. After graduating from the University of Illinois in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science degree in finance, she spent a year in Japan, teaching English to individuals of all ages. She's also traveled the world by herself, visiting places like Brazil, France, and Costa Rica; an active and adventurous runner/biker, Land has climbed Mt. Fuji and walked the Great Wall of China.

But Land found that her career in finance management and real estate left her unfulfilled. A personality test wisely steered her to a career in occupational therapy. Today, Land couldn't be happier in her OT studies.

"OT encompasses *everything*," Land said. "As an OT, I discovered you can be creative and daring. We don't work solely with people who have physical disabilities; we also help people with mental disabilities like stress and depression.

"OT uses science and evidence-based practices," Land added. "It takes into consideration the whole person (physical, psychological, environmental and social needs) in order to help that person function at the highest possible level — and live life to the fullest."

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CDIS Student Chosen for Minority Student Leadership Program



Gernise Dixon has a bright future ahead of her. The graduate Communications Disorders student recently secured a spot for herself in the 2010 **Minority Student Leadership Program** (MSLP) held at last month's [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#) convention in Philadelphia.

Dixon faced strong competition—92 applicants for only 33 slots. She is the only student from the State of Illinois to be chosen to participate in the week-long program.

MSLP is a leadership development program designed to recruit and retain racial and ethnic minorities who have been historically under-represented in communication sciences and disorders.

MSLP members participate in focused educational programming and activities that build and enhance leadership skills, gain an understanding of how the association works, and interact with leaders in audiology, speech-language pathology, and speech, language, and hearing sciences.

Dixon got a lot out of the weeklong program. Besides forming close bonds with fellow CDIS students — and soon-to-be future colleagues — Dixon had the chance to network with numerous CDIS professionals. She also had the chance to explore the idea of pursuing her doctorate with other Ph.D. degree-earners in her field.

Dixon currently serves as graduate assistant in GSU's Communication Disorders Department. She will graduate in August, 2012. The Baltimore-native-turned-Chicagoan holds an undergraduate degree in biology from Florida A & M University. Her interest in the CDIS field was piqued by the speech classes she took as electives during her undergraduate years.

"I'm really enjoying the program here at GSU," Dixon said. "The courses are very challenging and require a lot of critical thinking." Dixon also appreciates the fact that the CDIS faculty members have such a diverse range of specialties, and offer numerous areas of expertise from which students can draw.

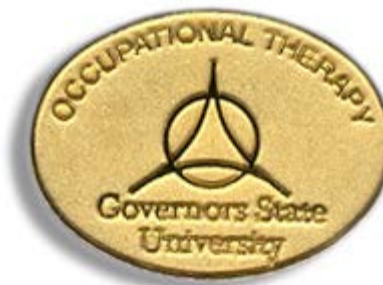
And while CDIS professionals can work in a wide variety of settings, Dixon is interested in working with patients from a clinical standpoint, in a hospital setting . . . that is, until she gets her own practice off the ground.

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Guest Speaker Delivers Poignant Message at MOT Pinning Ceremony

A standing-room-only crowd of parents, spouses, and other loved ones—some with signs to cheer on their favorite student—packed the Sherman Recital Hall at GSU last month for the Class of 2010 Master of Occupational Therapy Pinning Ceremony.

A total of 28 Master of Occupational Therapy students participated in the MOT



Pinning Ceremony. The ceremony is a long-standing tradition in the [Occupational Therapy Department](#) in CHHS, recognizing the hard work and dedication of the MOT students. The students officially graduated from the MOT program in December and will participate in the GSU commencement exercises on February 5, 2011.

President Elaine P. Maimon and Board of Trustees President Lorine S. Samuels joined [CHHS Dean Linda Samson](#) and Department of Occupational Therapy Chair [Elizabeth Cada](#) in welcoming the graduates and their many guests.

This year's featured speaker was chosen by the MOT students themselves. **Sergeant Major (Retired) Thomas Morrissey** of the United States Army Special Forces (USASF) delivered a riveting and inspirational presentation about his long road to recovery from eight life-threatening, close-range AK-47 wounds he received to his arms, legs and chest during an enemy ambush in Afghanistan in 2006.



Morrissey, a suburban Chicago resident, has shared his tale of recovery at several medical conferences over the past four years.

He performs these speaking engagements in order to serve as a mentor for other combat-injured soldiers, *and* to express his extreme gratitude to the medical professionals—especially occupational therapists—who worked so diligently with him during his three years of continuing rehabilitation (and 20 surgeries) at Army medical facilities both in Europe and in Augusta, Georgia.

A Higher Calling

After being welcomed by a standing ovation, Morrissey, a husband and father of three, began his presentation by noting that he shared a bond

with the MOT students. "We have both been directed to a higher calling – for me it's the military, and for you, it's the occupational therapy profession."

For Morrissey, progress was long in coming. Three months into recovery, he was only able to partially dress himself, and it took 15 minutes to put on a T-shirt. After seven months, Morrissey was able to bend his arm at the elbow.

"I was still thinking I was going back to the war," Morrissey said. "It wasn't until the 10th or 11th surgery that I realized I wasn't going back."

Morrissey credits the "knowledge, empathy, and commitment" of his occupational therapists for his recovery. He also credits the "creativity" and proficiency of his therapists in building all the necessary splints, tools, and casts he needed to perform a wide variety of basic functions, such as eating.

Today, though movement is still restricted, Morrissey is able to walk and use his arms and hands.

"I am so thankful for the (MOT) graduates here and for all who serve the greater good," Morrissey said. "The people in this profession do have a heart. They have to, to be able to touch people the way they do."



CHHS Dean Linda Samson (at podium) addresses the future Master of Occupational Therapy graduates at the MOT pinning ceremony.



*David and Elizabeth Klehr weren't shy (note their sign) about showing their support for their daughter, MOT student **Johanna Klehr** (center), at the MOT pinning ceremony.*

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PT Graduate: On the Front Lines of Patient Care



As seen on ABC TV/WLS-Chicago news, GSU graduate Alejandra Jirasek (above, right) works with patient Ondelee Perteet.

The 15-year-old patient at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital in Chicago is a lean, 6'2" former swimmer. Having suffered a traumatically-acquired spinal cord injury at the age of 14 from a gunshot wound, he now faces life with a severe disability.

As part of the patient's medical team, it is **Alejandra Jirasek's** job to help this young man, Ondelee Perteet. Jirasek is a 2007 graduate of the Master's in Physical Therapy program at GSU. For more than a year now, she has served as the young man's primary physical therapist since he began receiving outpatient care at Schwab.

Jirasek's young patient was featured recently on an ABC-TV/Channel 7 news segment, *"The Determination of Ondelee."* Jirasek was filmed working with her patient, supporting him from behind and facilitating muscle and movement patterns, as he struggled to mobilize his paralyzed legs forward.

"Each step is a victory," Jirasek said. "You have to celebrate every little gain, celebrate the little accomplishments. Ondelee has been working hard," she added. "It's been a long and a hard year; he's had a lot of different challenges. But he's made some excellent gains."

On the Front Lines

Reflecting on her work as a physical therapist, Jirasek said, "I would characterize my work as whole body rehabilitation. Physical therapy is not just about 'working on strength.' It is about making a plan for systematically improving gross motor skills and promoting maximal function and independence. At the same time, you've got to understand your patient's journey and get your patient's family on board with the rehabilitation plan you've built together."

That's where relationship-building comes into play, Jirasek pointed out.

"Physical therapists can only be as successful as their relationship with the patient and family. If they don't trust you, the rehab is NOT going to work well, no matter how good the plan," she said.

Teamwork is Key

Jirasek says she is lucky to work with a "wonderful" group of occupational

therapists at Schwab.

"Ondelee's primary OT and I worked very closely throughout his care," Jirasek said. "We are a team. In complicated cases such as traumatically acquired spinal cord injuries, it's essential to have a team that can build upon the goals and knowledge of the other disciplines. No one person can be everything for a patient."

Jirasek feels her PT education at GSU prepared her very well for the job she is doing today. "My GSU training in physical therapy was very comprehensive in nature. I was really delighted," she said.

[Russell E. Carter, PT, Ed.D., Physical Therapy Professor Emeritus](#) at GSU, was Assistant Director of Physical Therapy at Schwab before he was recruited by GSU to help get the university's growing physical therapy program off the ground.

Carter's connection to Schwab eased the way for Jirasek (among other GSU students) to complete her final clinicals at Schwab before starting work there in 2008. She is considering going on for her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree at some point in her career.

College of Health and Human Services [Dean Linda Samson](#), Ph.D., RN, BC; NEA, BC and Dr. Carter brought the DPT degree program to fruition over the past eight years. The program's first graduating class of 18 students was hooded in an historic ceremony last June, 2010.

A native Chicagoan, Jirasek had been working as an athletic trainer prior to enrolling in GSU's PT program; she thought her career would continue to focus on sports medicine and rehabilitation.

"I thought I knew where I was headed," Jirasek said, "but now I'm on a totally different track" (working with a variety of pediatric conditions, including cerebral palsy, complex neurological and developmentally delayed patients). And loving every minute of it.

"I love my job," Jirasek said. "I love getting to know my patients and helping them achieve their potential."

[View ABC News Channel 7 video clip.](#)

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MSN Students Pursue Diverse Research Agendas

It's always interesting when the **Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)** students from both the Administration and Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in Adult Healthcare concentrations present their final Capstone poster projects.

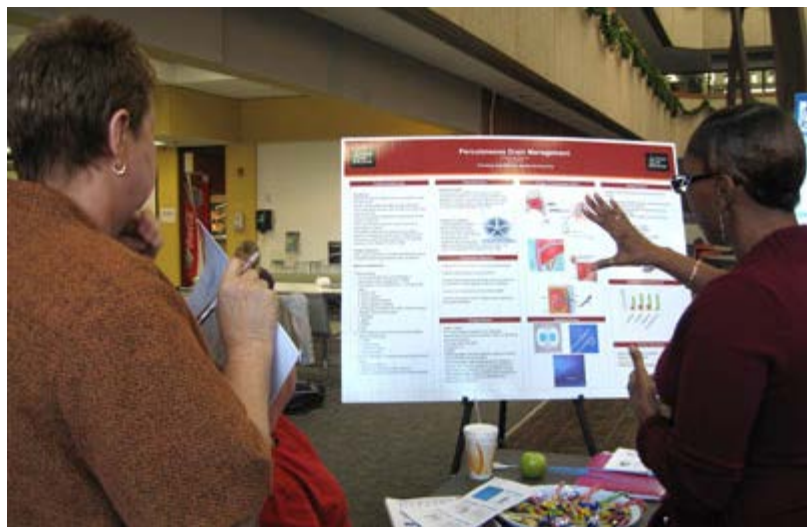
A total of 20 students (12 in the CNS concentration and eight in the Administration concentration) presented their work for nursing faculty (and interested passers-by) in the Hall of Governors last month.



Liberty Ann Erfe, RN, BSN, is dressed for travel as she chronicles the journey that a hospital must make in order to earn Magnet Recognition — one of the highest levels of recognition a hospital can receive.



*These three MSN students grew to become a close and supportive cohort during their time in the GSU Nursing program. Pictured (left to right) are **Anthony Bucki**, **Yvette Roberts**, and **Allyene Lacey**.*



Nancy MacMullen, Interim Nursing Department Chair (left) listens intently while MSN student **Denise Wilson** explains her Percutaneous Drain Management project.

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Russell Carter Named GSU Professor Emeritus

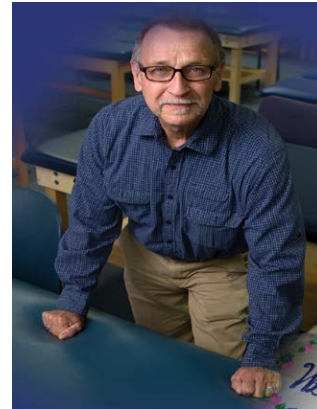
In recognition of his scholarship and 13 years of service, Physical Therapy [Professor Russell Carter, PT, Ed.D.](#), has been named **Professor Emeritus**.

"The College of Health and Human Services is absolutely thrilled to see Dr. Carter named Professor Emeritus," noted [Linda Samson](#), Ph.D., Dean of the College of Health and Human Services.

"Dr. Carter is most deserving of this honor, having given such dedicated service to not only the Physical Therapy Department, but, indeed, to the whole College and University. We're extremely proud of his achievements, and grateful for his continued support and involvement with the Doctor of Physical Therapy program, which was recently evaluated by a site visit team from the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)."

Congratulations, Russ!

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Addictions Studies Lecturer Named IADDA Chairman

[Peter Palanca](#), senior lecturer in the Addictions Studies Department, was named chairman of the [Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association \(IADDA\)](#), a Springfield-based, non-profit organization that advocates at the state government level for progressive substance abuse prevention and treatment policies.

Palanca also serves as chair of the Addictions Studies Advisory Board.

Palanca is the executive vice president at [Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities, Inc. \(TASC\)](#), overseeing service delivery throughout Illinois and directing TASC's new business development, training services, and philanthropy. Palanca joined the agency in 2003.

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Congrats to Dean's List Students!

CHHS recognized 97 undergraduate students who made the [Spring/Summer 2010 Dean's List](#).

"I'd like to congratulate each and every one of our undergraduate students," said [Linda Samson, Ph.D.](#), Dean of the College of Health and Human Services. "Our students have shown a great deal of commitment to

their course of study. With future health care leaders and social service providers such as these, our nation is in good hands."

Dean's List honors come only to undergraduate students who earn a minimum of 3.70 grade point average or higher during the trimester and take at least six credit hours during the term.

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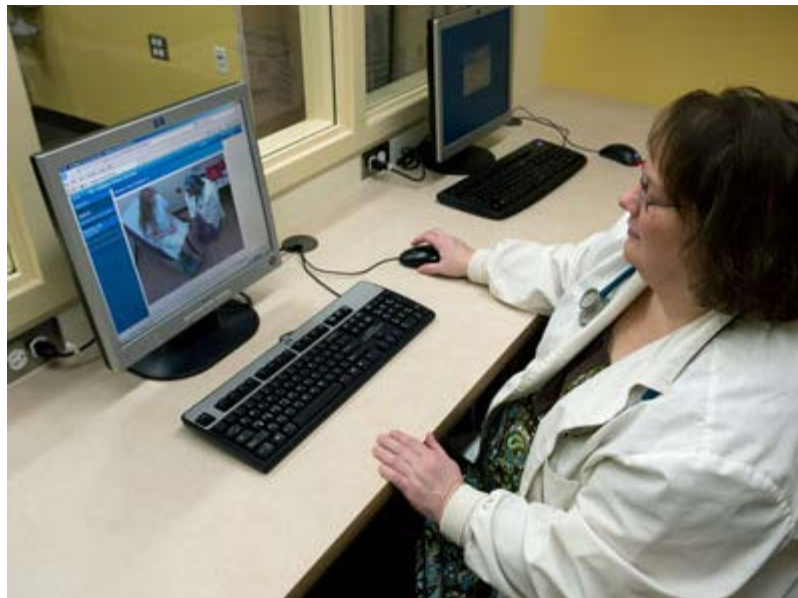
It's State-of-the-Art All the Way for CHHS Nursing Students!

With last year's opening of the **new clinical nursing laboratory** located in the basement of the Faculty Office Center ("G Building"), CHHS nursing students now have a state-of-the-art facility in which to hone their highest level of nursing and critical thinking skills.



First and foremost, the nursing laboratory is a fully functional classroom, said [Shirley Comer](#), DNP, RN, JD, CCNE, a Nursing Department lecturer. From the "smart podium," Comer can simultaneously run a demonstration DVD on the large, high-definition TV, while an accompanying PowerPoint presentation is shown through an LCD projector.

The laboratory also includes four, fully-functional exam rooms where students can practice "head-to-toe" patient assessments. One of the exam rooms is equipped with a moveable video camera linked to a control room just down the hall where Comer can observe the student, tape his/her performance, and later review the exercise for grading and assessment.



Shirley Comer observes a nursing student's patient assessment from the control room.

Also featured in the lab are four simulated hospital bays, complete with a simulation mannequin capable of producing heart, lung, and bowel sounds, as well as common vocalizations.



Comer works with Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student Barbara H. Johnson, RN, MSN, CNE (right) on the simulation mannequin.

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CDIS Students Host Workshop for Family Development Center

The students enrolled in the Communication Disorders class CDIS 710 (*Child Language Disorders: Early Stages*) were given the unique opportunity to provide a workshop for the early childhood educators of GSU's [Family Development Center](#) last month. The class was led by [Jennifer Armstrong, Ph.D., CCC-SLP](#), Assistant Professor in the [Department of Communication Disorders](#), College of Health and Human Services.

Among the topics discussed during the workshop were:

- Warning signs for speech and language delays in children, age 0-5;
- Phonemic awareness in children, age 0-5;
- How to get the most out of one page of a book;
- Increasing vocabulary through dramatic play;
- Increasing language and literacy at meal-time;
- Going green with language and literacy.

This recent workshop was the third in a series of educational workshops that Communications Disorders students have offered the parents, children, and staff members of GSU's Family Development Center.

Each phase of the workshop was interactive and well-received by all attendees, Dr. Armstrong observed.

According to **Fern Katz, Early Childhood Program Coordinator** for the Family Development Center, "I've been working with this population for more than 30 years. It was wonderful to be presented with new information and learning activities that we can use with our children."



CDIS students (left to right) Prentice Johnson, Joe Sierra and Lindsey Good answer questions during a workshop they provided recently at GSU's Family Development Center.

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Social Work, Nursing Departments Schedule Information Sessions

The Department of Social Work will host information sessions for the [Master of Social Work \(MSW\) program](#) on the following dates at Governors State University:

- Thursday, January 27, 2011 7:30 - 9 p.m. Hall of Honors
- Thursday, February 24, 2011 7:30 - 9 p.m. Hall of Honors

Reservations are not required. Additional information may be obtained by contacting Kelly Robinson at 708.235.3997.

The Department of Nursing will host an information session for the [RN-to-BSN](#), [Master of Science in Nursing \(MSN\)](#) and [Doctor of Nursing Practice \(DNP\)](#) degree programs on the following date at Governors State University:

- Thursday, February 17, 2011 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. Hall of Honors

Those planning to attend are asked to contact Vanyette Exton at 708.534.4040, or vexton@govst.edu **by Friday, February 11.**

Nursing faculty members and an advisor will be available for individual consultation. Light refreshments will be provided.

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