

Summer 2023

SHSP Dean's Newsletter, Summer 2023

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NYMC Celebrates the Class of 2023 at 164th Commencement Exercises

The NYMC community buzzed with excitement and anticipation as the Class of 2023 celebrated their dedication to the health sciences and looked onward to the journey that lies ahead of them. Behind Sunshine Cottage, families, friends and faculty gathered to commemorate the SHSP graduates for their time at the College on May 24. With the beaming sun and rich greenery of the NYMC campus, the graduates glowed as they solidified their commitment to their professions in the health sciences. The ceremony—conferred 175 degrees to the SHSP Class of 2023, including 41 D.P.T. degrees; 31 M.S. degrees; 50 M.P.H. degrees; 7 Dr.P.H. degrees; and 46 SLP. Read the full article on the 164th commencement and view the photos, live stream and highlights video. [Read more about the 164th commencement ceremony.](#)

SHSP Announces Reorganization and New Department of Rehabilitation Sciences

The SHSP has announced the creation of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, which comprises of the Division of Physical Therapy and Division of Speech-Language Pathology. The new department will be led by **Sambit Mohapatra, Ph.D., PT**, chair and professor

(nominated) of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, who will begin on July 1. He joins NYMC from the Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Science in the University of Vermont's College of Nursing and Health Sciences, where he is a tenured associate professor and program director of the Doctor of Physical Therapy program. [Read more about the new Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.](#)



D.P.T. Class of 2025 Honored at White Coat Ceremony, Prepares for Clinical Education

D.P.T. students from the Class of 2025 reached a significant milestone in their educational journeys, donning their white coats for the first time at the White Coat Ceremony held in John W. Nevins, M.D. '44 Auditorium on April 18. In front of friends, family, faculty and SHSP

leadership, the 49 students asserted their commitment to the field of physical therapy as they transition to the clinical side of the curriculum. [Read more about the D.P.T. Class of 2025 White Coat Ceremony.](#)

Sari Koppel, SLP Class of 2023, Combines the Art and Science of Voice

Sari Koppel, SLP Class of 2023, is the personification of the intersection between art and science. She's a singer, actor and soon to be speech-language pathologist. The Ithaca-native started singing lessons at eight years old and continues to sing 20 years later – getting the chance to perform with a live orchestra of more than 60 instrumentalists and to audiences of thousands. [Read more about Sari Koppel.](#)



Doctor of Physical Therapy Program Hosts 19th Annual Doctoral Project Presentation Day



For the first time since 2019, the D.P.T. program at NYMC hosted its annual doctoral project presentation day in person. Forty-two students, split into nine different groups, presented their research in various areas concerning the field of physical therapy, ranging from the impact of line dancing on cognitive function, to teaching cultural competence in the physical therapy curriculum. The keynote presentation was delivered by Victor Santamaria, Ph.D., PT, M.S., PCS, assistant

professor of physical therapy. [Read more about the D.P.T. doctoral project presentations.](#)

From Healing Communities to Educating Minds: Nkem Chukwueme, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. '23, Carves Inspiring Journey in Public Health

For more than 14 years, **Nkem Chukwueme, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. '23**, has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for millions of citizens around the world. Her career began in her home country of Nigeria and has allowed her to travel the globe, making a significant impact at every stop along the way. Her most recent accomplishment includes a Doctor of Public Health degree from NYMC in the School of Health Sciences and Practice. A self-proclaimed lifelong teacher, Dr. Chukwueme will embark on a new journey this fall, joining the NYMC Department of Public Health as an adjunct professor, bringing along an abundance of experience and knowledge, as well as a track record of getting results. [Read more about Nkem Chukwueme, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. '23.](#)



Judith Watson, M.P.H. '07, RN, Recognized at SHSP Faculty Meeting for Rapid Lifesaving Response

When asked why they chose to pursue a career in health care, many medical professionals will respond with the same answer: “to make a difference.” For **Judith Watson, M.P.H. '07, RN**, she was reminded of why she chose her profession on March 24, 2023. A nurse by trade, Watson worked her way up to become chief executive officer of the Westchester Community Health Center (formerly Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center). On that day in late

March, she, like many CEOs, was the last person in the office. Around 6:15 p.m., a gunshot victim scurried into the luckily unlocked health center to find Watson. She quickly

began treating the victim's wounds and called for assistance. The victim survived thanks to Watson's training and quick-thinking. Her courageous act was recognized at the SHSP faculty meeting on June 6, 2023, with an award for rapid lifesaving response in our community. [Read more about Judith Watson, M.P.H. '07, RN.](#)

Alumni Profiles

Get to Know the New Chair of the SHSP Alumni Leadership Council, Bryan Kist, M.S. '01, D.P.T., PT, OCS, FAAOMPT

Like many alumni, **Bryan Kist, M.S. '01, D.P.T., PT, OCS, FAAOMPT**, was interested in reconnecting with his graduating class. Dr. Kist wanted to organize a 20-year reunion in 2021, but to do so, he needed to access the contact information of his fellow classmates. He was directed to the NYMC SHSP Alumni Leadership Council. After being a member of the council for two years, Dr. Kist was appointed as the council chair in 2023, becoming the first alum of the physical therapy program to don the title. [Read more about the new SHSP Alumni Council Leadership Chair, Bryan Kist, Bryan Kist, M.S. '01, D.P.T., PT, OCS, FAAOMPT.](#)



Speaking of Samantics: Empowering SLP Graduate Students Through Experience and Authenticity

The saying “experience is the best teacher,” rings true for **Samantha Walker, M.S., SLP Class of 2019** in the School of Health Sciences and Practice. She uses her experience as the foundation on which she has built a brand with more than 52,000 Instagram followers. Inspired by her own journey of becoming a speech-language pathologist, Walker created Speaking of Samantics, a platform dedicated to helping members of the SLP community. From the application process, to finding a job after graduation and everything in between, Walker shares stories about the highs and lows speech-language pathologists encounter throughout their educational and professional endeavors. [Read more about Samantha Walker, M.S. '19.](#)

Faculty, Resident and Student Publications

Hae Young-Kim, Dr.P.H., M.A., M.S., adjunct professor of public health, published **Human Cortical Interneurons Optimized for Grafting Specifically Integrate, Abort Seizures, and Display Prolonged Efficacy Without Over-Inhibition** in *Neuron*: Volume 111, Issue 6.

SHSP HIGHLIGHTS

Diane E. Heck, Ph.D., Granted Emeritus Associate Dean and Professor of Public Health Status at SHSP Commencement

For her years of outstanding leadership and devotion to NYMC and the SHSP, **Diane Heck, Ph.D.**, received emeritus status in front of colleagues and students at the SHSP commencement ceremony on May 24. Dr. Heck joined the NYMC faculty in 2007 and has received multiple awards for her research. Many of her projects were largely focused on developing medical countermeasures, treatments and therapeutics to address the effects of chemical toxicants and agents of mass destruction on civilian populations. “Dr. Heck has been a warm and wonderful mentor to our students, to our faculty as well as to this dean,” said **SHSP Dean, Robert W. Amler, M.D., M.B.A.**



Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) Students Collaborate with School of Medicine Students

Second year D.P.T. students participated in an interprofessional education activity with NYMC SOM students. The D.P.T. students served as teaching assistants, with faculty supervision, for the SOM students in their Foundations of Clinical Medicine 2 course. The content area was examination, evaluation and clinical reasoning related to patients with low back pain or knee pain. The session afforded the opportunity for the medical students to learn more about physical therapy and the educational background of physical therapists, for both cohorts of students to discuss each profession’s role in the care of patients with low back and knee maladies, for the medical students to develop their hands-on skills related to patient examination for low back and knee pain and to practice communicating with each other as an interprofessional team.

Division of Speech-Language Pathology Hosts Inaugural Vesting Ceremony

The Division of Speech-Language Pathology celebrated its first year students who transitioned into their externships and clinical studies by gifting them with vests that can be worn when working with patients. "The vest ceremony was a token to begin the clinical externships and reminder of the ethical, empathetic and the best practices that we SLP first year students aim to follow. Being vested symbolized the responsibility and the honor we get to serve the people across lifespans," said **Anushka P., SLP Class of 2024.**



Division of Physical Therapy Welcomes Largest Class in Program History

On May 30, 2023, the Division of Physical Therapy welcomed the largest first-year class in program history to campus. The class of 2026 is comprised of 62 students, all pursuing their doctoral degree in physical therapy. Over the next three years, the students can expect to engage in a curriculum geared towards not only treating people with injuries or disease, but also preventing or detecting movement-related problems at the earliest stages and promoting healthy lifestyles and work environment.

Padmini Murthy, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., FAMWA, FRSPH, Attends 76th World Health Assembly

Dr. Murthy moderated a high-level panel on Gender Equity in the Health Workforce for Health Systems Strengthening, a program hosted by the Government of France and Women in Global Health, in collaboration with the Government of Liberia and the Government of Norway, under the Gender Equal Health and Care Workforce Initiative. She also moderated a high-level panel with panelists Loyce Pace (Assistant Secretary, US Dept. of Global Affairs HHS), H. E. Fernando Olivera (Mexico DPR to UN Geneva), Dr. Amelia Latu (WHO Chief Nursing Officer), Dr. Catherine Loftus (Permanent Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services), Honorable Ms. Ana E. Haddad (Vice Minister for Information and Digital Health of Brazil), Mr Frédéric Depretis (Deputy Director for Human Affairs French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Dr. Roopa Dhatt Executive Director Women in Global Health, Ms. Catherine Menganyi (Chapter Leader WGH Kenya), and Dr. Rana Hajjwah (WHO EMRO).



Faculty Appointments (March 8 through June 21)

Diane Heck, Ph.D., professor emeritus of public Health

Hae-Young Kim, Dr.P.H., adjunct professor of public health

Nicole Abbamonte, D.P.T., clinical instructor in physical therapy

Lauralynn O'Halloran, M.A., PT, clinical instructor in physical therapy

Nkemdilim Chukweume, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., adjunct assistant professor in public health

Jorge L. Rivera-Agosto, M.S., J.D., adjunct assistant professor in public health



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